

## Is Pitts losing touch?

*In our view*

One reason given for U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar's loss in the Indiana primary was that he was considered to have lost touch with his constituents.

So what might one say about U.S. Rep. Joe Pitts?

Earlier this week it was revealed that, in answer to a constituent's letter about the Israeli situation, Pitts' office responded that former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat needed to do more to aid the peace process.

The response went viral ... for good reason. Arafat died in 2004 and Sharon has been in a coma since 2006.

Pitts' office apologized for the letter (an old form letter, perhaps?), and spokesman Andrew Wimer said staffers were reviewing their internal process to avoid future mistakes.

Although the mistake reflects poorly on Pitts, in a world with so many different forms of communication and so many different kinds of constituent requests, we understand how such a mistake can occur.

Nevertheless, it portrays the congressman as being out of touch with the times.

A report in the PA Independent, however, raises a different question: Is Pitts losing touch with the people in his own district?

The story, citing statistics from the Center for Responsive Politics, reported that, in this election cycle, 42 percent of Pitts' political contributions have come from outside

Pennsylvania, including \$40,000 from sources in and around Washington, D.C.

Although most of the congressman's contributions continue to originate in Pennsylvania, the report exposes a trend.

During his first re-election campaign in 1998, fully 97 percent of his campaign contributions came from within Pennsylvania. In 2000, 96 percent came from within the state. By 2010, the percentage had shrunk to 83 percent.

With six months until the 2012 general election, his in-state contributions stand at 58 percent.

That may not make much of a difference in Pitts' overwhelmingly Republican district.

The fact that his Democratic opponent, Aryanna Strader, lives outside the district would seem to further enhance his re-election prospects.

But the contributions suggest that certain interests in Washington may have a stronger desire to keep him in office than do his own constituents.

Indeed, given Pitts' age (he will be 73 on Election Day), his nearly four decades of public service, including 24 years in the state House, the trend of political contributions and his staff's Israel letter gaffe, one wonders if it's not time for the Republican Party to begin considering a successor.