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Posted: Thu, Jul. 28, 2011, 3:00 AM

Right Makes Might

Meet Daryl Metcalfe, the gun-toting, gay-bashing, tea-partying state rep who's taking over Harrisburg.

Daniel Denvir



State Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, a gun-toting 48-year-old who represents Pittsburgh's fast-growing, far-out Butler County exurbs, has spent more than a decade slogging his way toward power. For years, he was a nobody in Harrisburg, and the media paid far more attention to his strong-worded comments about gays, guns and immigrants than his colleagues ever did to his legislation. But in the wake of President Barack Obama's election, things changed: A national movement of angry conservatives took hold and voted out any Republicans or Democrats who smelled of moderation.

Or, as Metcalfe put it to the liberal news website Talking Points Memo, "I was a Tea Partier before it was cool."

In 2010, as right-wing challengers took on establishment conservatives nationwide, Metcalfe ran for lieutenant governor, promising to be an ideological watchdog rather than a running mate: "If Pennsylvania's next governor breaks his word and raises taxes, supports more government programs that redistribute wealth or signs laws that infringe on our Constitutional rights, then I will publicly expose his actions and be ready to challenge him in the next primary election," he wrote in a letter to Republican State Committee members.

Metcalfe lost that race, but the Tea Party tidal wave sent him 21 mostly conservative freshmen House Republicans as colleagues. The midterm elections saw the GOP pick up nearly 700 seats in state Houses nationwide, and there are more Republicans in state legislatures today than at any time since the Great Depression. In Pennsylvania, the party now controls the Governor's Mansion, House and Senate. That victory added to a right-wing core established in 2006, when many mostly moderate Republican incumbents were ousted after legislators from both parties infuriated voters by giving themselves a sneaky midnight salary hike.

Metcalfe is now chairman of the powerful State Government Committee, and he's savoring the political moment: He was a key supporter of an expansion of gun owners' rights to fire on an assailant, a bill signed by Gov. Tom Corbett. The House passed Metcalfe's legislation requiring voters to present government identification, which could disproportionately keep the poor, elderly and nonwhite from the polls. This fall, he is expected to move legislation to pass a constitutional amendment barring same-sex marriage; anti-immigrant measures modeled on Arizona's draconian law; and an anti-union "right-to-work" bill that Corbett pledges to sign.

Crucially, Metcalfe, who did not return repeated requests for comment, will help oversee the decennial process of redrawing congressional districts to reflect population changes from the 2010 census. He wields enormous power to reshape districts and, thus, elections, for years to come.

This busy seventh term comes after a decade sounding off at the political margins.

"Daryl has waited a long time to be heard in the caucus," says Karen Beyer, a former Lehigh Valley state representative and moderate Republican defeated in last year's primary by a 23-year-old Tea Party-backed candidate.

The Radical

Rural and suburban politicians have always gained political advantage by denouncing the symbols of urban sin — homosexuals, immigrants, poor minority neighborhoods — and, often, the city of Philadelphia itself. Metcalfe has made attacking those people and our city a blood sport.

As Bob Guzzardi, a conservative Ardmore-based real estate tycoon and Republican fundraiser, puts it, our problem may be Metcalfe's solution. "He gets all this attention as hated in Philadelphia," Guzzardi says. "Well, if you're hated in Philadelphia, you're loved in the rest of the state. So it plays into his hands."

Metcalfe is the House's most prominent critic of gays: He opposed Philly's program to market the city to gay tourists, saying that tax dollars should not be used to "promote immoral behaviors"; he tried to cut state funding to universities such as Temple because they offer domestic-partner benefits; he sued a gay New Hope couple for attempting (and failing) to get a marriage license; and he opposed Domestic Violence Awareness Month, calling it part of "the homosexual agenda" to support a "sinful lifestyle" because it recognized male victims of rape. "The gentleman from Butler has made this problem even worse and more men may be abused, even killed in their homes," decried Rep. Babette Josephs, a Democrat from Philadelphia, on the House floor in 2009.

Regardless of whether his legislative agenda flies in the more moderate Senate, or whether it addresses issues relevant to his constituents, Metcalfe — and a GOP in thrall to Tea Party voters — benefits. The outbursts look great to his audience of hard conservatives throughout the state and, increasingly, nationwide. Take his campaign against "illegal alien invasion": Though Philadelphia grew for the first time in half a century thanks to Asian and Latin American newcomers, Metcalfe's Butler County counts just 745 Mexicans. But while visiting Philly for an anti-immigrant rally, he made it a point to meet "with one of America's most outspoken English-only advocates and Gino's [sic] Cheese Steaks owner Joey Vento," as noted on his website.

And while there has always been a bipartisan enthusiasm for weaponry outside of Pennsylvania's big cities, Metcalfe has raised Second Amendment advocacy to a more potent form of political theater. Though it's not supposed to be comedy, Philadelphia ends up the butt of the joke.

"This cultural problem is the breakdown of the family and the subsequent absence of positive parental influences and supervision in children's lives," he said in 2006, explaining why he opposed gun control as a means of fighting violent crime in Philadelphia. "Absent fathers, financial hardship and lack of meaningful parental influence and availability in children's lives are a disastrous formula for social unrest and violence."

"Philadelphia," said West Philly Rep. James Roebuck, responding to Metcalfe and others, "is not the center of evil as some of you suggest."

Metcalfe's legislation often targets racial and religious minorities. In 2006, he blocked a resolution honoring a Muslim organization because, he explained, "The Muslims do not recognize Jesus Christ as God." (He later defended his remarks, saying that he objected to comparing the organization's beliefs to those of William Penn, a Christian.)

In response, then-Gov. Ed Rendell told the *Inquirer*, "I don't think I have agreed with anything Rep. Metcalfe said in the last three or four years, and that statement doesn't change anything. ... I don't think many people take much of what Rep. Metcalfe says seriously."

Metcalfe also introduced "birther" legislation that would require presidential candidates to prove they are citizens, fueled by the discredited theory that President Obama is not; with more dire consequences, his voter ID bill could significantly depress voter turnout since the poor, elderly, black and Latino are far less likely to possess identification.

"My district is probably 80 to 90 percent African-American," says Rep. Vanessa Brown, who represents parts of West and North Philly. "The disheartening part of this bill is that it will affect seniors between 80 and 100 years old — and these are the seniors who fought for the vote for all African-Americans."

Metcalfe's agenda has made him a number of friends and fans on the political fringe. In October 2010, he decided to appear on the radio show of popular conspiracist Alex Jones, who believes that 9/11 was an "inside job"; who promotes the idea that Obama and a secret global cabal of bankers is going to round up Americans in FEMA-operated concentration camps before setting into motion a eugenics plan that will wipe out 80 percent of the human population via poisoned food; and who claims to "have the government documents where they said they're going to encourage homosexuality with chemicals so that people don't have children."

During his appearance, Metcalfe did not contest Jones' statement that "federal Homeland Security is fully infiltrated" by the Israeli government and that "Israeli art students" involved in the 9/11 attacks were now in Nevada undertaking surveillance against the National Security Agency. Instead, Metcalfe responded that Obama and other political enemies "embrace these socialist leftist policies of the Eastern Bloc nations that when I was in the military, we were prepared to go to war against during the Cold War."

Metcalfe has used such inflammatory rhetoric before. In a 2009 statement, he called anyone joining Operation Free, a group of environmentalist war veterans, "a traitor to the oath he or she took to defend the Constitution of our great

nation!"

And yet it is Metcalfe who has associated with people who pledge to take up arms against the government. In 2010, he announced he would speak at an Ohio meeting of the Federal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Coalition alongside a representative of the right-wing militia group Oath Keepers, which calls for police and soldiers to mount an armed resistance when the time comes that the Obama administration declares martial law and forces Americans into concentration camps.

Of all the ideological fancies, it is Metcalfe's involvement in the anti-immigrant movement that has made him a right-wing rising star. He has cultivated relationships with Fox News regulars such as Arizona State Senate President Russell Pearce, who drafted that state's anti-immigrant legislation, and former Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo, a one-time anti-immigrant presidential candidate who has called for the bombing of Mecca. In January, when Metcalfe founded a coalition of anti-immigrant state legislators who pledge to eliminate birthright citizenship for the children of noncitizens granted by the 14th Amendment, his name landed in media nationwide, from *The New York Times* to Fox News.

It has also brought Metcalfe and other right-wing Republicans into contact with alleged white supremacists.

Metcalfe's group State Lawmakers for Legal Immigration works closely with the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), an anti-immigrant organization that the Southern Poverty Law Center has designated a hate group. FAIR has, among other things, received extensive funding from the white supremacist Pioneer Fund, and group leaders like founder John Tanton have made numerous racist statements, such as a 1993 letter stating that "for European-American society and culture to persist requires a European-American majority, and a clear one at that."

Metcalfe has also spoken alongside Dan Smeriglio, an ally in Pennsylvania's anti-immigrant movement and alleged white supremacist, including at a 2007 rally organized by Smeriglio's Voice of The People USA organization. Metcalfe even spoke at a June 2010 rally in Phoenix organized by Smeriglio to support the state's harsh new anti-immigrant law — a rally that even anti-immigrant leader William Gheen boycotted as a result of Smeriglio's white power ties. Gheen noted at the time that Smeriglio had appeared with Steve Smith, leader of the racist skinhead organization Keystone United, at an anti-immigrant rally in Hazelton, Pa. Smeriglio also listed the white supremacist singer-songwriter Saga as a favorite musical act on Facebook, where Metcalfe and Smeriglio were both Smith's "friends."



Metcalfe's Rise

Some insiders say that Daryl Metcalfe was meant to be a sideshow, and that Republican leaders — House Majority Leader Mike Turzai and Speaker Sam Smith — gave him control of the State Government Committee so that he could stay busy with dead-end and polarizing social issues and away from serious matters like, say, the budget. "They appease him," says a political source from the heart of Metcalfe's district. "And they'll give him things that will get him off their back."

If so, the plan might have backfired: Putting Metcalfe in charge of pushing right-wing social legislation made him more, and not less, powerful. Metcalfe, say Rep. Josephs and others, uses his newly influential bloc of legislators to

increase his leverage within the party. They allege that he rallied right-wing Republicans to vote "no" on Republican Gov. Corbett's budget. Though the budget made dramatic cuts to education and social welfare spending, Metcalfe, they say, argued it didn't cut deeply enough. Leaders then promised Metcalfe support on his voter ID legislation in exchange for right-wing support for the budget.

"I think he blackmailed them," says Josephs, who regularly clashes with Metcalfe as minority chair of the State Government Committee. "I think that what Metcalfe did was get 16 or 17 people who also don't care about Corbett or whether the budget is on time. And he went to Turzai and Smith and said, 'You pass this bill on voter ID or we're not voting for the budget on time.'"

Republicans counter that party leadership embraced the voter ID legislation — so there would be no reason for a quid pro quo.

"How would [Josephs] know that?" asks Steve Miskin, spokesman for Turzai. "Rep. Metcalfe voted for the budget and never once whipped votes against it. He never even spoke out against the budget. That's ludicrous."

Rep. Jaret Gibbons, a Western Pennsylvania Democrat, also doubts the horse-trading allegation, saying that Republicans all have a direct interest in keeping likely Democrats from voting. "I think it was more political than ideological legislation," he says, unlike other Metcalfe bills that "truly are social conservative legislation that may have some dissension within the Republican caucus."

Whatever happened behind the Republicans' closed doors, it is clear that the right wing has controlled the party since the 2010 elections, when Corbett, a former prosecutor with a moderate reputation, faced a primary challenge from Berks County state Rep. (and Tea Partier) Sam Rohrer. In an effort to shore up right-wing support, Corbett signed a "no new taxes" pledge with fiscal conservative and Washington power broker Grover Norquist, and promised to deliver the budget on time, signaling from the get-go that his governorship would be loyal to the Tea Party. Metcalfe and Rohrer — the latter now state director of the Tea Party organization Americans for Prosperity — won't let him forget that.

"I don't think the governor is the driver here on some of these legislative initiatives," says former Rep. Karen Beyer. "I think they come from the members on the right."

Beyer says moderates should exercise their swing vote to push legislation that has majority public support, like a tax on natural gas. And she warns that if Republicans continue to pursue far-right policies, they will lose seats to Democrats in Philly's moderate suburbs.

Metcalfe's legislative predecessor, Pat Carone Krebs, agrees. "I've had moderate Republicans in the House caucus say to me, 'What happened to your district, Pat?'" says Krebs, who has an unusual vantage point, having switched from Democrat to Republican. "They elected you, and they elected *Daryl*?"

Ideologue or Opportunist?

Like many right-wing state legislators nationwide, Daryl Metcalfe is a member of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which produces model legislation drafted in part by big business. This year, ALEC has come under criticism for its role in pushing legislation like Wisconsin's anti-union bill. What's surprising is that Pennsylvania taxpayers pick up the tab for Metcalfe's involvement.

Documents obtained by *City Paper* from the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission show that ALEC reimbursed Metcalfe \$832.91 in 2007, a "scholarship" that is funded by major corporations. And state documents obtained by good government group Common Cause and reviewed by *City Paper* reveal that taxpayers also reimbursed Metcalfe \$509.25 in per diems, and for parking and transportation, food and other fees for the 2007 ALEC conference in Philadelphia.

Since 2007, taxpayers have footed \$1,164 in ALEC expenses for the self-professed small-government advocate. He isn't the only Republican steering taxpayer dollars to the conservative advocacy group — other legislators also had fees and per diems covered.

That same year, the documents also show that a \$50,000 appropriation to cater the ALEC meeting was added into the state budget, a food bill footed by taxpayers that included \$30,450 in roasted chicken breast and \$3,000 for cheesecake lollipops. The budget outlay was described as "for the payment of expenses related to hosting conferences, meetings or conventions of multistage organizations which protect the member states' interests or which promote governmental financial excellence or accountability."

Metcalfe's agenda more or less mirrors that of ALEC model legislation, including efforts to compel local police to enforce immigration laws and prohibit localities like Philly from enacting their own gun restrictions.

"He's a true conservative," says Mike Pintek, host of a Pittsburgh talk radio show on which Metcalfe often appears. "He's not one of these Republican In Name Only-type of guys."

But Guzzardi, the influential Ardmore-based conservative, says that Metcalfe is more of an opportunist than an ideologue, pointing to his support for the moderate and allegedly corrupt Republican leadership of years past. He calls Metcalfe a "hack," even though Guzzardi's own "Liberty Index" gives Metcalfe sky-high ratings. "If you're a real conservative, you say 'no' to John Perzel. He said 'yes' to John Perzel."

Metcalfe supported Perzel, the ousted and indicted Philadelphia Republican, House Speaker and Majority Leader — an awesomely powerful state politician and a consummate deal-maker always ready to sacrifice ideology for the sake of action. Metcalfe received help early in his career from the New Jersey-based and Perzel-allied political consultants at the David Millner Group. He also said "yes" with dollars: Friends of Daryl Metcalfe made frequent donations to the House Republican Campaign Committee, an organization controlled partly by Perzel and the alleged operations center for illegally using taxpayer funds to carry out campaign work, part of what's known as the bipartisan Bonusgate scandal.

Indeed, according to two sources, Metcalfe's conduct was also the subject of a previously undisclosed 2008 grand jury investigation for illegally using taxpayer funds for campaigns, though he was never indicted. Former Metcalfe staffer Kimberly Bartley was called to testify before the grand jury, according to her mother, Debbie Bartley. "I went with her

to Pittsburgh to testify," she says, but "nothing ever came of it."

A separate person with direct knowledge of the proceedings confirmed Bartley's account, and another source says that Metcalfe was interviewed by two investigators from the Attorney General's office on the subject.

Liberals accused then-Attorney General Corbett of carrying out a partisan investigation, which only netted Perzel after numerous Democrats had been indicted. Although Corbett had said other investigations were ongoing, nothing has been heard since.

Enemies in Both Parties

Metcalfe has a reputation for being difficult, and neither his personal nor his political styles have gone over well with many at home.

He often runs candidates against local township officials, and orchestrated a bitter fight for control of the county's Republican committee — a shock to people accustomed to a bipartisan, nuts-and-bolts Butler County political scene. But while a right-wing Tea Partier might seem an odd fit for the suburban district, affluent Pittsburgh commuters in the area's booming subdivisions don't vote. And Metcalfe, said to keep only a Bible on his desk, turns out the religious right, a group more concerned with political warfare than constituent services.

"As of last year, he had only written one piece of legislation that passed," says Zack Byrnes, 26, the soft-spoken development director for the Blind Association of Butler and Armstrong Counties who was Metcalfe's Democratic challenger in 2010. "It changed the name of a local bridge."

Metcalfe also infuriated local officials when he opposed state funding for a local park, and they say he did nothing to support a major highway project.

In 2006, Metcalfe and then-Butler County Republican Committee Chairman Jim Powers sought to expel committee candidates who had endorsed Democrats in a local school board race. One of the candidates accused Metcalfe of punishing her for supporting Arlen Specter against conservative challenger (and now senator) Pat Toomey.

"He is extremely methodical in his dislike of people," says Joan Chew, a longtime power broker in the local Republican Party establishment and one of the offending committeepersons. "It just goes step one, step two, step three."

"I tried to change the bylaws to reflect," says Powers, that "you're not allowed to go out and endorse a Democrat because that's not what we're trying to go out and do."

But Metcalfe and Powers also appear to have supported a Democrat — when it suited them.

In 2008, Metcalfe allegedly supported Democrat Dave Root (Powers would say only that Root is "a friend of both Daryl and myself") in his successful campaign against Republican Cranberry supervisor Chuck Caputy. Five years earlier, Metcalfe pressed charges against Caputy, whom he accused of purposely bumping into his daughter at the mall where Caputy worked as a manager at JCPenney. Harassment charges were thrown out, and some accuse Metcalfe of carrying out a political vendetta to punish Republican township supervisors who endorsed Metcalfe's Democratic opponent in the 2002 election.

Little is known about Metcalfe the man. His website states that the upstate New York native attended Kansas State University but does not indicate that he received a degree. He served four years in the Army and eventually made his way to Western Pennsylvania to repair medical devices.

Metcalfe is secretive to the point that he refuses to let janitors clean his office in the Cranberry Township office building.

"He will not allow anyone to clean his office after he's left because he has 'secret documents,'" says Democratic Butler County Commissioner James Lokhaiser, who complained about Metcalfe's obsessive focus on immigrants.

He is a mystery to many colleagues in the House, too, a loner who rarely socializes with other legislators. But Metcalfe didn't come to Harrisburg to, as they say, make friends. Democrats face corruption indictments and political marginalization, moderate Republicans are cowed by the Tea Party, and a loud voice with a pair of sharp elbows has eagerly filled the void.

(daniel.denvir@citypaper.net)

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I am not sure where the article's figure of 745 Mexican-born residents of Butler County came from. According to the Census Bureau's 2005-09 American Community Survey, Butler County had 132 Mexican-born residents, plus or minus 93 people. (The margin of error is huge because it is such a small sample.) I don't know that Census 2010 data for Butler County has yet been released at this level of detail.

— AmandaWBS

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2010 census numbers have been released. Check FactFinder 2 at <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

— Daniel Denvir

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This wins the prize for the most lame and pathetic attempt to disparage a conservative politician that I have ever read. I can't get angry, as I laughed at Denvir's multitude of unsuccessful attempts to make this come off as an investigative/hit piece. This guy is like 99% of journalists; i.e., nothing more than a stenographer writing out the Progressive's talking points.

While the author no doubt bows at the altar of George Soros, reveres the likes of the rude and arrogant ACLU card-carrying Progressive Babette Josephs, quivers in the presence of the thug Bob Brady, and desperately wants to emulate the amoral Ed Rendell, the majority of Americans respect and admire statesmen such as Daryl Metcalfe who refuse to be owned and manipulated by any Party boss or special interest group, including the self-proclaimed honcho, Guzzardi.

Those who protest this invasion of illegal aliens, including Joey Vento, are the same who demand our officials honor their oath of office and our laws; those politicians who don't are the same who are cognizant of the fact they would not win an election for dog catcher were it not for illegal aliens and the corrupt, anti-Americans who profit from their presence and the special interest groups who now own their souls.

— Chantal

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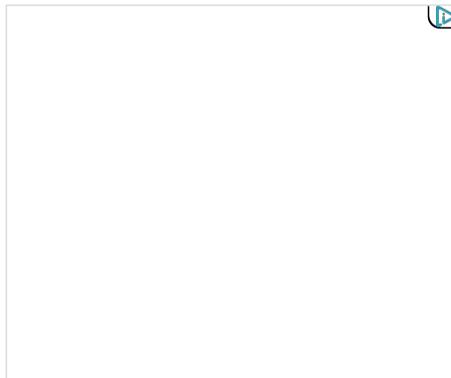
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