

# REPUBLICAN MAIN STREET PARTNERSHIP



2009, Issue 4

## Expected Special Election -- New York 23

The 23<sup>rd</sup> District of New York, which includes parts of Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego, and Saint Lawrence Counties, is expected to hold a special election in the coming months. Incumbent **Congressman John McHugh** was recently nominated to be Secretary of the Army by President Obama. Although Congressman McHugh has been approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee, a date for the special election cannot be set until he is confirmed by the full Senate. If McHugh is confirmed soon, the special election could be held on the regularly scheduled election day scheduled for November 3, 2009.

Assemblywoman Dierdre “Dede” Scozzafava is the expected Republican candidate. She is a life-long resident of the area, which includes mostly small towns in upstate New York. Prior to being elected to the New York State Assembly in 1998, Assemblywoman Scozzafava dedicated much of her life to community service. She served four years as a Village of Gouverneur Trustee and was Mayor of the Village of Gouverneur from 1993 until her election to the Assembly.

As a Member of the Assembly, Scozzafava was appointed to the leadership position of Whip for the Assembly Minority Conference. She serves on the Assembly Banks, Codes, Ethics and Guidance, Rules, and Ways and Means committees. Assemblywoman Scozzafava has been a vocal advocate for Northern New York by holding forums and serving on a number of task forces to address the diverse needs of the community’s citizens. As Chairwoman of the SAVE NY Task Force, the Assemblywoman traveled throughout New York state to meet with various constituencies to develop and improve ways to protect New York’s women and children from domestic abuse and sexual violence. The task force played an integral role in raising awareness of these issues. A number of its proposals, including civil confinement of sex offenders and stiffer penalties under Megan’s Law, were adopted as legislation.

Assemblywoman Scozzafava is likely to face first-time candidate Bill Owens, setting up a battle that Congressional Quarterly says “will likely hinge on which party can deliver turnout and which candidate can win over moderate voters.” In selecting Owens, Democrats emphasized his Air Force service, his business acumen as a tax and business attorney and his status as a political outsider. According to CQ, Owens is decidedly a second choice for the Democrats after the lead contender for the nomination, State Sen. Darrel Aubertine, decided he was not interested in running for Congress. Unlike Aubertine, Owens does not have experience running in a contested election nor does he have comparable name recognition.

A well-known figure in Plattsburgh, along the New York's Eastern border, Owens will have to work quickly to build relationships in the western part of the sprawling district, the part of the district where Assemblywoman Scozzafava is strong. Owens has the capability to self-fund and has strong ties to the business community — another source of funding in a campaign that will require considerable expenditures to let voters know there is a special election and what the nominee stands for.

A review of the political history of the 23<sup>rd</sup> District shows that McHugh has been re-elected comfortably since 1992 and registered Republicans outnumber Democrats in the district. But President Obama won a majority of the district's votes in 2008 — 52 percent to 48 percent for Republican John McCain. In addition, Democrats won a tight special election race in the neighboring 20th District in March, also with a candidate who was a political newcomer. The New York Conservative Party recently put forward its own candidate, Lake Placid businessman Doug Hoffman. He recently released a poll showing him running a close third, with Assemblywoman Scozzafava preferred by 26%, Owens at 17%, and Hoffman at 16%.

The Watertown Daily Times recently praised Assemblywoman Scozzafava, calling her “experienced” and “dedicated.” They went on to say that she is “an excellent choice to represent the Republican Party in the upcoming race for the 23rd Congressional District ... (because) she has proven to be a hard worker for her constituents with known views that put her in the moderate wing of her party. Her positions put her in the political mainstream, (and) her support of women's issues has been consistent. Her efforts to improve the north country economy and responsiveness to the needs of workers has earned her endorsements of organized labor.”

### **Member Profile – Congressman Pat Tiberi (OH 12)**

**Congressman Pat Tiberi** has represented this Columbus based district since 2000, winning the last election by a margin of 55% - 42%. Rep. Tiberi succeeded Republican John Kasich, and has won by double-digit margins in each of his four re-election campaigns. But the district has shown signs of ticket splitting, with key Franklin County going for Democrats Obama, Kerry and Gore in the last three Presidential elections.

According to several recent news articles, Democrats are planning to vigorously challenge Rep. Tiberi next year. Democrat Paula Brooks, an elected commissioner in the county that includes Columbus, said recently that she will challenge Rep. Tiberi. Brooks previously served on the city council of Upper Arlington, a Columbus suburb, and was first elected as a Franklin County commissioner in 2004. She was re-elected in 2008 with 63 percent of the vote. Congressional Quarterly has changed their initial rating of the 2010 race to the more competitive “Republican Favored” from “Safe Republican.”

Commissioner Brooks actually lives in Ohio's 15th District, which also includes part of Columbus, and in 2007 she planned — and then nixed — a bid for the House seat that Democrat Mary Jo Kilroy eventually won. (Members of Congress are not required to live in their districts.) Republicans were quick to call attention to this issue. “It's unclear who Paula Brooks is referring to when she cites ‘people in the district,’ but it is clear that she's not one of them,” said

Paul Lindsay, a spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee, the campaign arm of the House GOP.

Rep. Tiberi serves on the House Ways and Means Committee, with major jurisdiction over tax and health care issues. He is recognized as one of the most knowledgeable Members of Congress on housing and home ownership issues. Along with Senator George Voinovich, he has written legislation that would help Ohio compete on a level playing field with other states in attracting new jobs and keeping existing ones. The House has also approved Rep. Tiberi's proposal to help all returning military veterans better compete for federal jobs. Politics in America, in their 2006 edition, called Rep. Tiberi "an able and diligent lawmaker."

While in the State Legislature, Tiberi was responsible for writing laws that created a DNA database to track violent criminals, established comprehensive lawsuit abuse reform, required performance audits of Ohio's 21 urban school districts, protected seniors from financial con artists and initiated nursing home consumer report cards. Tiberi also proposed bills that offered state income tax credits for charitable contributions and reformed Ohio's estate tax law. Rep Tiberi's work in public office has gained him numerous honors, including more than a dozen statewide "Legislator of the Year" awards from groups ranging from the Buckeye State Sheriffs Association to the National Federation of Independent Business in Ohio. He's also been named a Watchdog of the Treasury for his efforts to protect taxpayers.

### **Recent Polling Information**

According to a Rasmussen Reports survey conducted Aug. 27-28, "Throw the bums out" may be applied to the 2010 election, not just baseball. More than half of voters said they would vote to replace the entire Congress.

In the telephone survey of 1,000 voters, just 25 percent told pollsters they would vote to keep the current roster of lawmakers, while 18 percent said they are not sure how they would vote. The current numbers show little change since October. When Congress was passing the \$700 billion bailout plan during the presidential campaign and an impending meltdown of the financial industry, 59 percent wanted to throw out all members and 17 percent wanted to keep them.

With Democrats in control of both chambers of Congress, it's not surprising that the number of Democrats who would vote to keep the entire Congress has grown from 25 percent to 43 percent. However, 70 percent of unaffiliated voters said they would vote to replace all of the elected politicians in the House and Senate, up from 62 percent last year. Only 14 percent gave Congress good or excellent review for their overall performance, while only 16 percent believe it's "very likely" Congress will address the most important problems facing the nation. And 75 percent said members of Congress are more interested in their own careers than they are in helping people.