

Young alumna runs for state Assembly seat

By Aleks Tzatzev / Associate News Editor | Posted: Thursday, October 27, 2011 12:00 am

Sara Rosengarten was working toward her law degree at the Rutgers-Newark School of Law and as a fellow at the Eagleton Institute of Politics last year. Now she is vying for an office in Trenton.

Alongside John Genovesi, another Republican candidate, she is running for an Assembly seat in District 36, challenging incumbent Gary Schaer, D-36, and Marlene Caride.

Rosengarten, 25, is the youngest candidate in New Jersey and will face stiff competition in a district, which has traditionally been blue with Schaer and Sen. Paul Sarlo, D-36, as incumbents.

For her undergraduate education, Rosengarten graduated magna cum laude in 2008 from the University, with a double major in political science and women's studies. She graduated in 2011 from Rutgers-Newark School of Law.

"At Rutgers, I was given a very strong academic background," she said. "From the political science perspective, I was able to explore academically the various levels of government."

In addition to academics, Rosengarten worked in the Office of Legislative Services, the nonpartisan research office of N.J. government.

John Weingart, associate director at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, said he remembered Rosengarten from last fall semester.

"She was a law student, and as an Eagleton fellow, she took a course here on state legislature in the fall semester," he said. "We are always happy to see students who have gone through Eagleton getting involved in government."

Rosengarten, who is arguably the face of a younger generation of state politicians, said younger people and especially students are underrepresented in government.

"What you notice is there is a stark lack of younger people being represented," Rosengarten said. "We make up a large portion of the population in the state, and we have issues that affect us that aren't being addressed."

She said she feels like she is joining "an old boys' club," but her age could be a positive as young people go to vote this November.

Some of the major issues, Rosengarten said, were lowering taxes, creating jobs and amending public school choice.

Rosengarten said if the state were to get out of the financial slump, taxes must be lowered for both individuals and corporations in the hopes of returning businesses to the state and retaining valuable workers.

"Graduating students in the states are coming out with tons of loans, and I know personally, my friends leave the state ... because taxes are so high, and they can't afford to stay," she said.

She said corporate taxes also drove small businesses out of the state, leaving fewer jobs for college graduates and causing for further economic woes for New Jersey.

"It just doesn't make any sense having the No.1 highest taxes in the country when we don't return on it anymore, when it's too expensive to live here," she said. "This really affected me personally."

Her opponent Schaer addressed the issue of home foreclosures by supporting a consumer-protection bill titled, "The Foreclosure Rescue Fraud Prevention Act," according to a N.J. Assembly Democrats press release.

"Assemblyman Gary S. Schaer (D-Passaic) ... urged Gov. [Chris] Christie to sign a measure he has sponsored to

protect beleaguered homeowners from predatory foreclosure consultants,” according to the press release.

Rosengarten also plans on addressing school choice in New Jersey and especially the Abbott schools in lower-income districts funding.

She said former Gov. Jon S. Corzine had instituted a move, which funded these schools through a federal government stimulus.

“This was created to operate on a deficit,” Rosengarten said. “What happens is that the individual municipalities are left to fund these schools, which is then derived from our property taxes.”

Another problem in the state are failing schools, but the solution is not throwing more money at the issue, she said.

“If you look at the failing school districts in the past 15 years, we see that every year we put a few thousand in the failing schools, their scores actually fell down,” Rosengarten said.

She disagreed with the general trend of taxpayers paying for “experiments” the state does in its educational system funding.

“Most of time, the money doesn’t even make it into the classrooms,” she said.

Rosengarten said while with private schools, parents have the option of moving their children to a better one if unsatisfied, they do not have the same option with public schools because they are already paying a lot of money on property taxes.

Rosengarten will share the ticket with Genovesi as the two challenge Schaer and Caride for the two seats — one of which is currently empty.

“One of the missions of the institute is to teach students to recognize that politics and government are an important part of their lives,” Weingart said. “From time to time we have those who run for office, and we are always happy to see that happen.”