

Republicans Decry Allen's Absence During Voting

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Republicans are hammering Rep. Tom Allen for traveling to California this week to attend fundraising dinners instead of voting in the House of Representatives.

Allen's campaign manager, Valerie Martin, confirmed that Allen was in California to raise funds for his Senate race and that he missed 19 votes. But she said the Democrat has a 98 percent vote record and that he voted on the right side of the issues.

Allen, the six-term 1st Congressional District representative from Portland, is challenging two-term incumbent U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, the Bangor Republican, in the 2008 election.

Collins in her nearly 11 years in the Senate has never missed a vote, a record her campaign frequently touts.

The fact that Allen left Washington to travel to California to raise money for his race against Collins has Republicans claiming Allen is putting politics ahead of service. In an e-mail circulated Friday, Republicans featured a map showing Maine, Washington and Southern California, graphically making the point that Allen is far from home and far from work.

Martin said that in his 11 years in the House, Allen has cast 98 percent of the approximately 7,000 votes taken in that body.

"Tom is very proud of his voting record," Martin said, "and more importantly, he's made the right choices with that vote."

Allen has missed votes to attend his father's funeral and his daughter's wedding, she noted. And because of its procedural rules, it is easier to miss a vote in the House than it is in the Senate, she said.

Martin said about 890 votes have been cast in the House this year, compared with 346 votes cast in the Senate. Seven House members of that body's 435 have perfect voting records this year, she said.

The average number of missed votes for House members is 33.4, Martin said. Allen has missed 26 votes so far.

Republicans critical of Allen note that he scheduled the West Coast fundraising trip to coincide with a period when he knew the House would be in session.