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Orozco, Brown race to State House

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Needham —

On the fourth floor of 175 Highland Ave., state Senate candidate Sara Orozco and volunteers huddled together in a small office room, using cell phones to call folks about Orozco's campaign.

"Do you have any questions you want to ask me?" Orozco said into the phone.

With Election Day quickly closing in, the state Senate campaigns of Orozco, D-Needham, and incumbent Scott Brown, R-Wrentham, are eying the home stretch, with Orozco's campaign finalizing its Election Day strategy and Brown staying the course.

"I've been campaigning for 10 years," Brown said. "I'm a Republican. I have to campaign every day ... I'm like a tortoise. I keep doing what I've been doing every single day."

Orozco sat alongside volunteers making phone calls on the evening of Oct. 23. Brown held signs in downtown Needham with his volunteers on the morning of Oct. 24 and hosted a pizza party for seniors in Attleboro later that day.

Orozco's campaign manager, Dan Hoffer, said volunteers have been busy, but that the general feeling is positive. He said the campaign has about 350 volunteers, with the highest concentration being in Orozco's hometown of Needham.

"The most effective tool is Sara," Hoffer said. "She's out there talking about issues middle-class families care about, such as health care, education and housing. With the economy tanking, these are issues people really care about ... Sara is just the candidate this district needs. If she's not elected, people will see it."

Alan Pransky of Mayflower Road has been making calls on behalf of Orozco. He said his strategy is to engage the person on the other line.

"When I get hung up on and answer machines, it gets discouraging," Pransky said. "When they actually engage me, I enjoy it ... Once I engage them, I can get something across."

Orozco said she's feeling more focused as Election Day approaches.

"I feel energized and really positive," Orozco said. "I find as we get closer and closer to Election Day, I find myself more focused. I focus on my job and let my crew focus on what they have to do ... What I take from this campaign is that a lot of people are hungry for change."

Brown has also been making personal calls to voters, saying he has made up to 10,000 calls as of late last week. The incumbent feels people value his experience.

"[The people I call] feel there's no learning curve at all," Brown said. "We need experienced people to get us out of this economic mess. People seem very happy and satisfied with their representation."

Brian Curley of Wilshire Park, an organizer for Brown's campaign, said the volunteers are trying to be "as visible as possible" in Needham. Curley has been a long-time supporter of Brown's, volunteering in two previous campaigns.

"What brings people out [for Brown] is his ability to balance a lot of different issues," Curley said. "Be they fiscal issues or more social issues, such as suicide prevention and child predator laws."

Greg Collins, a 2005 Needham High School graduate who is currently a senior at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, is volunteering for Brown's campaign for the second time. A couple of weekends ago, he dropped off literature at people's homes in Needham.

“I go door-to-door, give people literature and discuss the issues,” Collins said, noting he supports Brown for his conservatism “with taxpayers’ money.” “I liked it when people are outside getting the mail or mowing the lawn. Most Needham residents have been very friendly when I approached them.”

Back at Orozco headquarters on Oct. 23, Orozco’s campaign also has its young volunteers. Lily Freedberg, a Wayland High School senior, became involved in Orozco’s campaign through her school. She said she was nervous when she made her first call for Orozco.

“When at home and people call my parents, they don’t like that,” Freedberg said. “I learned to empathize with other callers. And as time goes by, you get into the groove.”

And even though she isn’t old enough to vote, Freedberg noted her volunteerism has given her a voice.

“Although my vote can’t count, I can help a campaign get better,” she said. “I can be a contributor.”

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