

Specter plays the presidential card

Unlike Yeakel, he said, his stands square with Bush and Clinton's. Today, he and she debate on radio.

By Wanda Motley
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U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter appealed to both Democratic and Republican voters yesterday, saying he is more in tune with the thinking of the two major parties' presidential candidates than is his opponent.

Specter, who has been accused of straddling political divides, said he agreed with both President Bush and Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton on critical issues in controlling the federal deficit such as the line-item veto.

He also mentioned his position on expanding access to health care, saying that, like Bush and Clinton, he favors employer-based health insurance programs as a way to ensure medical services for all Americans.

"When we line up, three of us are on one side of the issue," said Specter, citing the death penalty and standardized testing for teachers as other issues on which he agrees with Bush and Clinton and his opponent, Democrat Lynn Yeakel, does not.

Yeakel does not support the line-item veto, capital punishment or teacher testing beyond certification requirements that already exist. She also advocates establishing a national health care plan that does not depend on whether a person is employed.

Yesterday, following her campaign's cross-state bus trip over the weekend, Yeakel limited her campaigning to a pair of private fund-raising events, one with a lawyers' group and one with African Americans.

This morning at 8, Yeakel and Specter are scheduled to have their first face-to-face meeting since their televised debate a few weeks ago. They are set to be on *Breakfast With the Candidates* on KYW radio (1060-AM).

Although Specter recently has made a point of his similarities with Clinton, he said yesterday that did not mean he was discounting Bush, whose inability to catch Clinton in voter polls has been viewed as a hindrance for GOP candidates this year.

"Don't rule out Bush too soon," Specter told a woman who asked how he would handle issues with a Democrat in the White House next year.

Specter spoke at a "Get Out the Vote" forum organized for employees at National Liberty Corp., a Chester County insurance firm for which Specter once did legal work. About 500 workers attended the session, held on company time.

Specter also walked straight into a subject that his Republican opponent has taken a beating for, the recession.

"We are experiencing tremendous difficulties with our national economy and our local economy," conceded Specter. But he said he has already begun to address those concerns by sponsoring legislation that would fund more enterprise zones for cities and allow early withdrawal of IRA funds for major expenditures such as college tuition and a first house.

In the morning, Specter joined U.S. Rep. Curt Weldon (R., Pa.) at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard to announce that they were proceeding with a lawsuit against the federal government over its efforts to close the facility.

Both lawmakers contend that the Bush administration illegally put the base on its closing list.

Inquirer staff writer Russell E. Estleman Jr. contributed to this article.