

## **NJ AAUP Higher Education Issues and 2006 US Congressional/ Senate Candidates Answers**

The NJAAUP has selected its Higher Education Issues from the Rutgers AAUP-AFT questionnaire. All 26 Congressional and U.S. Senatorial candidates (Republicans and Democrats) received the questionnaire; 13 replied. Below is a summary of answers to the questions selected by NJAAUP (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q8). Please read these responses, note which candidates chose not to reply, and then cast a well-informed vote on November 7, 2006!

The following Congressional/Senatorial candidates responded to the questionnaire: U.S. Senator Robert Menendez, Congressional incumbents Robert Andrews (D-1), Steve Rothman (D-9) and Rush Holt (D-12) and Challengers Viola Thomas-Hughes (D-2), Rich Sexton (D-3), Carol Gay (D-4), Paul Aronsohn (D-5), Leigh-Ann Bellow (R-6), Linda Stender (D-7), Tom Wyka (D-11), Joe Sinagra (R-12) and Albio Sires (D-13).

Not replying were: Challengers Thomas H. Kean (R-Senate), Vincent Micco (R-9), Jose M. Sandoval (R-8), Joseph S. Sinagra (R-12), John J. Guarini (R-13), Incumbents Frank A. LoBiondo (R-2), James Saxton (R-3), Christopher H. Smith (R-4), Scott Garrett (R-5), Frank Pallone (D-6), Michael Ferguson (R-7), William J. Pascrell (D-8), Steve R. Rothman (D-9), Donald M. Payne (D-10), and Rodney P. Frelinghuysen (R-11),

### **Q1. ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION**

The rising cost of public higher education has placed a heavy financial burden on many families and individuals as grants have shrunk to only 25% of the average student aid package. In 1980, the purchasing power of the Pell grant, a key program for low and moderate-income students, covered about half the cost of attending an in-State public four-year college. Today the maximum Pell grant covers less than 30% of these costs.

**Do you support increased federal funding to restore the purchasing power of Pell grants to 50% of the cost of attending an in-State four-year college?**

*All candidates said Yes but Bellow. Challenger Bellow said she did not because she felt additional funding would only exacerbate the deteriorating purchasing of the Pell Grant. Bellow said, "...reforms should be implemented...."*

### **Q2. PART-TIME FACULTY**

Part-time faculty currently constitute over 50% of our nation's college and university teachers and often teach the same courses as full-time faculty. Yet the majority of part-time faculty typically earn about \$2,000 to teach a course and receive no health care benefits. They are also denied unemployment compensation during the summer and other periods of unemployment.

**Do you support legislation requiring that part-time faculty receive proportionately equal pay and benefits as full-time faculty?**

*All answered Yes, but Bellow and Sinagra who both said No. Bellow said, "Every professor and institution should be afforded the ability to freely negotiate contracts for the terms of employment." Sinagra further said "I would support raising the earning curve for part-time staff with a cap, based on years worked, no missed classes as an incentive, but not the benefits."*

### **Q3. DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Distance education in higher education has great potential for the education of non-traditional students, but there is also a danger that low standards and insufficient student interaction with faculty could sacrifice quality to expediency.

**Should the federal government enact rigorous educational standards and require ongoing faculty-student interaction in the implementation of distance education programs?**

*All incumbents and challengers answered Yes, except for Bellow and Sinagra. Bellow said, "Each institution should be permitted the ability to establish its own standards as to faculty-student interaction as it related to distance education." Sinagra expressed the same view.*

#### **Q4. SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH**

**A.** Corporations invest in market-oriented research and realize profits from their investments. The federal government funds a significant portion of all basic, academic research, including some research projects that will never result in marketable products.

**Should the federal government continue, increase, or decrease its investment in basic research?**

*Menendez, Andrews, Gay, Aronsohn, Stender, Rothman, Wyka, Holt and Sires said the Federal government should increase funds. Thomas-Hughes and Bellow felt the government should decrease funds and Sexton and Sinagra checked continue funds at the current level.*

**B.** Currently, federal funding for embryonic stem cell research is not available. States are the only public source of funding for this research that impacts the work of faculty and staff at public research universities, such as Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and has incredible potential in seeking cures to many illnesses.

**Do you support federal funding for embryonic stem cell research?**

*All incumbents and challengers answered Yes, with the exception of Bellow and Sinagra. Bellow believes that human life begins at conception and, therefore, does not support the destruction of life for the purpose of medical or other research. Sinagra said, "There have been more breakthroughs in adult stem cell research in providing cures for a variety of illnesses. The benefits of adult stem cell far outweigh the benefits of embryonic research."*

#### **Q5. HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY**

**A.** Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, currently under consideration, gives proprietary (for profit) colleges and universities greater access to federal financial aid programs without increasing federal financial aid to the public and non-profit private sector. There is also language that would restrict the rights of members of the academic community by establishing an "Academic Bill of Rights."

**Do you support changes to the Higher Education Act that would benefit proprietary colleges and universities at the expense of public and private non-profit colleges and universities?**

*This question was answered No by all incumbents and challengers, except for incumbent Andrews who just commented without a designation of yes or no. Andrews said, "The one area where we must do better, however, is that we have not done a good enough job reaching people at the bottom of the economic ladder.... I am interested in doing whatever we can to reach more students..."*

**Do you support removal of the proposed language on an "Academic Bill of Rights" from the reauthorization of the HEA? (Section 103 of HR609 and Section 104 of S1614)**

*Unanimously Yes.*

**B.** Federal law has traditionally placed strict limits on the federal role in dictating the education policies of colleges and universities. Some legislators have argued that the federal government needs to step in to stop biased professors from imposing sanctions on students who do not agree with them. Others believe that the problem of government intervention in college curriculum and teaching far outweighs any individual problems that may arise on campus. The *Commission on the Future of Higher Education* (Spellings Commission) asserts that "university standards have become diluted and teaching methods outdated."

**Would you oppose legislation imposing federal control or oversight on what college professors teach and how they grade students?**

*All incumbents and challengers but Thomas-Hughes said they would oppose federal control or oversight on what college professors teach. .*

**Q6, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS**

As we move into the “information age,” a growing number of Americans will be professional workers who exercise some judgment about their work but who do not control the conditions of their work.

**Should professionals at private and public institutions of higher education, such as faculty members, professional staff and librarians, graduate student employees, and part-time/adjunct faculty, be permitted to organize for collective bargaining?**

*All incumbents and challengers said Yes.*

**Do you support the Employee Freedom of Choice legislation allowing for card-check recognition?**

*All but three answered Yes. Thomas-Hughes left it unanswered, Sexton felt he needed more information, and Bellow said, “Card-checking provisions provide the potential for undue influence at the time a vote is cast. Each individual should be free from potential coercive actions when casting any ballot.”*

**Q8. USA PATRIOT ACT**

The Congress has yet to renew the USA Patriot Act. Americans are concerned with the protection of civil liberties under any such legislation. Libraries and universities fear a “chilling effect” on borrowing practices and academic research.

**Do you support the protection of civil liberties in a revised USA Patriot Act?**

*All candidates said Yes.*

Copies of the all Questionnaires are available upon request <[pnowlan@rutgersaaup.org](mailto:pnowlan@rutgersaaup.org)>.