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## John Baer: A Senate run for Allyson Schwartz? Don't think so



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THE LAST QUESTION fielded by U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz at a Pennsylvania Press Club luncheon had to do with when she'll announce for U.S. Senate.

"Not today," she said.

But she said she's "not shutting the door" on a possible run next year for the seat held by Republican Arlen Specter.

"I appreciate my name being mentioned as frequently as it has been, because it means I'm doing a damn good job," she told the Harrisburg audience Monday.

She talked about her post on the House Ways and Means Committee, which sets tax policy, and about how important that can be for Pennsylvania during tough economic times.

The third-term Democrat and former state senator also said: "I'll make a final decision and let you know about it."

I actually think it has been made, absent an earthquake in the political landscape.

I spoke with Schwartz. She said that she can't put a percentage on odds of running, has no timeline for a decision and probably would not run for both her House seat and the Senate, though technically she could.

I doubt she's in - for a couple of practical reasons.

She fought hard to win her seat, campaigns constantly to keep it and seems to relish the job. Why risk losing it?

She wouldn't be a lock in a primary. Two or three other Democrats from the region are talking about running (former National Constitution Center chief Joe Torsella says he's in; Montgomery County state Rep. Josh Shapiro's thinking about it; U.S. Rep. Joe Sestak is mentioned).

And Schwartz has gone this way before.

In 2000, she finished second in a six-way Senate primary with 27 percent of the vote. Then-U.S. Rep. Ron Klink of Pittsburgh won with 41 percent (and lost to then-Sen. Rick Santorum), beating Schwartz and four other Southeastern Pennsylvania candidates.

The general rule is, a westerner wins against multiple easterners, and while no westerner yet has emerged for next year, state Auditor General Jack Wagner, of Pittsburgh, is mentioned.

Allegheny County Democratic Chairman Jim Burn says that that rule still applies: "I think that dynamic is still in place, and there is speculation about two or three names [he declined to name] . . . and if it was Wagner, he was the top vote-getter last fall."

Wagner got 3.3 million votes in his re-election bid. Barack Obama won the state with 3.2 million votes.

Then there's the fact that Pennsylvania isn't female-friendly.

We're one of only 13 states to never have elected a woman U.S. senator or governor; we have elected only five women to nonjudicial statewide office *ever*; only seven women to Congress *ever* (and three succeeded husbands who died in office in the '40s and '50s); and we rank 46th among states in number of women in the Legislature, according to the Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics.

A he/she race here tends to be a mismatch.

Not that Specter isn't vulnerable.

He's certain to draw a primary foe, and state election officials say that 239,000 voters switched registration to Democrat last year, leaving a more conservative GOP than the one that renominated Specter just barely (by 17,000) in '04, over Pat Toomey.

Many Democrats hope that Specter gets knocked off or that general-election voters remain in the mood for "change" and feel that the (by then) 80-year-old, 30-year incumbent will have served long enough.

I never count Specter out. He has survived too much, politically and personally.

And, yeah, Schwartz is more experienced and accomplished today than in 2000. But when I ask if she really wants to give up her seat for a tough statewide run, she smiles and says, "There are many ways to serve."

Which sounds to me a little like, you know, shutting the door. \*

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