

Eleventh Hour in the 12th District

Congressional candidates shoot it out on the video screen

by Hal Plotkin

In the 12th Congressional District, Democratic San Mateo County Supervisor Anna Eshoo and Republican Stanford Law School Professor Thomas Campbell are locked in a heated battle that has been distinguished not so much by what the candidates have to say as by how they've gone about saying it.

Campbell, a graduate of the University of Chicago and Harvard Law School, was completely unknown to most area voters when Republican incumbent Ernest Konnyu got into hot water earlier this year over reports that he sexually harassed female employees and a lobbyist. Although Konnyu vigorously disputed the allegations, leading Republicans like former Representative Ed Zschau and Hewlett Packard co-founder David Packard—sensing that Konnyu's reputation had been dealt a politically crippling blow—quickly scrambled to find a candidate capable of holding onto the traditionally Republican congressional seat.

Enter Thomas Campbell. The youngest faculty member at Stanford Law School and Ronald Reagan's choice as the director of the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Competition, Campbell possessed the Republican team-player credentials that appealed to Packard and Zschau along with a squeaky clean reputation. Packard's crucial support enabled Campbell to handily defeat Konnyu in the primary, making Konnyu the only Republican in Congress to be defeated in a primary election this year.

The former undersecretary of defense under President Nixon, billionaire Packard is the 12th District's preeminent kingmaker. When H-P's thousands of employees, con-



Sup's On: Democratic San Mateo County Supervisor Anna Eshoo is being outspent by her opponents 2 to 1 in the 12th Congressional District.

tractors and associates receive an appeal from Packard for campaign contributions, it is an appeal that most find difficult, if not impossible, to reject. One of the valley's largest employers, Packard wields a financial clout that, not surprisingly, has resulted in the election of every 12th District congressional candidate he has supported over the last 20 years.

While Eshoo's reputation as a local public servant had already been established—leaving her free to concentrate her efforts on attacking Campbell's record—Campbell needed to introduce himself to the voters. By penning a series of essay-style ads—designed to look like newspaper articles—Campbell staked out a variety of positions ranging from urging additional tax reductions for the wealthy (“savings and investments will be encouraged”) to more moderate positions like support for women's rights and opposition to offshore oil exploration.

After compiling the ads in a booklet—calling them “published articles”—Campbell has managed, with a \$1 million bankroll, to rapid-

ly create an image as a journalist/scholar in a district where the intellectual side of politics is given more weight than in most places.

While Campbell has been busy getting voters acquainted with him, his opponent has been busy attacking him as an academic with little real empathy for the concerns of the average voter. Supervisor Anna Eshoo, who holds an AA degree from Canada Community College, won the right to face Campbell by beating back a spirited primary challenge from Esalen Institute director Jim Garrison—waging his first political campaign—by emphasizing her practical experience as a county supervisor.

Eshoo also won crucial support from EMILY (Early Money is Like Yeast) a national feminist fundraising organization whose individual members across the country poured thousands of dollars into her campaign. Added to her preexisting base of financial support in San Mateo County and her own \$60,000 personal campaign contribution, the Atherton resident is easily the best-funded Democratic candidate to ever run for the 12th District seat. But it is how she is using her money that, like Campbell, has drawn the most attention.

Faced with the prospect of being outspent by Campbell by as much as 2-to-1, Eshoo devised a novel strategy for reaching voters. Rather than fill mailboxes with appeals for support in the traditional manner, the Democratic candidate wrote and produced 110,000 copies of an eight-minute videotape that was hand delivered to area voters by volunteers.

The videotape features Eshoo talking directly to the camera and explaining her campaign theme.



Stirring Up Campbell: Stanford law professor Thomas Campbell has replaced Republican Ernest Konnyu as David Packard's chosen candidate.

“I'm the candidate who takes on the sacred cows,” she says, decrying waste in the Pentagon. Holding up what she calls a “\$400 hammer and a \$17 bolt,” she adds, “I don't buy that we measure our patriotism or our commitment to national defense by how much money we let the Pentagon continue to waste.”

In addition to pledging to carefully scrutinize defense contracts, Eshoo also promises voters that she will bring her tendency to eschew sacred cows to a variety of other federal issues. Calling it a disgrace that “we [California] have more toxic [cleanup] sites than anywhere else in America,” Eshoo says she will sidestep the Environmental Protection Agency and bring together area scientists and business leaders to “solve the problem ourselves,” if necessary.

Eshoo's strongest criticisms of Campbell, however, center on the Stanford professor's support for Judge Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court and his record in the Reagan administration,

where he was in charge of the agency designed to prevent anti-competitive business mergers. Labeling Campbell “an executor of the conventional wisdom,” Eshoo blasts what she calls Campbell's “record-setting” pace of allowing 3400 corporate takeovers in the 18 months that he headed the federal competition bureau.

Eshoo acknowledges that she is fighting an uphill battle, noting that Campbell has “the right endorsements” and is from “the right party.” However, Eshoo says she still thinks she can win because “challenging the sacred cows” of the 12th District is an idea whose time has come.

As the campaign moved into its final week, Eshoo's dramatic success in distributing her campaign video had many in her camp talking of an upset. At last count, nearly 750 volunteers participated in the week-long grassroots effort, leaving the magnetic tapes on the doorsteps of voters in an area where nearly 90 percent of the residents own VCRs.

Moving to blunt Eshoo's appeal to the videophiles, Campbell announced late this week that his campaign will pay for a live, half-hour call-in show on commercial television that will be hosted by the GOP candidate. While Campbell's handlers publicly maintain that they are unworried by Eshoo's tape—“she just talks at the voters,” one says, they plainly hope that by appearing as the accessible, interactive candidate, Campbell's use of TV might prove more impressive than Eshoo's.

The Tom Campbell for Congress show goes on live, this Sunday night at 930pm on KICU-TV (Channel 36). To have questions answered on the air, call Campbell at 408/298-3636. Copies of the Eshoo video are available by calling 408/773-9871.