

The 2002 Arizona First Congressional District Race

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Both Republicans and Democrats held great hope to take the open House seat in the newly-created Arizona First Congressional District. The primary election featured fifteen candidates running in three primary elections: Democratic, Republican, and Libertarian. Three newcomers to politics emerged from the primary. The general election was an uphill battle between two major party candidates who moved into the newly created election district to run for the open House seat. In the end, Rick Renzi, the Republican candidate, beat George Cordova, the Democratic candidate, by just 6,000 votes (3.6 percent), despite outspending Cordova three to one. Edwin Porr, the Libertarian candidate, received a surprising 5.1 percent of the vote even though he raised little money and was virtually absent from the public stage during the entire election. The story of the 2002 Arizona First Congressional District election is driven largely by primary election dynamics.

Inside the First Congressional District

Arizona's First Congressional District was newly created by an Independent Redistricting Commission following the 2000 Census.² The district sprawls over more than 58,000 square miles, including most of the northern and eastern portions of the state. The district is larger than the states of Illinois and Pennsylvania. In fact, it is the largest congressional district in the nation that does not encompass an entire state. It includes six complete counties and a significant portion of two others. By design, it is an all-rural district.³ The largest city within the district is Flagstaff, with a population of almost 54,000, according to the revised 2000 Census.

The district encompasses a wide variety of interests, including a large service sector, mining and ranching interests, a large university and several robust community colleges, a sizeable science community, and a large number of retirees. Almost a third of the district's population (34 percent) is Native American or Hispanic American.⁴ The district was designed to be competitive, and both parties placed great hope in capturing this new House seat.⁵ While Democrats have an eight-point registration advantage within the district,⁶ Republicans typically turn out a larger number of voters, and conservative Democrats do not hesitate to vote for Republican candidates. According to an analysis by Cook Political Report, voters within the district supported George Bush over Al Gore in the 2000 election by approximately 11,000 votes.⁷ On the other hand, district voters supported Bill Clinton over Bob Dole in 1996, 47 percent to 38 percent.

¹ The authors wish to thank Kristi Hagen, Karin Ross, Dennis Luna, Katharyn Lyon, Russ Masco, Kara Oehler, M. Christopher Stringer, and Isaac Thompson for their research assistance.

² Arizona voters supported Proposition 106 in 2000 calling for an Independent Redistricting Commission. The work of the redistricting commission can be found at "On-Line Information Center," *Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission*, 2001. At <www.azredistricting.org> 16 January 2003.

³ There was no clear understanding among the candidates about what it means to represent "rural" interests. See Adam Candee, "So Just What is 'Rural?'" *Arizona Daily Sun*, 18 August 2002, A1.

⁴ "Final Congressional Plan," *Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission*, 2001. At <www.azredistricting.org/final/congfinal.pdf>, 6 January 2003.

⁵ Jim Pederson, Arizona Democratic Party Director, telephone interview by Fred Solop, 10 December 2002.

⁶ "Final Congressional Plan," *Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission*.

⁷ "May 28, 2002 House Update Part One: AZ 01," *Cook Political Report*, 2002. At <www.cookpolitical.com/display.cfm?edit_id=31>, 6 January 2003.

Running in a large rural district, candidates had to pay attention to multiple media markets. The Phoenix market, while outside the congressional district, bleeds into the district, often through cable TV. Phoenix media was expensive for the candidates and time was hard to come by as the 2002 Arizona election also featured a high-profile gubernatorial race and three Indian gaming propositions. The gaming propositions alone involved \$39 million in spending.⁸ Cable and radio spots were relatively cheap throughout the district, but, given the grand size of the region, spots had to be purchased on many small stations. The size of the district, the lack of one central media market, and the need for relatively unknown candidates to gain name recognition combined to drive campaign spending to astonishing heights.

The Candidates

The dynamics of the Arizona First Congressional District primary election set the stage for the general election campaign. Arizona was one of several states that held a late primary in 2002, on September 10. Given the wide-open nature of the race, the primary election was an opportunity for a variety of candidates to throw their hat in the ring. Seven candidates ran in the Democratic Primary: George Cordova, Fred DuVal, Roger Hartstone, Sam Martinez, Diane Prescott, Derrick Watchman, and Steve Udall. Six candidates ran in the Republican Primary: Alan Everett, Sydney Hay, Rick Renzi, David Stafford, Lewis Tenney, and Bruce Whiting. Two candidates ran in the Libertarian primary: Edwin Porr and Andy Fernandez.

On the Democratic side, Fred DuVal and Steve Udall were presumed by all to be the frontrunners. DuVal was a former Chief of Staff to former Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt (later Secretary of the Interior under President Bill Clinton) and a member of the Clinton White House staff. Udall hails from a notable family sometimes referred to as “the Kennedys of the West.”⁹ The Udall family includes Stewart Udall, Secretary of the Interior under President Kennedy; Mo Udall, long-time representative to the U.S. House from Arizona; and current Congressmen Tom Udall (D-N. Mex.) and Mark Udall (D-Colo.). Only DuVal and Udall hired professional political consultants to run their primary campaigns. Late polling in the primary election showed Diane Prescott, lawyer and businesswoman, to be another serious contender, having come from behind in the crowded Democratic primary field. Interestingly, the national and state Democratic parties chose to stay out of the primary election, largely because they did not want to alienate any of the candidates.

The 54,000 Democrats participating in the primary split their vote in many directions, allowing George Cordova, a virtually unknown candidate, to win the primary. Cordova scored a stunning upset victory, winning with 22 percent of the vote. Steve Udall, the next closest competitor, had 20 percent of the vote. Diane Prescott came in third with 18 percent of the vote and Fred DuVal was fourth with 16 percent of the vote.

Cordova was not on anyone’s radar screen. He ran a grassroots campaign, concentrating his efforts largely in areas with large minority populations. His campaign strategy involved eighteen months of trips to the Navajo reservation, meeting Navajos in chapter houses throughout northern Arizona. Peter MacDonald, former Navajo Nation President, served as one of his closest advisors. Cordova, a Latino candidate, also courted the vote of Latino Democrats in the district. He spent relatively little time during the primary in the vote-rich counties of Yavapai and Coconino.

⁸ John Stearns, “\$21.1 Million Spent Getting Voter Approval for Prop. 202,” *Arizona Republic*, 6 December 2002, B1.

⁹ This phrase comes from Ryan Hawkins, Steve Udall Campaign Manager, interview by Fred Solop, Flagstaff, Ariz., 23 August 2002.

On the Republican side, Rick Renzi was a relative newcomer to the district. He was a former football hero at Northern Arizona University (NAU) within the district, and had business holdings throughout the state. But shortly after graduating from NAU, Renzi had moved to the Washington, D.C., area where he resided for many years before buying a house in Flagstaff in October 2001.¹⁰ This led many to label him a “carpetbagger” during the election. Renzi was running against Republicans with deep roots in the district. Lewis Tenney had served on the Navajo County Board of Supervisors, and Alan Everett had been mayor of Sedona, Arizona.

Renzi was the presumed frontrunner in the race, largely because he had more funds to work with than other Republican candidates. Renzi outspent his primary opponents by a substantial sum of money. He invested \$585,000 of his own money and raised another \$100,000 to run radio and TV ads throughout the district.¹¹ He was the only Republican candidate to hire a professional campaign consultant: Joe Galli, a veteran of ten national campaigns who successfully managed several campaigns for Congressman J.D. Hayworth in the old Arizona Sixth Congressional District, parts of which overlapped with the new First District. National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) primary polls predicted that Renzi would win the election.¹² He ultimately succeeded in a race where the Republican vote was splintered among six candidates. Renzi received 24.4 percent of the 46,585 votes cast in the Republican primary, with half of his votes coming from one county—Yavapai.

George Cordova and Rick Renzi moved into the general election from different vantage points. Cordova had the advantage of a larger base of Democratic registrants and Democratic primary voters. Cordova’s base was in the less-populated Navajo and Hispanic American communities within the district. He was presumed to be secure in his support from Apache, Navajo, Pinal, Graham, Greenlee, and Gila counties. Cordova’s weakness, however, was that he did not run a district-wide primary campaign, and was relatively unknown in the more populated Coconino and Yavapai counties. Cordova needed to establish a solid relationship with more traditional Democrats who would have been more comfortable with a DuVal or Udall win. On the other hand, Renzi hit the ground running and had district-wide name recognition the day after the primary election. Though much of his support was concentrated within one county (Yavapai), he had achieved name recognition throughout the district. Renzi’s big challenge, however, was to shed the “carpetbagger” label and prove that he was well-acquainted with the interests of the whole district. He had to make a case for being the best person to represent the district in Washington.

The Arizona First Congressional District was listed in the May 2002 Cook Political Report as among the most competitive House races nationwide.¹³ This assessment proved accurate, as a *Grand Canyon State Poll*, conducted with likely voters by the Social Research Laboratory at Northern Arizona University just after the primary election in September, found that Cordova and Renzi each had 37 percent support in the district.¹⁴ The same poll showed Renzi with greater

¹⁰ “House Hopefuls Funding Their Own Campaigns,” *Arizona Daily Sun*, 1 September 2002, A1. Rick Renzi’s partner and ten of his twelve children continue to reside in Burke, Va.

¹¹ Adam Candee, “Renzi Loans Campaign \$585,000 to Outspend Rivals,” *Arizona Daily Sun*, 21 July 2002, A2.

¹² Steve Schmidt, NRCC, telephone interview by Fred Solop, 13 November 2002.

¹³ “May 28, 2002 House Update Part One: AZ 01,” *Cook Political Report*, 2002.

¹⁴ “Arizona CD 1 Election: Cordova and Renzi Tied in Support,” *Northern Arizona University Social Research Laboratory*, press release, 17 September 2002. At <www.nau.edu/srl/09-17-02.pdf>, 1 November 2002.

name recognition (27 percent of respondents were able to name Rick Renzi as the Republican candidate, as opposed to 11 percent being able to identify George Cordova as the Democratic Party candidate) and Republican Party registrants outnumbered Democrats among likely voters by three percent. But the poll showed that Democrats were holding steady with their party's candidate and Independents were throwing their weight behind Cordova.

The dynamics of the election soon shifted as Renzi continued to outraise and outspend Cordova. The White House targeted the district and sent President Bush to Arizona twice to support Renzi, raising \$250,000 for the candidate.¹⁵ Vice President Cheney also came to Phoenix and raised \$100,000 at a luncheon for Renzi.¹⁶ Cordova's campaign failed to gain momentum in the district. Lacking the money necessary for launching a district-wide publicity campaign, Cordova continued to emphasize a grassroots approach to the election. Once the Republicans launched a negative campaign against Cordova, he was never able to move away from allegations of swindling and tax fraud associated with his business endeavors. In the end, a backlash to negative campaigning narrowed Renzi's lead. Rick Renzi ultimately prevailed in the election by 3.6 percentage points.

The Parties

Both the national and state Republican and Democratic parties were reluctant to commit to any particular candidate during the primary elections. There were too many candidates running and the outcome of both primaries was uncertain. The NRCC conversed with the Renzi campaign throughout the primary election, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) maintained contact with Fred DuVal and Steve Udall, assuming that one of these candidates would win.

The NRCC expected Rick Renzi to win the Republican primary; it did not expect George Cordova to win the Democratic primary. In fact, they knew nothing about Cordova the day after the primary. NRCC research at the end of the primary election showed that Renzi would start the general election 17 percentage points behind if DuVal or Udall won the Democratic primary.¹⁷ A DuVal or Udall win would likely have triggered the NRCC to step out of the race and not fund the Republican candidate.

But a different scenario played out. After Cordova won, the NRCC immediately conducted opposition research. This research revealed serious concerns about Cordova's business record. Following this research, the NRCC committed approximately \$1.9 million to the district without hesitation.¹⁸ It ran two TV ads, produced and distributed thirteen mailers, and sent several NRCC staff persons to the district throughout the general election. The state Republican Party followed the NRCC's lead and committed an additional \$500,000 to TV ads and approximately \$80,000 to produce and distribute another twelve mailers in the district.

By the beginning of October, the NRCC began running negative ads that took heavy swings at the integrity of George Cordova, whom they accused of swindling investors in his venture capital efforts and failing to pay taxes to the federal government. The Republicans also ran a more subtle

¹⁵ Gary Ghioto, "Renzi's Bush take: \$250K," *Arizona Daily Sun*, 1 October 2002, A1.

¹⁶ Howard Fischer, "GOP Now Touting Job Creation," *Arizona Daily Sun*, 15 October 2002, A1.

¹⁷ Schmidt, interview, 13 November 2002.

¹⁸ Estimates of the Republican commitment to the race ranged from \$2 million to \$4 million. Our research suggests the commitment to be closer to the \$2 million figure. Mike McElwain, NRCC Political Director, interview by David Magleby and Jonathan Tanner, Washington, D.C., 2 December 2002.

negative campaign. They distributed a mailer saying Cordova's "values are wrong for Arizona's families" because he had been endorsed by the Arizona Human Rights Fund, a gay-rights organization, in a 1994 race for the Arizona House.¹⁹ Also, a number of the NRCC TV ads and mailers featured darkened black-and-white images of Cordova that some Democrats found disturbing, if not racist.²⁰

Cordova responded to each of the explicit accusations, but was forever defined by the Republican attacks. Cordova failed to independently define what he stood for; instead, he simply continued to defend himself against what he was not. When a newspaper story pointed out the many "sins of omission and distortion" in the Republicans' attack ads, Renzi tried to distance himself from them, arguing that the negative ads were coming from the national Republican Party and that they were out of his control.²¹ Yet the Renzi campaign itself was sponsoring two television ads featuring similar negative attacks against Cordova.

The strategy of the state Republicans was to secure the Republican base for Renzi and then appeal to the values of conservative, white, male Democrats, mostly living in the eastern part of the district.²² This strategy proved successful, as the minority vote presumed to support Cordova became diluted by a Democratic crossover vote supporting Rick Renzi. Renzi went on to win five of the eight counties in the district. Four of these counties (Gila, Graham, Greenlee, and Pinal) were supposed to be secure Cordova territory.

The national Democrats hesitated in throwing their full support behind George Cordova. The party was taken off-guard by Cordova's surprise primary win, especially after officials from the DCCC had developed cozy relationships with Fred DuVal and Steve Udall.²³ Furthermore, there was bad blood flowing among the Democratic candidates following the primary.²⁴ Five of the six other Democratic candidates refused to endorse Cordova after the primary election. Several never returned his phone calls.²⁵ The Cordova campaign lost about ten days to two weeks of precious campaign time following the late primary as the national Democrats pondered what to do. Finally, Fred DuVal, the consummate insider, invited Terry McAuliffe, Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chair, to his house in Flagstaff and arranged for McAuliffe to meet Cordova. National Democrats signed on to supporting Cordova after this meeting.

The local buzz was that the national Democrats agreed to invest \$1.5 million in the Cordova campaign.²⁶ The national Democrats, working through the state party, distributed six mailers, ran

¹⁹ National Republican Congressional Committee, "Liberal Values Just Don't Fit With Arizona," political mailer, distributed October 2002.

²⁰ Mark Shaffer, "Top-ranking House Hispanic Attacks Attack Ads," *Arizona Republic*, 30 October 2002, B6.

²¹ Gary Ghioto, "Attack Ads on Cordova Don't Add Up," *Arizona Daily Sun*, 24 October 2002, A1.

²² Bryan Murray, Arizona Republican Party Executive Director, telephone interview by Fred Solop, 7 November 2002.

²³ The DCCC remained in telephone contact with the DuVal and Udall campaigns. Toward the end of the primary season, the DCCC also was in contact with Diane Prescott's campaign. The DCCC, however, did not actively support any candidacy during the Democratic primary.

²⁴ Several persons related to various campaigns mentioned this situation to Fred Solop, including Debbie Pardee, Diane Prescott's campaign manager, Ryan Hawkins, Steve Udall's campaign manager, and Michael Fries, regional coordinator for Fred DuVal.

²⁵ Jed Jorgenson, George Cordova Campaign Manager, interview by Fred Solop, Flagstaff, Ariz., 8 November 2002.

²⁶ Peggy Toomey, Northern Arizona Democratic Party Coordinator, interview by Fred Solop, Flagstaff, Ariz., 24 October 2002.

four TV ads, and also sent some staff members to the district. Toward the end of the campaign, Cindy Jimenez, communications assistant to Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi of California, took over the reins as campaign press secretary, and Dave Hunter, Western Region Field Coordinator for the DCCC, spent time in the First Congressional District. Notwithstanding this activity, the \$1.5 million commitment never materialized. Hunter claimed the national Democrats invested about \$600,000 in the Cordova campaign,²⁷ but state Democratic Party officials said the dollar commitment was much smaller.²⁸ One highly-placed state Democratic official said the combined spending of the DCCC, DNC, and state Democratic Party on Cordova's campaign was \$250,000. Other than four mailers, the money was largely used to fund one week of television ads during the last week of the election. The flow of money slowed as the prospects of a Cordova victory became more distant and national Democrats opted to concentrate resources on incumbents with better odds of winning.²⁹

The state Democrats waged an ambitious battle for the Arizona First Congressional District seat. Encouraged by early polls, the state Democrats originally thought they had a solid shot at taking this open seat. While they waited for cues from the national Democrats regarding level of support, state Democrats invested resources in Arizona's governor's race and in the First Congressional District race. Toward the end of the race, it was clear that turnout was going to be important. The Democrats mounted an elaborate get-out-the-vote (GOTV) operation. Jim Pederson, state Democratic Party chair, invested \$2.4 million of personal money in GOTV efforts. The Democratic GOTV efforts included encouraging Democrats to apply for early ballots,³⁰ "chasing" people with undelivered early ballots, targeting Democrats who do not regularly come out to vote and Independents with extensive phone banking, and walking precincts the weekend before the election. This GOTV campaign proved important as Cordova closed his gap with Renzi to just under four points by Election Day.

Issue Advocacy Organizations

Issue advocacy organizations were noticeably absent throughout the Arizona First Congressional District primary election. For many organizations, the large field of candidates in both primaries created an uncertain environment for investing limited resources.³¹ This is not to say that organizations ignored the race. Many groups kept an eye on the race and were poised to make endorsements and invest money in candidates once the general election candidates were known.

Only three groups made endorsements in the primary election. The League of Conservation Voters and the Arizona Education Association (AEA) supported Fred DuVal's candidacy in the Democratic Primary campaign. The League paid for a small ad in Flagstaff's *Arizona Daily Sun* newspaper listing a slate of candidates they supported in the primary election, and the AEA communicated its endorsements to members in the district through targeted mailings. The Southwest Regional Carpenters Union endorsed Steve Udall during the primary. These groups necessarily had to reposition themselves once the general election campaign was underway, demonstrating the risky nature of making a primary endorsement in a crowded field of

²⁷ David Hunter, DCCC Western Regional Coordinator, telephone interview by Fred Solop, 15 November 2002.

²⁸ Peggy Toomey, interview, 19 November 2002.

²⁹ Mark Shaffer, "State Dems Deny Party Has Cut Cordova Funds," *Arizona Republic*, 1 November 2002, B6.

³⁰ Early voting in Arizona took place in the 30-day period before Election Day.

³¹ Dick Castner, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Western Field Coordinator, interview by Fred Solop, Flagstaff, Ariz., 18 October 2002.

candidates. Other organizations and issue advocacy groups jumped into the general election with endorsements and contributions as soon as the primary election results were known.

Education

The AEA, statewide affiliate of the National Education Association, supported George Cordova in the general election. AEA ultimately contributed \$10,000 to Cordova's campaign.³² The first \$5,000 was for Cordova's general election campaign and the second \$5,000 helped pay debts left over from the primary campaign. AEA distributed two mailings in the election. One mailing, distributed statewide, advertised the entire slate of candidates endorsed by AEA. This mailing went to all AEA members registered to vote in Arizona. The second mailing, a piece endorsing Cordova, was distributed to the 2,800 AEA members in the district who were registered to vote. AEA also conducted automated calls in the district and in the state as a whole. The statewide call encouraged people to vote on Election Day. The second call was directed more specifically to AEA members in the First Congressional District who were registered to vote. The automated calling was a low-budget operation, as AEA had recently purchased an automated dialer package. All of the calling took place from within their office. Finally, AEA encouraged its members in the district to volunteer by calling from local phone banks and walking precincts to get out the vote on Election Day.

Environment

The Sierra Club took an active interest in George Cordova's campaign. The Southwest Field office of the Sierra Club, located in Phoenix, Arizona (outside of the First Congressional District), played an active role in communicating with its 4,000 members in the district, sending them two mailings.

Unions

Unions also supported George Cordova in the election. The local Carpenters Union had an interesting operation going during the primary election. The Southwest Regional Carpenters Union, based in southern California, endorsed Steve Udall in the primary. The regional office delivered about fifteen computers to Flagstaff for use in phone banking.³³ The Udall campaign leased the computers in lieu of accepting a donation from the Carpenters Union. During the primary, volunteer firefighters and Udall supporters called likely voters encouraging support for Udall. Sample management and precinct targeting took place in Los Angeles. The Carpenters kept the phone bank operating until the general election. The Cordova campaign leased the computers at fifteen cents per call until the last two days before the election. At that time, the state Democrats came in and leased the computers for their GOTV efforts. The phone bank message was changed to include appeals for Janet Napolitano, Democratic candidate for governor, and Terry Goddard, Democratic candidate for attorney general, along with Cordova.

The AFL-CIO also endorsed Cordova and distributed a mailer in support of him. Some union members volunteered to make phone bank calls and the AFL-CIO encouraged members to walk precincts as part of Democratic Party GOTV efforts.³⁴

³² Travis Mullen, AEA Director of Government Relations, telephone interview by Fred Solop, 12 November 2002.

³³ Thomas A. Harrington, Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters, interview by Fred Solop, Flagstaff, Ariz., 5 November 2002.

³⁴ Paulette Myers, Northern Arizona AFL-CIO, telephone interview by Fred Solop, 15 November 2002.

Business

The business community stood solidly behind Rick Renzi's candidacy. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce identified the Arizona First Congressional District as a competitive district and quickly endorsed Renzi after the primary election. Early in the election season, the Chamber planned on investing up to \$30 million in the 2002 elections. But this figure was never realized. The Chamber spent a lot of money early in the election season, but by the time Renzi won the primary, the Chamber had committed much of its funding base to other candidates.³⁵ While this was partially a function of the late timing of the Arizona primary, it also involved the Chamber's inability to meet initial fundraising projections.³⁶ The Chamber did distribute two mailings to Chamber members in the district, held several "meet and greet" events for Renzi in Washington, held a press conference in the district, and appeared with Renzi at local Chamber events. The Chamber's western field coordinator also made phone calls and facilitated contributions to Renzi from other PAC sources.³⁷

The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) also weighed in with an endorsement of Renzi. Its only activity within the district, however, was distribution of an "issues questionnaire" mailer.

Social Issue Organizations

The National Rifle Association (NRA) played an active role in promoting Rick Renzi's candidacy. After soliciting questionnaires from the candidates, the NRA gave an 'A' rating to Renzi and a 'D' to Cordova. Based on this rating, the NRA mobilized its constituents to get involved in the campaign. The NRA claims to have 20,000 to 25,000 members in the district.³⁸ The group distributed three waves of mailings to its members informing them of the NRA's candidate ratings. The NRA also sent mailings to all registered gun owners and hunting license holders in the district. This substantially expanded the size of their target group of voters. The NRA believes that in a close House election, it can sway 2 to 3 percent of the vote.³⁹ Given that the Renzi-Cordova race ended in a difference of 3.6 percent, one could conclude that the NRA played an important role in the election.

The National Right to Life organization also got involved in the race. It labeled George Cordova as supportive of "abortion on demand" and Renzi as a candidate supporting "the legal rights of a fetus" and opposing "partial-birth abortions."⁴⁰ The NRL distributed one mailing in the district and sponsored a radio spot that ran on several radio stations.⁴¹

Other Political Groups

Arizona Citizen Action came into the election with an agenda highlighting two issues of importance to seniors: the need for a comprehensive prescription drug plan and the importance of

³⁵ Castner, interview, 18 October 2002.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Jason Osborn, National Rifle Association, telephone interview by Fred Solop, 7 November 2002.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ National Right to Life, "This Little Guy Wants You to Help Elect a Pro-Life Congress," political mailer, distributed October 2002.

⁴¹ These stations included KAZM in Sedona, KQNA in Prescott, and KVNA in Flagstaff.

guaranteeing Medicare coverage for seniors. To promote these concerns, Citizen Action distributed two mailings to seniors in the district at a cost of approximately \$18,000.⁴² The mailings pitted Cordova's policy positions against Renzi's, with the clear understanding that Cordova stood with seniors on these issues. Arizona Citizen Action director Jim Driscoll held a press conference dealing with these issues in Prescott, Arizona, and organized a protest action outside Rick Renzi's Flagstaff headquarters.

The AARP played a small role in the election. It sponsored a candidate debate on the campus of Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, but only George Cordova showed up to field questions from a guest panel and audience members. AARP was interested in focusing attention on the particular needs of seniors in the district. It did not officially endorse a candidate in the race, however. Seniors were also targeted by appeals from other organizations, including the 60 Plus Association, America 21, and the Seniors Coalition.

The Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project (SVREP) out of Texas took special interest in the Arizona First Congressional District election. SVREP is most concerned with registering and mobilizing Latinos to vote. Given that the district has a large Latino registration base, SVREP targeted the district for specific activity. The organization came to the district and registered approximately 5,000 Latinos.⁴³ SVREP also sent a staff person to the district to do field coordination. Its efforts were nonpartisan and largely focused on GOTV activities. Social Research Laboratory polling showed Latino voters disproportionately supporting Cordova, so SVREP efforts likely benefited Cordova more than Renzi.

The Ground and Air Campaigns

Rick Renzi pursued aggressive air and ground campaigns during the general election, while George Cordova continued to emphasize retail politics and the ground campaign. The Renzi campaign outspent the Cordova campaign by almost three to one, and national Republicans outspent national Democrats in the district by at least by eight to one. The Rick Renzi for Congress Committee distributed one mailer to likely voters in the district. Renzi also ran three television ads, nine newspaper ads, and made two automated calls to people's homes. The NRCC distributed thirteen mailers and ran three television ads for Renzi. The Arizona Republican Party distributed twelve mailers. In the end, George Cordova distributed two mailers, three newspaper ad, and six automated calls. The DCCC, working through the state Democratic Party, distributed six mailers and four television ads. Both campaigns used phone banks and invested resources in GOTV operations. Other organizations supporting the Rick Renzi campaign with mailers, media buys or automated phone calls included the NRA, NRL, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and America 21. The George Cordova campaign was supported by the Sierra Club, AEA, and the AFL-CIO.

Much of the campaign discourse was driven by the national political parties, specifically the negative campaigning of the NRCC. As noted previously, the NRCC spent at least \$2 million to get Renzi elected, and the DCCC spent no more than \$250,000 trying to put Cordova in office. The NRCC used its opposition research to fuel a negative campaign against George Cordova. This negative campaigning began by approximately October 10, one month before the election. Questioning Cordova's integrity proved helpful in suppressing the Democratic vote and

⁴² Jim Driscoll, Arizona Citizen Action Director, interview by Fred Solop, Flagstaff, Ariz., 23 October 2002.

⁴³ "SVREP.com," *Southwest Voter Registration Education Project*, 2002. At <www.svrep.com>, 1 November 2002.

encouraging conservative Democrats to vote for Rick Renzi.⁴⁴ Eleven of the thirteen mailers paid for by the NRCC featured attacks on Cordova, mostly relating to his business record. Both of the NRCC television ads highlighted negative concerns about Cordova.

Allegations of business fraud and unscrupulous activities first appeared in the newspapers on October 9,⁴⁵ followed by a press conference sponsored by former business partners of George Cordova on October 17.⁴⁶ But the NRCC was not alone in going negative. Faced with growing public displeasure over the negative campaign, Renzi explained that the mudslinging was the work of the national Republicans, and that he had no control over their actions.⁴⁷ Yet, as mentioned, the Rick Renzi for Congress Committee was also airing negative TV ads. The negative campaigning was also punctuated by automated phone calls throughout the district and allegations of push-polling.⁴⁸

The Republican attack put the Cordova campaign on the defensive. Almost immediately, Cordova ran an automated call responding to charges made by the Republicans. He printed a flyer answering many of the charges, asserting that Republicans were misrepresenting the facts. However, Cordova lacked the money to effectively respond to the charges and define his campaign on his own terms. The final weeks of the campaign were defined by the Republican offensive against George Cordova's integrity, with Cordova struggling to answer the charges. A few issues continued to be raised in the campaign—the future of Social Security, for example—but Cordova's character, not issues, dominated the race. He was thereafter defined by the Republican allegations and these doubts weighed heavily on the minds of voters.

The ground campaign played an important role in the election, too. Several politically powerful people were paraded throughout the district during the campaign. President Bush came to Arizona twice during the election season, supporting Rick Renzi as well as Matt Salmon, Republican candidate for Governor of Arizona. During his first visit, on September 27, Bush held a campaign rally in Flagstaff and engaged in fund raising for both candidates in Phoenix. The second Bush visit to Phoenix, on October 27, included a GOTV rally for Renzi and Salmon. Vice President Dick Cheney, House Republican leaders Dennis Hastert and Tom DeLay, and Cabinet Secretaries Gale Norton and Christine Todd Whitman also came to Arizona to support Renzi's candidacy. On the Democratic side, Senator Joseph Lieberman made an appearance in Flagstaff on behalf of George Cordova.

The Social Research Laboratory conducted a second survey of likely voters in the district. Six hundred likely voters were called between October 17 and 20, after the negative campaign was under way. Using the same sampling techniques and the same likely voter screen employed in the September survey, this second voter survey showed Renzi with a twelve-point lead in the race. The major difference between the first and second SRL surveys was that a significant proportion of Democrats no longer considered themselves "likely to vote" and were screened out of the second survey.⁴⁹ Despite an eight-point Democratic registration advantage in the district, Republicans were more energized around their candidate and doubts about the Democratic

⁴⁴ "Renzi Surges Ahead of Cordova," *Northern Arizona University Social Research Laboratory*, press release, 21 October 2002. At <www.nau.edu/srl/10-21-02.pdf>, 1 November 2002

⁴⁵ Mark Shaffer, "Candidate Blurs Business Skill," *Arizona Republic*, 9 October 2002, B9.

⁴⁶ Howard Fischer, "Business Partners Say Cordova Cheated Them," *Arizona Daily Sun*, 18 October 2002, A1.

⁴⁷ Gary Ghioto, "Smear Calls Mar 1st District Race," *Arizona Daily Sun*, 6 October 2002, A1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ "Renzi Surges Ahead of Cordova," press release, 21 October 2002.

candidate suppressed Cordova's support. The DCCC was caught off-guard at this point. It did not believe, at first, that Republican negative campaigning would stick. Now, with proof that the attacks were sticking, the Democrats were faced with either investing a large amount of resources to move the district back to competitive status or abandoning the campaign. The Democrats chose the latter strategy.

Conclusion

Ultimately, it was the wide-open nature of Arizona's newly-created First District that made for an unusual election campaign. The unique situation of thirteen major-party candidates fighting for two primary spots in a huge new district that was neither socially nor politically cohesive allowed for two unknown political novices to win their parties' nominations.

Presented with an unfamiliar candidate, the national Democrats were leery of committing resources to George Cordova's campaign. Republicans and their allies jumped at the chance to claim a toss-up seat, committing millions of dollars to a campaign that was almost exclusively devoted to trashing Cordova. Renzi outspent Cordova by almost three to one, and the difference in funding was further exaggerated by money from the national parties. Renzi presented himself in only the vaguest of terms, relying on his deep pockets to build name recognition and eke out a primary win. His general election campaign focused heavily on Cordova's negatives rather than his own positives. Lacking money and name recognition, Cordova failed to run a district-wide general election campaign and was unable to define himself as a candidate. The major flashpoint in the campaign involved candidate character: first, related to Cordova's ethics as raised in negative ads, followed by a backlash against Renzi for running such ads. In the end, Renzi's narrow victory despite his overwhelming financial advantage must have left national Democrats regretting their failure to support Cordova more strongly.

Table 8.1
Candidate Receipts and Expenditures 2001–2002

George Cordova (D) - AZ 1		Rick Renzi (R) - AZ 1	
Contributions from PACs	\$245,047	Contributions from PACs	\$451,260
Contributions from Individuals	\$161,432	Contributions from Individuals	\$370,696
Contributions from Party	\$49,000	Contributions from Party	\$30,000
Contributions/loans from the Candidate	\$200,000	Contributions/loans from the Candidate	\$763,090
Other Contributions	\$218	Other Contributions	\$4,006
Total Receipts	\$655,697	Total Receipts	\$1,619,052
Total Expenditures	\$591,142	Total Expenditures	\$1,534,777
Cash on hand as of 11/25/2002	\$64,551	Cash on hand as of 11/25/2002	\$369,274

Source: "2001-02 U.S. House and US Senate Candidate Info," *FECInfo*, 25 November 2002. At <http://www.fecinfo.com/cgi-win/x_statedis.exe>, 13 January 2003.

Table 8.2
The Air War: Most Active Organizations
Collected Ad-buy Data in the Arizona 1st Congressional District Race
Democratic Allies

Type	Organization	TV	Radio	Total \$ Spent	CMAG TV
Candidates	George Cordova for Congress	\$1,832	\$25,694	\$27,526	\$29,256
	Prescott for Congress, Inc. ^a	\$7,831	\$16,797	\$24,628	-
	Udall for Congress ^a	\$2,426	\$17,538	\$19,964	-
	DuVal for Congress ^a	\$2,669	\$3,405	\$6,074	-
	Sam Martinez for U.S. Congress ^a	\$2,560	-	\$2,560	-
	Watchman for Congress ^a	-	\$870	\$870	-
Political Parties	Arizona Democratic Party	-	\$902	\$902	\$663,306

Republican Allies

Type	Organization	TV	Radio	Total \$ Spent	CMAG TV
Candidates	Rick Renzi for Congress	\$51,899	\$23,673	\$75,572	\$473,820
	Sydney Hay for Congress ^a	\$4,632	\$5,376	\$10,008	-
	Whiting for Congress ^a	-	\$3,807	\$3,807	-
	Tenney for Congress Committee ^a	-	\$1,831	\$1,831	-
	Alan Everett for Congress ^a	-	\$1,554	\$1,554	-
Political Parties	NRCC	-	-	-	\$1,373,723
	Arizona Republican Party	-	-	-	\$1,088,394
	RNC	\$154,050	-	\$154,050	-
Interest Groups	United Seniors Association	-	-	-	\$96,141
	National Right to Life	-	\$1,923	\$1,923	-

Nonpartisan

Type	Organization	TV	Radio	Total \$ Spent	CMAG TV
Interest Groups	Seagull PAC	-	\$3,830	\$3,830	-

Source: Data compiled from the *Election Advocacy* database and *CMAG* data.

^a Primary Candidates

- Please see Appendix B for a more detailed data explanation.
- Regarding Democratic and Republican Allies, certain organizations that maintained neutrality were categorized according to which candidates their ads supported or attacked or whether the organization was openly anti- or pro-conservative or liberal.
- The ad-buy data collected for this study may contain extraneous data because of the difficulty in determining the content of the ads. The parties or interest groups that purchased the ad buys possibly ran some ads promoting House or Senatorial candidates or ballot propositions not in the study's sample but still within that media market. Unless the participating academics were able to determine the exact content of the ad buy from the limited information given by the station, the data may contain observations that do not pertain to the study's relevant House or Senate races. For comparison purposes the CMAG data is included in the table.
- The '–' for an organization only reflects the absence of collected data and does not imply the organization was inactive in that medium.
- Because of the sheer volume of television and radio stations and varying degrees of compliance in providing ad-buy information, data on spending by various groups might be incomplete.
- This table is not intended to represent comprehensive organization spending or activity within the sample races. A more complete picture can be obtained by examining this table with Table 8.3.

Table 8.3

**The Ground War and Unique Ads: Most Active Organizations
Observed Activity in the Arizona 1st Congressional District Race**

Democratic Allies

Type	Organization	Mail	News	Phone	TV	Total Unique Ads
Candidates	DuVal for Congress ^a	12	3	-	1	16
	Committee to Elect George Cordova	2	3	6	1	12
	Prescott for Congress, Inc. ^a	2	2	2	4	10
	Steve Udall for Congress ^a	6	-	-	1	7
	Friends of Sam Martinez ^a	1	-	2	2	5
	Hartstone for Congress ^a	-	4	-	-	4
Political Parties	Arizona Democratic Party	6	-	2	1	9
	AZ State Democratic Executive Committee	-	-	-	3	3
	Yavapai County Democratic Committee	1	-	-	-	1
Interest Groups	Unknown Organization	-	-	6	-	6
	Arizona Citizen Action	2	-	2	-	4
	League of Conservation Voters	2	1	-	-	3
	Sierra Club	2	-	-	-	2
	Alliance for Retired Americans ^b	-	-	-	-	1
	Arizona State AFL-CIO	1	-	-	-	1
	National Education Association	1	-	-	-	1

Republican Allies

Type	Organization	Mail	News	Phone	TV	Total Unique Ads
Candidates	Rick Renzi for Congress	10	9	2	5	26
	Alan Everett for Congress ^a	3	8	-	-	11
	David Stafford for Congress ^a	1	10	-	-	11
	Whiting for Congress ^a	5	1	-	-	6
	Tenney for Congress Committee ^a	1	2	-	-	3
	Sydney Hay for Congress ^a	1	-	-	1	2
Political Parties	NRCC	13	-	-	2	15
	Arizona Republican Party	12	-	1	-	13
	RNC	-	-	1	1	2
	Yavapai County Republican Committee	-	2	-	-	2
Interest Groups	60 Plus Association	2	-	-	-	2
	National Rifle Association	2	-	-	-	2
	US Chamber of Commerce	2	-	-	-	2
	America 21	1	-	-	-	1
	NFIB	1	-	-	-	1
	National Right to Life	1	-	-	-	1
	The Seniors Coalition	1	-	-	-	1

Source: Data compiled from the *Election Advocacy* database.

^a Primary Candidates

^b Unspecified race involvement. Ed Coyle, Alliance for Retired Americans Executive Director, telephone interview by David B. Magleby and Quin Monson, 20 December 2002.

- Please see Appendix B for a more detailed data explanation.
- Data represent the number of *unique* pieces or ads by the group and do not represent a count of total items sent or made.
- Regarding Democratic and Republican Allies, certain organizations that maintained neutrality were categorized according to which candidates their ads supported or attacked or whether the organization was anti- or pro-conservative or liberal.
- All state and local chapters or affiliates have been combined with their national affiliate to better render the picture of the organization's activity. For instance, the Arizona League of Conservation Voters data have been included in the LCV totals.
- This table is not intended to portray comprehensive organization activity within the sample races. A more complete picture can be obtained by examining this table together with Table 8.2.