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## Space tours COATC, sees value

### Platt pleased both 18th District candidates visited facility, learned

By KENT MALLET

Advocate Reporter

NEWARK -- The successor to Bob Ney as Ohio's 18th District representative in Congress will be familiar with the Central Ohio Aerospace and Technology Center in Heath.

Whoever wins the election between Zack Space, D-Dover, and Joy Padgett, R-Coshocton, will have toured the base and learned the significance of the facility.

Ney, a Republican who moved to Heath last year, announced he will not seek re-election, then pleaded guilty in federal court to two felony counts of trading legislative favors for vacations, meals, drinks, concert tickets, campaign contributions and poker chips. He awaits sentencing.

Space toured The Base on Wednesday, escorted by Rick Platt, executive director of the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority. Padgett previously toured the facility. It was a learning experience for both candidates, who were invited by the Port Authority.

"I was aware the facility was here, but not aware of all the intricacies of the facility," Space said after the tour. "I have a renewed appreciation for the value of the facility to the community and to enhance our national security."

That awareness is important, Platt said, to keep the base operating for years to come. The Port Authority, formed in 1996 primarily to retain jobs after the Newark Air Force Base closed, manages the COATC.

The Base employs more than 900 people and has an estimated \$200 million annual impact on the regional economy, according to the Port Authority. Boeing and Bionetics are the largest employers at the facility.

"We think it's the Port Authority's job to make sure the next member of Congress knows the base and the jobs here," Platt said.

Platt said the Port Authority must be vigilant to make sure the jobs don't leave the base and its interests are represented in Congress.

"We rallied the community to save The Base (in the 1990s), but now we've got to save The Base every day," Platt said. "(Space) showed he is going to be a fighter for us and the people here.

"I feel good we had both candidates in, so I feel there won't be a gap (in representation)."

Space shrugged off Padgett's latest allegation that he failed to vote in 10 elections between 1979 and 1987. Six were general elections and four were primaries, but none were in presidential election years.

Space, the Dover law director, said he was in college or law school during those years and suggested Padgett also could investigate the college football games he missed because of injury.

"We're focused on things that matter to voters," Space said.

The Space campaign did say Padgett did not register to vote until she was 29 and voted in Democratic primaries in the early 1980s.

The campaign, which started with Space critiqued by Ney, then by Padgett, has been frustrating and fun, Space said.

"It's been arduous and, at times, frustrating, but more than anything, this process has been very rewarding," Space said. "I look at it as a great opportunity to do good for a lot of people. That's something I find rewarding and exciting."