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## Physicist Mixes Science and Politics in Bid for Senate

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Among the myriad political races in the United States this election season, one in particular has captured my interest.

It is not the presidential contest between Vice President Bush and Governor Dukakis, nor is it any widely publicized, high-profile battle for governor or senator in a major state—contests that might be expected to receive the attention of the national media. Rather, it is a primary race for the U.S. Senate, as yet unnoticed by the national press, in the nation's smallest state, Delaware.

Delaware's Lieutenant Governor S. B. (Shien-Biau) Woo is seeking the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate in the state's primary on September 10. If he defeats his opponent (and at this writing the polls have Woo ahead), the Lieutenant Governor will then face incumbent Sen. Bill Roth, a Republican, in the November general election. Without discussing the merits of the candidate himself (which are many), I would say that Woo's bid for a Senate seat is worthy of notice by the scientific community for at least two reasons.

First, Woo is a scientist. He earned a Ph.D. in physics from Washington University in 1964 and

has been a professor of physics at the University of Delaware in Newark for the last 22 years. Although on leave this semester in order to devote full attention to the campaign, the lieutenant governor was only a few months ago teaching classes, a task he still performed while holding state office during the past four years.

It is ironic that in this Age of Science so few scientists have pursued high office. I have had occasion to regret this fact many times in these pages. After all, science forms an ever greater part of an ever greater number of issues facing the nation. The lack of scientific expertise among members of the U.S. House and Senate, it can be argued, is cause for concern. Recently, MIT professor Nam P. Suh wrote (*The Scientist*, July 25, 1988, page 11) of the need "to elect more congressmen and senators with educational or professional backgrounds in science and engineering." So it is both noteworthy and praiseworthy that one of our colleagues has stepped out from behind the bench to help meet this national need.

Second, the Woo campaign is remarkable because the candidate has made his scientific expertise a focus of the contest. He tells his

audiences that, if elected, he will be the only senator with a Ph.D. in the physical sciences, giving him some of the strongest science credentials of anyone in Congress. In his television commercials Woo argues that the nation must maintain and improve its science and technology capabilities, which, he says, are essential to long-term competitiveness. Standing in front of one of his physics classes, he emphasizes the need for better science education. The role of science in the future of our country and the need for scientists to be represented in Congress make up a dominant theme of the Woo campaign. It will be fascinating to see whether this message resonates with the electorate in Delaware. Will the public there see science as an important campaign

issue?

Win or lose, Woo is a pioneer. I hope he will be followed by others who are eager to mix science and politics. But perhaps the science community should do more to help its members reach office. Other groups have special-interest lobbying organizations that pour money into the coffers of candidates they favor. The Council for a Livable World in Washington, for example, selectively backs candidates nationwide that support nuclear arms control, dedicating its limited resources to races in which the Council's contribution can make a difference. So why not have a similar lobbying group for scientists? Such an approach might well put more scientists into office. ■