



PART III Campaign Research

Unnamed vs. Gil Gutknecht District 1 – Southeast Minnesota

This is going to be a hard race to win. Gil Gutknecht has dominated the 1st Congressional District of Minnesota ever since Tim Penny left office in 1994, and he has not left much opportunity for opposition to sneak in and steal the race. For Unnamed to take this election, he will have to relate directly with almost all of the citizens of the 1st district. The candidate must also be able to make the policy issues personal to the people of the first district of Minnesota.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Essential characteristics of the 1st district challenger include:

- ⇒ Rural MN roots
- ⇒ Able to relate to the voters personally (blue collar, white collar, professionals ~ young and old)
- ⇒ Strong family values
- ⇒ Ties to farming communities ~ able to understand the agricultural needs of the district
- ⇒ Great story teller
- ⇒ No secrets that could work to our opponent's advantage if exposed

The ideal candidate would closely resemble Gutknecht: a male who was born and raised on a family farm, in one of the counties with low democratic voter turnout. My ideal candidate would be from Winona, a competitive county with only 70% total voter turnout (PART I). This demographic should enable my candidate to increase voter turnout in that county as well as in surrounding competitive counties.

For optimal appeal, Unnamed should have a last name of German heritage to reflect the large percentage of the population of German descent. Unnamed will also need to relate with residents of Olmsted County, a large Republican-dominated county in the 1st District. A candidate who is a retired physician and married to a school teacher would present an image that understands the needs of blue collar workers as well as teachers and professionals. A childhood spent on a farm will connect him to the large agricultural base in the district, and his many years as a family physician will connect him to the broad base of health care workers in the city of Rochester.

Winona is a medium-sized, river-front town, located along the Mississippi River, approximately 100 miles south of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Unnamed grew up enjoying a rustic lifestyle and a respect for the environment. He is a year-round outdoor enthusiast -- ice fishing trips every winter with his extended family, hunting pheasants in the fall with his eldest son, and sailing in local races during the summer. It will be important to portray Unnamed as a happily married family man with children who attended public schools (including current enrollment in the University of Minnesota). He will be able to relate to the families in the 1st district of MN that have to juggle work and family, as well as double-digit increases in college tuition. It is crucial for my candidate to embody the rural, conservative lifestyle typically enjoyed by the people of southern Minnesota.

As discussed in class, there is nothing more powerful than a good story to resonate with voters. A candidate with the story telling ability of Bill Clinton or Ronald Reagan would be an effective opponent to the eloquent speeches Gil Gutknecht is known to deliver.

With these characteristics, Unnamed will be able to appeal to a broad range of voters and hopefully will be able to reach across party lines with his conservative upbringing. This is crucial to building a strong campaign that could upset Gil Gutknecht.

POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE

- ⇒ Democrats dominated elected offices in the 1st District until 1994 when Gutknecht took the seat in the House.
- ⇒ Gutknecht has been reelected with ease every election
- ⇒ Partisan ties are not a reliable indicator of voter response
- ⇒ High voter turnout is expected in the 2004 election

Without a doubt, this is going to be a tough election. As a popular incumbent, Gutknecht clearly is the favorite, but even his seat is not safe in this election (PART I). Voters in the first district are as polarized as the rest of the country by the current Bush Administration, and there is evidence of a strong "get out the vote" push. Minnesota has been labeled a battleground state, and President Bush and Senator Kerry have made multiple trips to the 1st District (which was unheard of four years ago). The political atmosphere is tense, so the voter turnout can be expected to be quite high and partisan ties will be tested.

Unnamed is clearly the underdog in this electoral race. He will need to shape a strategy that capitalizes on unique opportunities in the 1st District and benefits from Gutknecht's weaknesses. Unnamed will want to run a moderate campaign that does not push divisive liberal issues. Also, blatant attack ads on the popular incumbent may likely backfire if Unnamed has not already built a large following of supporters.

The best way for Unnamed to succeed in this tense political atmosphere is to discuss issues that resonate with the people of Southern Minnesota. He will want to echo Gutknecht's conservative values while giving voters a viable alternative to a candidate that consistently votes along Republican Party lines. Unnamed can attract both Democrats and Republicans with a strategy that exploits voter dissatisfaction with the current Republican platform.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- ⇒ **Plan of Attack: Aggressive.**
Open positive → Go negative before the opposition does → Respond to opposition attacks as necessary → Close on dual track positive/comparative
- ⇒ **Timing: Bookend.**
Open big and loud → Then, a slow steady build → Close big and loud
- ⇒ **Mobilization: The Marion Barry.**
Reinforce base > Enlarge base → Then turn it out
- ⇒ **Opportunity:**
 - **Pincer Maneuver.**
Get opposition into a position they cannot escape without suffering losses
 - **Machine Gun Attack.**
Attack opponent on Item #1 → As opponent begins to respond to Item #1, attack opponent on unrelated Item #2 → As opponent begins to respond to Item #2, attack opponent on Item #3 (Faucheux 54-61)

The plan of attack must ring true to the theme of the campaign. Negative ads are not effective if they do not strike a chord with voters. Ads that relate the voter back to Unnamed's positive theme will have a greater level of effectiveness (Panel 2 presentation). Each attack on Gutknecht must reinforce the theme that Unnamed is the best representative for the 1st district of Minnesota.

As the challenger, it is important that Unnamed have a chance to make a name for himself before he is discredited by the popular incumbent (publicity which is nearly impossible to turn around). The Aggressive Attack is the most viable approach because it will enable Unnamed to open on a positive note and begin to build his base. Unnamed can then turn around and attack Gutknecht before he has a chance to discredit him. (Faucheux 54)

Unnamed should use a Bookend campaign strategy, where he opens big to get his name and message out, then proceeds to build name and issue recognition, and then closes with a bang. Unnamed would need to fundraise successfully early in the campaign. Since Unnamed is a retired physician, he could turn to his colleagues for financial support early in the race. Once he has established name recognition, it will be much easier for him to increase his fundraising and close with a bang. (Faucheux 55-56)

Since electoral races across the board in the first district are very competitive, getting partisan voters to turn out does not guarantee a win. Instead, Unnamed must take the Marion Barry strategy to mobilize voters, which is optimal for close races. With this strategy, Unnamed has to reinforce his partisan base, then enlarge that base by reaching over partisan lines, and follow through with getting those voters to the polls on November 2nd. (Faucheux 58)

Attack ads need to tie back to the theme of the campaign in order to be effective. They also need to be structured in a way that makes them difficult for the opposition to refute. Unnamed can capitalize on the Pincer Maneuver as well as the Machine Gun Attack methods.

- The **Pincer Maneuver** can be used by Unnamed to attack Gutknecht's stand on taxes. In this approach, Unnamed could corner Gutknecht by asking him, "Isn't it true that 1/3 of the tax cut you passed went to 80% of American taxpayers?" As Gutknecht begins to explain this statement, Unnamed would respond with, "Then you cannot deny that 2/3 of the tax break you passed went to the top 20% of the wealthiest Americans." Unnamed can then close the attack by saying that representing Minnesotan values does not entail taking money away from elementary schools and giving it to the wealthiest Americans that do not live in the 1st district of Minnesota. (Faucheux 59-60)
- The **Machine Gun Attack** is another effective approach for Unnamed because he has many issues upon which to attack Gutknecht. He can relate these issues back to the theme of the campaign which is best representing the values of southern Minnesota.

For example, Unnamed can attack Gutknecht on the issue of education because Gutknecht supports school vouchers which benefit the rich and undermine the public education system. Once Gutknecht responds to the education attack, Unnamed can follow-up with an attack on Gutknecht's health care plan that also benefits the rich at the expense of average southern Minnesotans. As Gutknecht defends his health care plan, Unnamed continues the attack cycle by shifting to Gutknecht's endorsement of the "Unfair Tax" that again disproportionately advantages the wealthiest Americans. When Gutknecht attempts to respond to this attack, Unnamed can deliver the final blow which is that Gutknecht is disconnected from Minnesotan voters because he is simply a puppet for the Republican Party, adhering to party lines and even reaching beyond the most conservative in Congress (re: Fair Tax plan) (Faucheux 61)

THEME

- ⇒ Gutknecht is a party wonk, out of touch with true Minnesotans
- ⇒ Unnamed must be portrayed as a true Minnesotan who will best represent MN values

The theme or message of a campaign must make a connection with the public and give voters a reason to support the candidate. The theme will be referred to throughout the campaign and must show voters why Unnamed is the right guy to be elected and that Gutknecht is the wrong candidate for the job. The message should position Unnamed's strengths against the opponent's weaknesses. Throughout the campaign, Unnamed should work to enhance the differences that benefit his chances of getting votes, and he should work to blur the differences that would hurt his standings in the polls. (Guber)

A plausible theme for candidate Unnamed could be:

UNNAMED FOR CONGRESS
It's time for a Democratic choice

Or, an equally bland but encompassing theme could be:

UNNAMED FOR CONGRESS
He understands Minnesotan values.

Or, Unnamed could adopt a funny theme for the campaign that plays on the idiosyncrasy of a common Minnesotan children's game, "Duck, Duck, Grey Duck" (every other state in the US calls this game "Duck, Duck, Goose"). Only a *true* Minnesotan would understand the meaning of:

IT'S DUCK, DUCK, GREY DUCK
UNNAMED FOR US CONGRESS

This theme gets the message across in a light-hearted way that every parent can share with their child. Unnamed understands family life in Minnesota. Unnamed will be able to use humor in many different ways as he refers back to this message, reinforcing how in touch he is with southern Minnesota. This theme also plays off of a weakness of Gutknecht who grew up in Iowa, not Minnesota (and therefore wouldn't play the game the same way). Unnamed will show Gutknecht as someone who is busy in Washington, supporting the Republican Party, but clearly not in touch with southern Minnesota values.

This is not a "traditional" candidate theme – and that could work in Unnamed's favor since cheesy is back in style. Today's voters are turned off by the predictable nature of campaign speeches. This catchy and recognizable theme will attract the attention of voters and cause them to take the time to learn more about Unnamed and his stand on issues. In addition, this fun theme will bring some spice back to politics and make

Minnesotans smile as they drive past campaign signs that make them remember their childhood when they too played Duck, Duck, Grey Duck.

This theme also lends itself to many different creative opportunities. With this theme, Unnamed will be able to create an endearing visual image of children playing this game. He could also have media coverage showing him playing Duck, Duck, Grey Duck with children and then discussing the importance of education in southern Minnesota. With this theme, Unnamed can tie in his platform on education, taxes, health care, and family values. These issues strike a chord with Minnesotans, who believe in the importance of a good education as well as strong family values (Part I). Unnamed could also use this theme to portray himself as the “grey duck”, the one being selected to head off to Washington and represent all of the other ducks. A reference to ducks, and the visual image, would also appeal to outdoorsmen and hunters where Unnamed shares a common interest.

Of course, this theme could backfire with residents who were not originally from Minnesota, but as seen in Part I, most of the citizens living in the 1st district grew up in Minnesota. There is also the potential that this theme will not help Unnamed to be taken seriously as a candidate, and he would have to balance this risk by delivering powerful speeches that demonstrate his understanding of Minnesotan values. But it is a very catchy theme, and one that could easily slide into speeches without becoming repetitive and dull. This theme would definitely catch the attention of the younger generation and appeal to families with young children.

The following themes could be tested on a target audience for appeal:

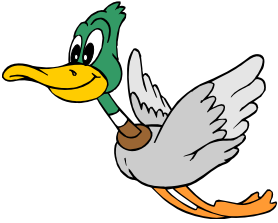
IT'S DUCK, DUCK, GREY DUCK



SEND UNNAMED TO THE US CONGRESS

Or

IT'S DUCK, DUCK, GREY DUCK



UNNAMED
FLYING HIGH TO SUPPORT **YOU** IN CONGRESS

Or

IT'S DUCK, DUCK, GREY DUCK



UNNAMED
WILLING TO FLY THAT EXTRA MILE
TO REPRESENT **YOU** IN CONGRESS

ISSUES TO BE DEVELOPED

⇒ Education

K-12 education is very important in the first district of Minnesota, as seen in the high rates of high school graduation (Part I). The voters have also passed numerous referendums to increase taxes so that the schools can have the funds necessary for a positive learning environment.

No Child Left Behind has not had a positive impact on schools in Minnesota. Being named as a failing school with failing teachers does not instill confidence to educate or pride in the local communities. Unnamed's platform will emphasize the need to make sure schools are given the necessary funding to improve instead of throwing labels and tests at schools that do nothing to fix the problem.

The issue of education should be a cornerstone of Unnamed's campaign because it is very salient to Minnesota's first district. It is a topic that needs to be addressed because educating our children is one of the most important requirements of a society, and it cannot be taken lightly.

- Gutknecht has only supported the National Education Assn 8% of time (Part II).
- Gutknecht also voted for the *No Child Left Behind Act*, which is filled with unfunded mandates that do not fix the problems faced by public education today.
- Gutknecht supports school vouchers that take money out of public schools and into private schools. This benefits families who are wealthy enough to send their children to private prep schools but disadvantages average Minnesotans and perpetuates the problem of "failing" public schools.

⇒ Taxes

Every citizen cares about taxes and how they will be directly affected by changes in the tax code. In Minnesota, voters want a congressman that will represent them instead of big businesses that benefit from tax loopholes. Unnamed should expand on the issue of taxes because Gutknecht is susceptible to criticism about Bush's tax cut that disproportionately favored the wealthy. This would give Unnamed appeal to the average MN citizen, along with Independent and moderate Republican voters.

- "Gil Gutknecht has consistently supported the President in giving budget-busting tax breaks to the super-rich, contrary to his pledge that he would never vote for an unbalanced budget when he signed Newt Gingrich's Contract with America." (<http://www.pomeroyformn.org/resources.asp?ResourceID=130>)
- Gutknecht's Fair Tax
- Critics of a consumption-based sales tax say adding a levy at the point of sale would likely lead to less consumer spending, thereby worsening a weakened economy. Also, they say a national sales tax would have to be astronomical for the government to collect its current level of revenues.

- Opponents of a national retail sales tax say that the tax is regressive - the poor pay a larger percentage of their income on necessities.
- This is not the best representation of SE Minnesota

⇒ Health Care

Health care is an issue that touches every Minnesotan's life. Everyone needs health care benefits, and Unnamed needs to emphasize the importance of making affordable health care available to every citizen.

Gutknecht's endorsement of HSAs and MSAs are cause for great concern in southern Minnesota. The issues discussed in Part II are largely unknown by constituents of the 1st district. Unnamed must educate the voters about what exactly the health savings accounts entail and how Gutknecht's plan does not best represent the needs of average Minnesotans.

- Some economists worry that Health and Medical Savings Accounts will become just another tax shelter for wealthy people.
- Opponents believe the accounts potentially could undermine the health insurance risk pool by pulling young, healthy patients out of the comprehensive coverage market.
- HSAs and MSAs are just another attempt to transfer Medicare responsibilities to the private marketplace. Democrats on the Senate Joint Economic Committee said the accounts would be of little use to low-income families.
- "A married couple with two young children contributing to an HSA next year, for example, would not receive any tax benefit unless their income was at least \$26,425," stated the committee Democrats' analysis. "Families with incomes moderately above that level would see minimal tax savings. Most of the tax benefits from HSAs go to higher-income families."

⇒ Agriculture

The Midwest dominates the agriculture frontier. This rings especially true to the 1st District where dairy and farming communities are prevalent. Gutknecht has a clear advantage here since he holds a position on the Agriculture Committee in Congress. It is important for Unnamed to echo Gutknecht on agricultural issues and play off his experience living on a farm. Unnamed can show that while he agrees with Gutknecht's hard work for agriculture, Unnamed would better represent Minnesota farmers because he also grew up on a farm and knows what is important to help family farms be successful.

- According to Pomeroy for Congress, Gutknecht's record is not 100% clean on agriculture. For example, 71% of crop subsidies go to only 10% of American agricultural producers.

- Gil Gutknecht has voted against subsidy caps and country-of-origin labeling, both of which would benefit Minnesota's small farmers.
(<http://www.pomeroyformn.org/resources.asp?ResourceID=130>)

BUDGET & FUNDRAISING

- Gutknecht = \$850,000 (Part II)
- Need for Unnamed to fundraise aggressively early in campaign and continue to fundraise as he builds momentum throughout the campaign.
- Look to labor groups, education providers and civil liberty organizations for funds (Part II)
 1. Planned Parenthood
 2. National Education Association
 3. AFL-CIO
 4. United Auto Workers (UAW)
 5. American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
 6. Education Minnesota
 7. Clean Water Action

In the attached file, Figure 1 shows a sample budget from a small, city council race. Clearly the funds necessary to compete in a congressional race against an incumbent are much greater, but the outline designating funds to each campaign activity is beneficial to any campaign. Unnamed should allot funds to media stations throughout the area, focusing on competitive areas. He also needs to assess the costs of advertising signs.




Following a Bookend campaign strategy, fundraising early in the campaign is crucial. Unnamed should be able to build on his network of contacts from his past occupation as a physician. As discussed in class, a doctor seeking public office could get his foot in the door by asking ten of his closest colleagues for a \$10,000 donation. And violate federal election law?

Because Unnamed is competing against a well-funded, popular incumbent, in order to compete, Unnamed will need to raise a significant amount of money. While there is no set limit, he would certainly want a goal higher than that of Gutknecht's current opponent, Leigh Pomeroy (see Figure 5 below). If Unnamed could begin the race with \$100,000 donated from his colleagues, he would be in good shape for a strong start, and if he managed his money well, he could compete with Gutknecht throughout the election.

Figure 5¹ Total Raised and Spent

2004 RACE: MINNESOTA DISTRICT 1

Gil Gutknecht (R)*

Raised:  \$789,220
Spent:  \$393,782
Cash on hand:  \$582,691
Last Report: 9/30/2004

Leigh Charles Pomeroy (D)

Raised:  \$42,975
Spent:  \$22,968
Cash on hand:  \$20,006
Last Report: 9/30/2004

Opensecrets. 20 Oct 2004. <http://www.opensecrets.org/races/summary.asp?ID=MN01&Cycle=2004>.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

A well-organized campaign is crucial so that the candidate does not get behind or lost at any point in the mayhem of running for office. In Catherine Shaw's, The Campaign Manager, she describes quite clearly the best plan for anyone seeking public office. Her strategy is designed for someone with 14 months to campaign, which is an appropriate amount of time for a US House of Representatives election. Table 1 shows the layout Unnamed will follow in his campaign.

Also, from Shaw's, The Campaign Manager, are other helpful organizational tools. In the attached file, Figure 3 shows an organizational plan for the last 5 months leading up to Election Day. Unnamed should create a large flow chart much like this one so that his campaign team knows exactly what goals need to be accomplished during that month.

Again, in the attached Adobe file, Figure 4 illustrates how a huge calendar can be an effective tool for organizing schedules and to-do lists. Using common organizational tools will help Unnamed to keep his campaign team organized, informed and efficient.

¹ Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 are in the attached Adobe file

Works Cited

Faucheux, Ronald A. Running for Office. M. Evans & Company Inc.: New York. 2002.

Guber, Susan. How to Win Your 1st Election. 2nd ed. St. Lucie Press: Boca Raton, FL. 1997.

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Shaw, Catherine. The Campaign Manager. 2nd ed. Westview Press; Boulder, CO. 2000.