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THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



Hughes Policy Center at Stockton College Asks: “Will the Gloves Ever Stay on in American Political Campaigns?”

Civility Panel Looks at Negativity in Campaigns, Advertisements

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Galloway Township, NJ- America is a nation where democracy is celebrated, yet political campaigning has become increasingly nasty. Negative print and broadcast ads, misleading attacks and unflattering pictures of opponents are just a few of the tactics that have become standard fare in both local and national elections. The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey’s William J. Hughes Center on Public Policy brought together a stellar panel of public officials and experts to examine if American politics can ever return to a more civil tone.

The open forum, which took place Thursday, Nov. 13 and moderated by Hughes Center Director Sharon Schulman asked the question, “Can Campaigners Ever Leave the Gloves On?” Attempting to find answers were Professor of Political Science at Stockton College, Dr. Alan Arcuri; Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein (D-District 14); President of Salmon Ventures, Richard Mroz, Esq.; Mayor of Egg Harbor Township James J. McCullough (R); and New Jersey Senator Jim Whelan (D-District 2).

The panelists drew on their own experiences and discussed possibilities for more civil campaigns in the future. It was noted that in several other democracies, limits have been placed on negativity in political advertising. The panel looked at the recent presidential campaign and noted that four out of ten Obama ads and seven of ten from McCain were characterized as negative. Some of the specific ads were scrutinized in which several true, but incomplete statements were made about the opponent. The complete version of the truth on each issue was shown as well as the distortion occurring as a by-product of the incomplete version.

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They also looked at issues such as topics that should be off-limits to negative campaigning, the media's role in negative campaigns, and the degree of responsibility to which candidates should be held for the statements and actions of their supporters.

Each panelist answered questions from faculty members, students and other members of the audience at the conclusion of the event. The complete panel can be seen on the Hughes Center Web site at www.stockton.edu/hughescenter.

The William J. Hughes Center is an independent catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on economic, social and political issues facing Southern New Jersey.

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