

# METROPOLIS

*Politics:* Info on the U.S. Senate candidates. *Eye:* Susan Hammer spends money to make money; Frank Fiscàlini starts a youth movement. *Grind is on assignment this week.* Edited by Jonathan Vankin

## Sincerely, Tom Campbell

*The Candor Candidate carries out an agenda set by his big-business backers. But he believes in it.*

BY JOHN WHALEN AND HAL PLOTKIN

**L**IKE A DIMMER SWITCH in action, U.S. Senate candidate Tom Campbell is morphing from gee-whiz jocularly to earnest candor on this radiant Sunday in the hills overlooking smogged-in Silicon Valley. One minute he's engaging in the slightly goofball backslapping that laissez-faire groupies, like H.O.-scale hobbyists, exchange whenever they gather. "A real conservative wears suspenders and a belt," the candidate jests. A nearly audible swallow later and the 39-year-old U.S. congressman is all candor.

On the campaign trail, Campbell is the Candor Candidate. No exception is his theme at this afternoon's fundraiser, which assembles four dozen or so mostly GOP high-tech executives and spouses poolside at 3Com Corp. founder Bill Kraus' modern glass-and-brick mansion in posh Los Altos Hills, where the driveways really are for driving and sidewalks are nonexistent.

"I do not hide in this campaign that I am pro-choice," Campbell flatly announces to incipient donors. Later in the day, at another fundraiser in the flatlands below, he will make the same point to Bay Area members of Log Cabin, the Republican gay and lesbian organization. He'll also tell the second group something that doesn't come up at the earlier klatch: He wrote to Gov.

Pete Wilson last year in support of AB 101, the state gay and lesbian civil rights bill that Wilson scuttled. Campbell says he would support a federal equivalent, but doesn't say whether he has introduced such a bill.

Campbell likes to characterize his stance on abortion and gay rights as a logical expression of conservatism's government-off-our-backs philosophy—and as a principled risk in a Republican primary likely to be fought in Southern California's Reagan country. "I am paying the price," he confesses. "I'm getting criticized by those who disagree with me strongly. It is to me, however, a function of what is right." Of course, Campbell's polls show that a majority of California Republicans are pro-choice and favor pro-choice candidates, but Campbell presents this

fact more as icing on the cake than the cake itself.

More candor: Campbell pledges, perhaps wistfully, his commitment to extending terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he has resided since 1988. He'd like to see the stints stretched from two to four years, he explains, because incumbents "spend too much time raising money and influence."

That admission isn't intended as a confession, but more as insider savvy ("I'm not afraid to say I'm a congressman") for the benefit of electronics VIPs. But he knows whereof he speaks. When it comes to raising money and influence, Campbell is near the top of his class, just like the Silicon Valley venture capitalists to whom he pitches himself (as Mr. High-Tech Goes to Washington).

**F**OR ALL of his self-conscious sincerity, Campbell, a nice guy with a slightly doughy, ingenuous face, is constantly described by observers and colleagues as "smooth," "calculating," "clever" and even "unctuous." Even those who consider his sincerity genuine concede that his polish often looks like shellac. Says a colleague at Stanford University's law school, where Campbell taught law and economics: "He presents his civility in such an exaggerated fashion that you get a sense he's being insincere." He's certainly one of the subtler practitioners of realpolitik in Congress. A staffer for a Democratic congressional representative calls Campbell "one of the slickest guys I have ever heard."

During the so-called House Bank Scandal, Campbell quickly positioned himself as Mr. Clean, touting his unblemished checking practices. "He's full of integrity," a Campbell staffer explained a few days before it was announced that he had, in fact, "overdrafted" a handful of checks.

Four years ago, Campbell pulled himself into office by

the suspender straps—that is, by virtue of his native intellect, political acumen, fulsome charm and, not least, access to the potent subsidies of Silicon Valley-bucks. Though he publicly downplays his political debt to any special interests, to be perfectly candid, Campbell is the candidate manufactured by the Santa Clara basin's electronics industry. He had the right specs: He's a socially moderate, economically conservative Republican who recites the Silicon Valley oath, *Abolish the capital gains tax*. High-tech business elites granted him the start-up capital that subsidized two successful runs for California's 12th Congressional District seat, in 1988 and 1990. (Now renamed the 14th District, it stretches from San Mateo to Mountain View.)

As an incumbent he's managed to expand his fundraising far beyond the valley of the dole. Having notables like former Secretary of State George Schultz and billionaire industrialist David Packard co-chairing his campaign doesn't hurt when it comes to attracting cash.

By the end of this March, Campbell had collected more cash than any other