

# 'Safe' District Is Now a Battleground

By Richard Galant

Democrat Allard Lowenstein's struggle to break free from the shackles of a liberal image is registering some success in a district that is traditionally safe for Republican Rep. John Wylder.

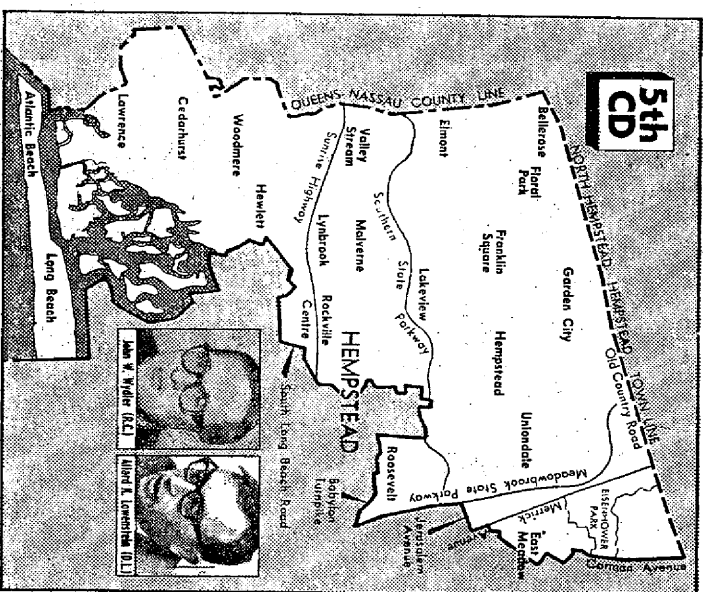
"It's going to be a very, very close race," says one active Republican who asked not to be named. GOP polls show the race almost even, he says. "Word has filtered down from Nassau headquarters that this guy's in trouble." Other Republicans, including Wylder, dispute that appraisal while declining to reveal survey results. The congressman says, "I'm in good shape," but he concedes that his workers and the GOP organization are throwing more resources than ever into the effort to retain his seat.

Two pieces of campaign literature tell the story of the battle. One Lowenstein flyer, intended for Republican strongholds like Garden City, bears praise from conservative columnist William F. Buckley and Sen. Henry M. Jackson, pictures former congressman Lowenstein in the midst of his smiling family and quotes a citation for honesty and courage awarded him by Notre Dame's class of 1970.

"We need a broad coalition beyond the traditional borders of Democratic support to win this district," Lowenstein's campaign manager, Paul Tully, says. The strategy appears to be taking hold—the Republican source says that the flyer "gave Lowenstein credibility . . . let's call it respectability" with voters who otherwise would have dismissed outright the prospect of supporting him.

A new Wylder brochure pictures the Garden City resident in front of the Capitol, "You Win When Wylder Wins . . . Here's Why!" it says, detailing his 14 years in Congress and "his firm stands and actions on key issues"—a record he often contrasts with what he calls Lowenstein's "record as an opportunist."

Wylder says ideology cannot be written out of the campaign. "I don't think the leopard can change its spots," he says, "and I think people know that Allard Lowenstein is an ultra-liberal." He fights Buckley



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with Buckley, citing Sen. James Buckley's support for him and noting what William Buckley had said that Lowenstein "backs enthusiastically almost every mistaken political idea that ever issued out of the social imagination of man" before lauding him in August for "his extraordinary integrity and sense of justice."

Lowenstein admits, "I may change my positions on the issues because you keep growing and learning." But, by and large, he says that his views have remained constant. The image of doctrinaire liberalism

is a "caricature" of his beliefs, he says, adding that during his term in Congress, "I voted against raising the debt ceiling and warned that you can't just go on spending and spending."

The Vietnam War, a dominant issue in Lowenstein's successful 1968 campaign, belongs to history. But the Democrat, a resident of Long Beach, says the administration of the war has left a legacy of "government misconduct" that fosters waste and other bureaucratic excesses.

The Lowenstein campaign has all the hallmarks of his four previous races for Congress—A parade of endorsements from national figures, a youthful corps of campaign workers and a bone-wearying schedule of appearances. But Tully, who worked in the 1968 race, says things have changed. "There were literally thousands of kids then who would come in on weekends and work this district really hard," he says. Now, "there aren't the polarizing issues . . . it's a more complicated world we live in."

But the candidates do espouse frankly opposed views in two areas while stressing subtler differences of shading and potential effectiveness in others. Wylder opposes the Humphrey-Hawkins full employment bill, a measure supported by Lowenstein that would make the government the employer of last resort. The incumbent favors offshore oil drilling; Lowenstein says drilling would be a "tragedy" and should be banned until the safety of the environment can be guaranteed. Both men attack the ocean-dumping of sludge—a major issue in the South Shore section of the district—and join many residents of the Five Towns in opposing landings of the supersonic Concorde at Kennedy Airport.

Wylder says forced school busing to promote integration also is a key issue. Calling for a constitutional amendment against busing, he notes that there is a pending lawsuit that could result in court-ordered busing across the New York City line. Lowenstein says the question of busing "ought to be resolved in the community affected by it."