

*Rossi Does Indeed Connect with the Grassroots and Tea Parties*  
*July 19, 2010*

Six months ago, the Puget Sound Conservative Underground hosted one of the first Senate Candidate Forums. The "original 5" Republican candidates – Coday, Didier, Widener, Salazar, and Williams – spoke to 150 people in Redmond about why they were running for the Senate and what their platforms were. This was followed up by the Puget Sound Conservative Underground (PSCU) vetting the candidates individually with separate meetings where each of the candidates responded to criticisms and answered questions. From that, the PSCU members were polled, and Dr. Art Coday was chosen as our favorite candidate.

Thus, it was disheartening when Dr. Coday suspended his campaign two months ago soon after Dino Rossi entered the race. Even though the PSCU's "favored son" endorsed Mr. Rossi, many PSCU members were skeptical about immediately jumping on the Dino bandwagon. They had heard other conservative groups or bloggers refer to him as a RINO and not a true conservative like the other Republicans still in the Senate race.

Because I was hearing fellow conservatives question Dino's passion and lack of connecting with the grassroots, as the organizer of the PSCU, I wanted to get him to speak to our members. So when I was able to talk to Mr. Rossi at Elizabeth Scott's kick-off event for her State Representative campaign, I asked him if he'd appear before my conservative, grassroots, tea-party-connected group. You would think a "RINO" would turn and run when he heard all those "scary" adjectives describing my group. But Dino said he'd heard great things from the other candidates who had previously attended PSCU meetings (namely Scott, James Watkins, and Art Coday) and he would be glad to set up a meeting.

This past Sunday, Dino met with 50 PSCU members in Bothell and who better than Dr. Coday to introduce him, explaining why he was supporting Dino. Dino then talked to our conservative group about his reasons for running, namely that those in Washington D.C. are spending too much and growing our debt and our government too large. "The borrowing and spending is morally reprehensible," said Dino.

One of the aspects of the individual vetting meetings we have run with the Senate candidates involves the candidate responding to criticisms in the forms of "cons" members have stated about them. When comparing to how the "original 5" candidates responded to a list of perceived negatives, it's interesting to note that no one spent more time than Mr. Rossi in going down the list of "cons" and trying to respond to all of them. In fact, one of the candidates a few months ago addressed just two criticisms from our list of over a dozen we listed about him and his campaign. But Dino appeared to want to address any and all concerns and answered a range of items in his 90 minute meeting, including spending considerable time explaining how some on the far left continue to try to muddy his name regarding his past business associations and dealings.

After going down the "cons" list, attendees in the audience asked questions, such as one PSCU member wanting to know Dino's thoughts on the

healthcare bill. "I don't call it a healthcare bill," Mr. Rossi shot back. "It's a tax bill with a little healthcare legislation sprinkled in." When grilled by a different PSCU member as to why Dino is saying on his website that he wants to repeal parts of the bill, and not all of it, Mr. Rossi wanted to correct any confusion. He said they would be changing that on the website because he wants to make it unmistakably clear that "the whole bill needs to be repealed," not just parts of it.

Finally, the elephant in the room (pun intended) was addressed when Dino was asked about the tea party groups and grassroots and if he is indeed a conservative. Finally, we got to talk about the main reason I wanted PSCU members to meet with Dino. From what I knew of him, he was "one of us," but they needed to hear it and see it themselves. Dino answered in part by pulling out from his pocket the "Contract from America" that he recently signed, being the first candidate running for Senate in our state who signed it. He talked about the fiscal conservative platform of this contract and how strongly he believes in what it says. (See <http://www.thecontract.org/the-contract-from-america/> for the details of the contract.) Dino continued by talking about how the tea parties are a good thing and how exciting it is to see people involved in the political scene more than ever over this past year. His desire to meet with our group and his future plans to meet with other tea party, 9/12, and conservative groups is evidence to his connection with these groups' principles.

Later in the event, a woman whom I did not recognize as a member of the Puget Sound Conservative Underground, in a fashion that reminded me of a reporter from an old black and white movie, confronted Dino on his position on abortion, specifically asking why he believed in abortion for cases such as rape. Dino asserted he was pro-life, but that he has always felt there were some extreme cases that are exceptions. He acknowledged with the clandestine questioner that they would continue to disagree with each other's views on abortion and neither would most likely be able to convince the other.

That questioner wasn't the only one who "snuck" into the meeting, which was supposed to be only for members of the Puget Sound Conservative Underground who previously RSVP'ed. (Due to the meeting room only having 50 chairs, seating was limited and the RSVPs were necessary.) Nevertheless, others who appeared at the meeting uninvited included a young man paid by the Democrats to get "dirt" on Dino and the other candidates when they speak at events. This didn't seem to deter Dino, as he knew what this guy with the microphone hidden inside a notebook was doing, and yet continued to state decisively all the things Patty Murray has done, or hasn't done, that has helped create the economic mess we are in. It gave proof that once the campaigning heats up in September and October, Dino will be ready with points and counterpoints about Murray that will resonate with the voting public.

One of the cons laid on Dino to respond to is a perception from some that he appears to not have enough "passion." Obviously referring to his Republican counterpart Clint Didier, but not naming him, Dino said he is not a yeller or screamer. When he got things accomplished in Olympia,

fellow politicians relied on him to calmly and decisively get things done. That is why he was referred to as "the rock." He then went on to explain his success of conservative budget-setting while in the State Senate. He urged those who are wondering about his record to go check his accomplishments when he was in Olympia. So I did just that.

I found out that in 2003, State Senator Rossi wrote the most frugal state budget in recent memory. He had two basic choices – raise taxes or cut the budget. As the lead budget negotiator for the majority Senate Republicans, Rossi chose to cut the budget. Working with Democrat Gary Locke, Rossi won over enough moderate Democratic legislators to pass a budget without general tax increases. In the budget, Rossi made sure to protect services for the mentally ill and developmentally disabled that Locke proposed cutting.

By the way, that same year, the right-leaning Washington Conservative Union gave Rossi a score of 100% for his supporting their agenda, including his opposition to bolster gay rights and his support for keeping the minimum wage from growing too large. Conversely, for his years in the State Senate, the left-leaning Washington State Labor Council gave Rossi a 6% approval score. This rating would be considered "a trophy" to any true conservative.

Finally, Rossi addressed a criticism that he lost the last Governor's race "badly" (of course, we all know he "won" the initial race) and lost momentum with the voters in a statewide race over the course of those four years from 2004 to 2008. He reminded us that in the year of the Obama landslide in Washington State, where Obama carried the state by 18%, Rossi came within 6% of unseating an incumbent Democrat. That was a remarkable achievement.

After our vetting session, many PSCU members who came in skeptical if Rossi should get their support, came away impressed. One said, "This was my first chance to see Dino in action and to explain his position, which was well handled. It was interesting to see Murray supporters trying to create subtle problems for Dino."

Another said, "I'm voting for Dino Rossi because I think he has the best chance of beating Patty Murray. He comes from humble beginnings and has become successful in business. All of that says a lot. He has already proven himself to stand up to pressure from liberals, and he has experience in getting things done, in government and in his business. Finally, he will work with Art Coday who has experience with Medicare/Medicaid patients to bring about a workable solution the healthcare."

A third PSCU member said afterward she likes that Dino, "Has the ability to take the heat, as other new candidates have not been tested. His voting record proves he's conservative and not a RINO. His calm personality depicts strength - a rock - not a raucous, arms-waving personality. I, personally, thought he looked healthy, composed and self-assured."

And as for me, I firmly believe Dino Rossi is a "smart" conservative, who

doesn't come across too right-wing in our left-wing state. I believe he will stand by his conservative principles and not disappoint us conservatives with any Scott Brown-type of votes (such as with the recent, fiscal Dodd-Frank bill). All the while, Mr. Rossi will be admired by independent and moderate voters as an adept candidate who has a proven track record for fiscal matters and just might be able to help us get out of our economic mess. The economy is the number one concern of voters, and a candidate who is strong in this department, with a positive track record, will be a front-runner in November. A Washington State candidate too far to the right and too vocal on social conservative matters, will confuse the debate with Murray, and move the focus away from the economy, which is just what the Democrats want to happen. A debate on social conservative issues will turn-off the influential moderate/independent voters in King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties, which are the determining counties in a statewide election.

The bottom line is we need to make sure Patty Murray is out and a conservative is in after November, and Rossi gives us the best chance of accomplishing this fundamental objective. With Dino's willingness to meet with the grassroots and his ability to connect with us on conservative principles, my fellow conservatives who are skeptics should discard the false "RINO" charges and quit considering Mr. Rossi the enemy. We cannot afford to fight among ourselves and put down Dino so that another Republican candidate might be able to climb over a beaten carcass. The enemy is not Rossi, it's Murray. The enemy is also the Socialist-targeted direction our country is headed. Sunday's meeting with Dino and the Puget Sound Conservative Underground will hopefully put a stop to the Dino-Dumping that is out there in some conservative corners, and instead bring on the Patty-Pounding.

**--Dan Michael**

Organizer of the Puget Sound Conservative Underground  
(<http://www.meetup.com/PugetSoundConservativeUnderground/> and on Facebook)