

David Kurkowski

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the wheel for the last 14 years, citing LoBiondo's low rankings on polls measuring power and influence with members of Congress.

"Frankly, I don't think he's (LoBiondo) worked very hard for us. If I'm the congressman, I would really work hard for the citizens of this district. I'm going to bring jobs to the district. Under his (LoBiondo's) watch, 4,000 jobs left the district. That's a lot of jobs," Kurkowski said. "If you count up all those jobs and all those families that are either on unemployment or they had to leave the district, that affects the rest of us who do have jobs."

There's a whole multiplier effect. It's why we have hard times here. Cumberland County is the highest unemployment in the state right now at 8 percent."

He blames the national economy's abysmal state on "poor regulation of the financial and credit markets by the Republican administration" and is championing himself as helping the working people, who Kurkowski said are hurting in the economic crisis.

"I talked to somebody who said his IRA practically disappeared this week. That's a tragic error," Kurkowski said. "Thank God we don't have Social Security privatized because people would have invested that money in insecure investments and

they would have been wiped out. We need safety nets to help people."

He advocated "working and middle class" people getting their tax cuts, a proposal espoused by Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama, a reversal of the wealthiest 10 percent receiving tax cuts under the Bush Administration.

On the war in Iraq, Kurkowski is more of a dove than a hawk, calling the Iraq war a "tragic mistake."

He cites the reasons for his opposition to the war: the deaths of 4,000 American troops, with thousands more wounded, an enormous continuing debt Kurkowski tallies to \$5,000 a second, and the toll the war has had on military equipment.

With these tangible costs, Kurkowski said the war in Iraq depleted the United States' "stature in the world."

"It's bankrupted us morally," Kurkowski said. "We need to end it in an orderly fashion as soon as possible."

His Republican opponent voted to use military force and invade Iraq in 2003.

Kurkowski said if he were in Congress in 2003 and had to cast that fateful vote to invade Iraq, he said he wouldn't have, citing a lack of evidence Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction.

"You also have to remember that in 2003, when that

started, we were deceived by the administration. It made it very difficult for members of Congress to pass an informed vote on the war," Kurkowski said.

Kurkowski's war strategy includes setting a goal and allowing the military to achieve the goal.

"The goal has to be orderly pullout, working with the government of Iraq, turning over control to them but not promising to keep a presence in there. I think the longer we keep the military presence in the Middle East and in Iraq, the more problems we have," Kurkowski said.

On the environment, Kurkowski advocates expanding the use of alternate energy.

He said he taught high school students in 1972 about what was called at that time the "limits to growth," that there wasn't enough oil to keep up with the rising population, so solutions to fossil fuels would have to be found.

"It was readily apparent that the bubble was going to end at some point in time. I think the time estimates didn't work out exactly as predicted when oil would become such a problem, but certainly the result is where we've ended up," he said.

His plan to stimulate the economy includes federal grants to local municipalities for investing in alternate energy and getting their elec-

tricity off the grid. Kurkowski said Cape May could invest in a windmill to power its desalination plant, a move he said would save the taxpayers \$250,000 a year.

"The local municipality would have more money in their budget. They could lower taxes or not increase taxes. We would be doing something good for our earth by having less reliance on fossil fuels. We would cut down our dependence on oil, thus reducing the price of the oil that we do want to use," Kurkowski said.

"We're not ever going to be free of all oil. We just don't want to be burning it."

The Kurkowski camp has made an all-out effort to research LoBiondo's record. Kurkowski brags that he's giving LoBiondo his first real challenge in years.

He called LoBiondo's support for legislation that authorized off-shore oil drilling a "flip-flop" after LoBiondo said he opposed off-shore drilling.

"I don't think he's got strong convictions. Frankly, I think it confuses voters."

They don't know where he stands on these issues," Kurkowski said.

But it's LoBiondo's role from 2001 to 2006 as chairman of the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee that investigated the Coast Guard's Deepwater program that

Kurkowski's campaign is promoting as an example of LoBiondo's ethical lapses and incompetence.

In 1998, Congress provided the Coast Guard with \$28 million to begin a 20-year, \$10 billion to \$15 billion program to replace their aging cutters, vessels and equipment. The program, called Deepwater, would use contractors to develop designs for the new vessels and equipment called "assets."

Kurkowski said rather than exercise the oversight responsibility of the subcommittee, LoBiondo relied on military contractors to "self-police" and monitor progress on the construction projects and report back to the Coast Guard and Congress.

"My opponent simply wasn't up to the task of running an oversight committee. He left it to others. In fact, he left it to the very people he was supposed to be keeping an eye on," Kurkowski said.

Kurkowski said Deepwater cost taxpayers "millions of dollars" on ships that weren't seaworthy and radio systems that didn't provide adequate security for classified transmissions and weren't waterproof.

"At the same time that all of this waste and fraud was going on, over a period of five years, my opponent was accepting thousands of dollars in campaign donations from the same military con-

tractors who were flushing taxpayer dollars down the drain," Kurkowski said.

LoBiondo said the Coast Guard is suing the contractors for \$93 million to recoup lost money from the faulty vessels and that he supports the lawsuit and an act that shifts management and oversight of Deepwater to the Coast Guard.

Kurkowski is also questioning LoBiondo's seriousness on voting for the "Contract With America," a proposal House Republicans outlined during the so-called Republican Revolution of 1994. Among the proposals was the "Citizen Legislature Act", a Constitutional amendment that would set 12-year term limits for members of Congress, with six terms for Representatives and two for Senators. LoBiondo voted for the legislation, which the House rejected. Kurkowski said LoBiondo, who is running this year for his eighth term, broke his pledge on self-imposed term limits. LoBiondo said he's running because he has the experience the district needs.

Whether Deepwater or LoBiondo's record resonates with voters in today's climate, when jobs and the economy are in the forefront, remains to be seen, but for now Kurkowski is hoping his opponent's past is relevant.

Argue

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Mahaney responded to Beale's comments, first telling him he was "not well-informed," which Beale called an "inappropriate statement."

"At the five meetings, I overwhelmingly endorsed the project," Mahaney said.

However, Mahaney said, the city council has to be very cautious about how it presents information to the public. Mahaney said the city can't, for example, send out a letter telling people to vote for the project, but they were preparing a mailer on the project and the ballot question.

"Every voter will get a mailer," Mahaney told Beale. "Call me when you get it."

Mahaney said he had given a number of interviews to various media outlets in which he stated his opinion about the project.

Mahaney addressed the statements about not promising a Convention Hall and inheriting the project, saying they were in response to remarks members of the public made about what the city had presented.

He said the statement about inheriting the project was a reference to the time limit the current city council was working under.

Mahaney referred to statements criticizing city council for hiring an architect without going through a bid process.

"Had I stopped the project

and gone out for bid on an architect it would have put the project two to three years behind," Mahaney said.

Mahaney said he was initially concerned about the level of public support for the project, but after five meetings, he believes the public is now behind the project.

Beale said he was asking city council to be enthusiastic in its support for the project.

Councilman Niels Favre said he thought the mayor made his points well. He said council responded to the public by putting the issue up for

a binding referendum. He said council also acted unanimously in its support for the design of the new Convention Hall, but now had to be careful in how it structured its support of the ballot question.

Councilwoman Terry Swain said council members have put in hundreds of hours on one-on-one meetings with

members of the public. She said the entire council has been enthusiastic about the process.

Beale said that was the kind of talk the public needed to hear.

Deputy Mayor Linda Steenrod and Councilman David Kurkowski were not present to respond to Beale's

appeal. Kurkowski was present for the closed session meeting at 6 p.m., but had to leave to attend a Congressional candidates' debate.

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