

Jim Bognet (PA-08) Research Memo

The following memo contains research on Jim Bognet, a Republican candidate in Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional district. Research for this research memo was conducted by the DCCC's Research Department in February 2020. By accepting this report, you are accepting responsibility for all information and analysis included. Therefore, it is your responsibility to verify all claims against the original documentation before you make use of it. Make sure you understand the facts behind our conclusions before making any specific charges against anyone.



Jim Bognet

Republican candidate in
Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District

Research Memo – 2020

Last Updated February 2020

Prepared by the DCCC Research Department



Significant Findings

- ✓ *Bognet was a Trump appointee to the Export Import Bank before resigning to run for Congress.*
 - *Bognet said he decided to run for office after Rep. Matt Cartwright voted for impeachment.*
- ✓ *Bognet was a career staffer on Republican campaigns before becoming a consultant.*
 - *2018: Bognet was CEO of Martha McSally's Senate race in Arizona.*
 - *2012: Bognet consulted on David Dewhurst's Senate primary run in Texas, in which he was defeated by Ted Cruz.*
 - *2010: Bognet worked on Steve Poizner's race for Governor in California.*
 - *2008: Bognet was a consultant on John McCain's presidential campaign.*
 - *2008: Bognet was an economic advisor to then-Gov. Romney's presidential campaign.*
 - *2003-2006: Bognet worked on California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's campaigns and in his administration.*
 - *According to the FEC, Bognet made nearly \$700,000 working for federal campaigns*
- ✓ *Bognet claimed to own a consulting firm, JRB Strategies, which he based in his hometown of Hazleton, PA.*
 - *Secretary of State records showed no such firm existed.*
 - *FEC records showed no disbursements to a Pennsylvania-based JRB Strategies.*

January 2020: Bognet Announced His Campaign For PA-08

Bognet Touted Having Fought Against Liberals "Every Step Of The Way," And Said Cartwright's Vote For Impeachment Got Him Into The Race

Bognet Decided To Run After Cartwright Voted For Impeachment

Bognet Decided To Run After Cartwright Voted For Impeachment. "But like many Republicans inside and out of the administration, the Democratic drive to impeach Trump angered him, and he started watching his hometown Democratic congressman, Matt Cartwright, to see if he would vote against Trump. [...] But Cartwright did vote to impeach, prompting political predictor Charlie Cook to move his seat, Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District, into the 'toss-up' category. Twenty-one days later, Bognet resigned from his job and made plans to run in the GOP House primary in April to unseat Cartwright, citing impeachment as his motivation." [Examiner, 1/22/20]

Bognet Said He Had “Fought Liberal Democrats Every Step Of The Way” In His Career

January 2020: Bognet Announced His Campaign For PA-08. “Former Trump Administration appointee Jim Bognet on Thursday announced his candidacy for the 8th Congressional District seat. He is running as a Republican.” [Times Leader, 1/24/20]

Bognet Said He Had “Fought Liberal Democrats Every Step Of The Way” In His Career As A Republican Consultant. “A Hazleton native and a graduate of Penn State University, Bognet said he has spent his life fighting for conservative values across the country. From working for former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum and U.S. Rep. Lou Barletta, to senior roles on three presidential campaigns and on campaigns across the country, Bognet said he ‘has fought liberal Democrats every step of the way.’” [Times Leader, 1/24/20]

Bognet Called Cartwright Nancy Pelosi’s “Lapdog”

Bognet Called Cartwright Nancy Pelosi’s “Lapdog.” ““Northeastern Pennsylvania deserves a congressman who will support our great President Donald J. Trump,’ Bognet said. ‘I couldn't bear to see what Nancy Pelosi and her lapdog (U.S. Rep.) Matt Cartwright were doing to harm our country and our President. As a member of Nancy Pelosi's leadership team and under Pelosi's direction, Cartwright has spent this term in Congress working with Elizabeth Warren, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Ilhan Omar to smear President Trump. Patriots in Pennsylvania will not rest until Matt Cartwright loses the power to ever again support the fatally flawed impeachment against President Trump.’” [Times Leader, 1/24/20]

Bognet Said He Had Assembled Resources To Run A Grassroots Campaign

Bognet Said He Had Assembled Resources To Run A Grassroots Campaign. “Bognet said he has assembled a strong team of backers to raise the financial resources and build the grassroots campaign necessary to defeat Cartwright. Bognet announced Republican leader and President of Hayden Power Group, George Hayden Jr. of Mountain Top, as chairman of his fundraising committee.” [Times Leader, 1/24/20]

Foreign Policy

Romney Foreign Policy Plan

2008: As Economic Adviser To Mitt Romney, Bognet Said Romney Was Focused On Moving Muslim Nations “Forward Into Modernity”

2008: As Economic Adviser To Mitt Romney, Bognet Said Romney Was Focused On Moving Muslim Nations “Move Forward Into Modernity.” “On a question about Romney's foreign policy, Bognet answered: ‘Governor Romney talked over the last year about the need to fight radical jihads in the Middle East. He understands in many Muslim countries we need to help them move forward to modernity. We are going to need full work to help this troubled region move forward. It doesn't have a heck of a lot to do with economic policy here in the United States, but the government has been speaking out about the need to help moderate Muslim countries grow and expand and have healthy economies and get past the civil discord they have.’” [Standard-Speaker, 1/31/08]

Opioids

Bognet Sought To Institute A Death Penalty For “Drug Kingpins And Traffickers” As His First Bill In Congress

Bognet Sought To Institute A Death Penalty For “Drug Kingpins And Traffickers” As His First Bill In Congress. ““Stories about the opioid epidemic resonate with him. Two relatives died because of drugs. Bognet said

his first bill would establish a federal death penalty for drug kingpins and traffickers, but he also said the nation needs more counselors to provide treatment. ‘We have to help our addicts get back on their feet,’ he said.”
[Standard-Speaker, 1/24/20]

Taxes

Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT)

2007: Bognet, On Behalf Of Mitt Romney, Called For Congress To Be Able To Do Its Job In Dealing With The AMT, While Avoiding “Raising Taxes On Other Folks To Offset The AMT”

2007: Bognet, On Behalf Of Mitt Romney, Called For Congress To Be Able To Do Its Job In Dealing With The AMT, While Avoiding “Raising Taxes On Other Folks To Offset The AMT.” “Just one major campaign made a top policy adviser available to discuss the AMT. Many didn't respond at all to requests for the candidates' plans. ‘Congress should be allowed to do its job,’ said James Bognet, policy development director to Republican Mitt Romney. The former Massachusetts governor wants to ensure the AMT doesn't spread, and supports finding a temporary fix, though Mr. Bognet made clear that he defers to Congress on the nitty-gritty. ‘The easiest way to patch it is to index for inflation. . . . The governor doesn't support raising taxes on other folks to offset the AMT.’”
[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 11/25/07]

Professional History

Bognet Was A Trump Appointee To The Export-Import Bank Of The United States

January 2020: Times-Leader: “Bognet Recently Resigned His Position As A Trump Appointee At An Executive Branch Agency Dedicated To Supporting American Job Creation, Exports, And Manufacturing.”

January 2020: Times-Leader: “Bognet Recently Resigned His Position As A Trump Appointee At An Executive Branch Agency Dedicated To Supporting American Job Creation, Exports, And Manufacturing.” “Bognet recently resigned his position as a Trump appointee at an executive branch agency dedicated to supporting American job creation, exports, and manufacturing. Bognet said he left this position so he ‘could devote his full energy to fighting those responsible for the impeachment sham.’” [Times Leader, 1/24/20]

Bognet Worked As Senior Vice President For The Export-Import Bank Of The United States

Bognet Worked As Senior Vice President For The Export-Import Bank Of The United States. “Pennsylvanian James Bognet had been around local and presidential politics for a long time before landing a dream job as a senior vice president at the Export-Import Bank of the United States. ‘I was really honored to get a chance to work in the Trump administration,’ said Bognet, 44, a veteran of several campaigns, including those for former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and former GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney.” [Examiner, 1/22/20]

Bognet Ran A Political Consulting Firm, JRB Strategies

Bognet’s JRB Strategies Was Based Out Of Hazleton

Bognet Based His Political Consulting Firm, JRB Strategies, Out Of Hazleton. “Bognet, 44, based his political consulting business, JRB Strategies, in Hazleton and pays taxes there, which is where he started in politics.”
[Standard-Speaker, 1/24/20]

Bognet Founded The Firm In 2013. According to Bognet’s description of JRB Strategies on Facebook, he founded the firm in 2013. [Facebook, accessed [2/10/20](#)]



JRB Strategies

Founder and Managing Director · March 1, 2013 to present · Hazleton, Pennsylvania

Jim Bognet serves as Managing Director of JRB Strategies. JRB Strategies offers communications, public affairs, crisis communications and strategic counsel to major corporations, political campaigns, officeholders, start-ups, and emerging growth companies.

The firm executes public affairs projects for corporate clients including a major multi-billion dollar ride sharing company, a software company in the medical field, a premier NYC management consulting firm, and a large entertainment company.

JRB Strategies provides political candidates and ballot initiative campaigns with strategic consulting and campaign management services. Campaign assignments includes directing communications strategy, strategic assessments, policy advice and creating paid media campaigns, including TV and radio advertising.

[Facebook, accessed [2/10/20](#)]

Pennsylvania Secretary Of State Showed No Records For JRB Strategies

Pennsylvania Secretary Of State Showed No Records For JRB Strategies. According to searches run on the Pennsylvania Secretary of State’s website, the state had no records for JRB Strategies. [Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of State, Search Business Entities, accessed [2/10/20](#)]

Select Business Entity

Search Results for term *JRB Strategies* type: *Starting with*

No results found for search term

[Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of State, Search Business Entities, accessed [2/10/20](#)]

Searches For Just “JRB” Did Not Contain Entries Filed In The City Of Hazleton. According to searches run on the Pennsylvania Secretary of State’s website, the state had no records of an entity matching “JRB” that was located in Hazleton. [Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of State, Search Business Entities, accessed [2/10/20](#)]

Search Results for term *JRB* type: *Starting with*

Show 10 entries Filter Records

Business Entity Name	Name Type	Address	Entity Number	Entity Type	Status	Citizenship
No matching records found						

Showing 0 to 0 of 0 entries (filtered from 160 total entries) Previous Next

Please click on an entity name or number for viewing details

[Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of State, Search Business Entities, accessed [2/10/20](#)]

FEC Records Showed A JRB Consulting Based In Texas – But It Wasn’t Owned By Bognet

FEC Showed Disbursements To JRB Consulting LLC, A Firm Based In Texas. According to searches run on FEC, a variety of committees made disbursements to JRB Consulting LLC. The records indicate the firm was based in Texas. [FEC, accessed [2/10/20](#)]

Spender	Recipient	State	Description	Disbursement date	Amount
BLUEGRASS COMMITTEE	JRB CONSULTING LLC	TX	STRATEGIC CONSULTING-FINAL PAYMENT	09/03/2014	\$5,000.00
MCCONNELL SENATE COMMITTEE '14	JRB CONSULTING	TX	STRATEGY CONSULTING-FINAL PAYMENT	09/02/2014	\$10,000.00
MCCONNELL SENATE COMMITTEE '14	JRB CONSULTING	TX	STRATEGY CONSULTING	08/28/2014	\$11,100.00
BLUEGRASS COMMITTEE	JRB CONSULTING LLC	TX	STRATEGY CONSULTING	08/04/2014	\$5,000.00
MCCONNELL SENATE COMMITTEE '14	JRB CONSULTING	TX	STRATEGIC CONSULTING	08/04/2014	\$10,000.00
MARIANNE WILLIAMSON FOR CONGRESS	JRB EVENT SERVICES	CA	EVENT EQUIPMENT RENTAL	07/03/2014	\$815.40
BLUEGRASS COMMITTEE	JRB CONSULTING LLC	TX	STRATEGY CONSULTING	07/01/2014	\$5,000.00
MCCONNELL SENATE COMMITTEE '14	JRB CONSULTING	TX	STRATEGIC CONSULTING/RESEARCH	07/01/2014	\$46,197.36
BLUEGRASS COMMITTEE	JRB CONSULTING LLC	TX	STRATEGY CONSULTING	06/04/2014	\$5,000.00
BLUEGRASS COMMITTEE	JRB CONSULTING LLC	TX	STRATEGY CONSULTING	05/05/2014	\$5,000.00
MCCONNELL SENATE COMMITTEE '14	JRB CONSULTING	TX	RESEARCH	05/05/2014	\$18,140.00

[FEC, accessed [2/10/20](#)]

The Firm In Question Was Not Owned By Bognet. According to a search of the Texas Secretary of State's website, JRB Consulting LLC was owned by Johnny Bencomo. [Texas Secretary of State, accessed [2/10/20](#)]

Filing Number: 801080153
Original Date of Filing: January 29, 2009
Formation Date: N/A
Tax ID: 32038786706
Duration: Perpetual
Name: JRB CONSULTING, LLC
Address: 517 CABRILLO DR
 ODESSA, TX 79765 USA
Entity Type: Domestic Limited Liability Company (LLC)
Entity Status: In existence
FEIN:

REGISTERED AGENT	FILING HISTORY	NAMES	MANAGEMENT	ASSUMED NAMES	ASSOCIATED ENTITIES
Name Johnny R Bencomo		Address 517 Cabrillo Odessa, TX 79765 USA		Inactive Date	

[FEC, accessed [2/10/20](#)]

Note: According to databases for federal lobbying in the House and Senate as well as several state lobbying databases, Bognet was not a registered lobbyist.

Bognet Worked On Multiple Republican Campaigns, Including Presidential And Senate Races, And Had A Losing Record

Bognet: “The Reason You Do Campaigns Is To Get People You Believe In Elected. You Want To See Their Ideas And Policies Implemented.” “These days, politics gets him jumping. ‘The reason you do campaigns is to get people you believe in elected. You want to see their ideas and policies implemented,’ he said.” [Standard-Speaker, 3/25/09]

2018: Bognet Was CEO Of Martha McSally’s Senate Campaign

2018: Bognet Was CEO Of Martha McSally’s Senate Campaign. “Later, he assisted around the country on campaigns for president of Mitt Romney and candidates for governor, U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. Most recently, he was chief executive officer for the campaign of Martha McSally, a fighter pilot who won a Senate seat in Arizona two years ago.” [Standard-Speaker, 1/24/20]

McSally Lost Her Election To Kyrsten Sinema, But Was Appointed To Fill Sen. McCain’s Seat.

“Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey is appointing Republican Rep. Martha McSally to the Senate, Ducey said in a statement Tuesday. McSally narrowly lost a race this year to Democrat Kyrsten Sinema for Arizona's other Senate seat, which opened after Sen. Jeff Flake opted against seeking re-election. Instead, McSally will replace GOP Sen. Jon Kyl, who is resigning months after Ducey selected him in September to temporarily fill the seat of former Sen. John McCain, who died in August.” [CNN, [12/18/18](#)]

2012: Bognet Worked For Texas Lt Gov David Dewhurst, Who Lost To Ted Cruz In A Senate Primary

2012: Bognet Was Senior Advisor To Dewhurst's Senate Race. "The campaign of Dewhurst, who has the backing of officials such as Gov. Rick Perry and 2008 GOP presidential candidate Mike Huckabee, fired back with a statement from Jim Bognet, senior adviser to the campaign, saying Cruz is the one flailing and 'shamefully attempting to play the victim.' 'This is about Cruz's deception and lack of character,' Bognet said." [Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 5/26/12]

A Year After Dewhurst Lost, His Campaign Still Owed Vendors – Including Bognet -- Nearly \$1 Million. "It's been more than a year since Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst lost his bid to become a U.S. senator, but his campaign still owes consultants and vendors nearly \$1 million, Federal Election Commission records show. In a July filing, the Dewhurst For Texas federal campaign committee disclosed various 'debts and obligations' owed to consultants and other service providers, including top Republican consultants Dave Carney, Mike Baselice and Jim Bognet." [Texas Tribune, 8/13/13]

Bognet Was Owed \$112,885 For His General Consulting Services. "Here are some of the debts the Dewhurst Senate campaign still owes, according to the FEC: [...] \$112,885 to former general consultant and strategist Jim Bognet, a former top campaign aide to Mitt Romney." [Texas Tribune, 8/13/13]

Dewhurst Lost To Cruz In The Primary. "Ted Cruz, an insurgent backed by the Tea Party, easily defeated the candidate favored by Gov. Rick Perry on Tuesday in a runoff election for the Republican Senate nomination that revealed a wide rift in Texas between the party establishment and restless anti-incumbent activists on the right. With the come-from-behind victory over Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, Mr. Cruz is heavily favored to win the Senate seat being vacated in November by Kay Bailey Hutchison and appears likely to become a star of the national conservative movement. On Tuesday night, his unofficial margin of victory was 57 percent to 43 percent." [New York Times, [7/31/12](#)]

2009: Bognet Was Deputy Campaign Manager For California Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Steve Poizner

Bognet Was Deputy Campaign Manager For California Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Steve Poizner. "Jim Bognet was driving from Los Angeles to Sacramento to start a new job in a profession that keeps him on the move. 'It's a very transient lifestyle,' Bognet, 33, a Hazleton Area High School graduate, said Monday during his first day as deputy campaign manager for California Republican gubernatorial candidate Steve Poizner." [Standard-Speaker, 3/25/09]

Poizner Lost His Primary To Meg Whitman By Nearly A Million Votes. According to results from the 2010 California primary, Steve Poizner lost the nomination to Meg Whitman. Poizner earned 632,940 votes and Whitman earned 1,529,534 votes – a difference of 896,594 votes. [California Secretary of State, Statement of Vote for the Statewide Direct Primary Election, Page 45, [6/8/10](#)]

2008: Bognet Was A Communications Adviser For Sen. John McCain's Presidential Campaign

Bognet Was A Communications Adviser For Sen. John McCain's 2008 Presidential Campaign. "Bognet served 14 months with the campaign as policy development director, providing recommendations based on economic trends, writing op-ed articles and giving interviews to C-SPAN, The New York Times and other media. When Romney withdrew from the race, Bognet helped John McCain's campaign for the final months as a communications adviser." [Standard-Speaker, 3/25/09]

John McCain Did Not Win The Presidency. "Republican John McCain lost Tuesday's presidential election because he could not overcome a hostile economic environment, distance himself from an unpopular president or convince voters he could lead them out of the crisis." [Reuters, [11/5/08](#)]

2008: Bognet Was An Economics Advisor For Gov. Mitt Romney's Campaign In Massachusetts

2008: Bognet Was An Economics Advisor For Gov. Mitt Romney's Campaign In Massachusetts. "While Bognet planned to remain on the governor's staff after that, an opportunity arrived to join the presidential campaign of Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney as an economics adviser. Bognet served 14 months with the campaign as policy development director, providing recommendations based on economic trends, writing op-ed articles and giving interviews to C-SPAN, The New York Times and other media. When Romney withdrew from the race, Bognet helped John McCain's campaign for the final months as a communications adviser." [Standard-Speaker, 3/25/09]

Romney Dropped Out Of The 2008 Presidential Race. "Mitt Romney, the former Massachusetts governor who sought to position himself as the true conservative choice for the Republican presidential nomination, announced Thursday afternoon that he had ended his campaign." [New York Times, [2/7/08](#)]

2003: Bognet Worked On Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Gubernatorial Campaigns

2003-2006: Bognet Worked On Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Campaigns. "Bognet helped California's current governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, get elected in 2003. Since then, he has lived in Los Angeles, Sacramento, Washington, D.C. and Boston. He stayed in Schwarzenegger's administration as deputy economics adviser during the governor's first term. For Schwarzenegger's successful re-election in 2006, he was policy director for the campaign." [Standard-Speaker, 3/25/09]

2002: Bognet Worked On Lou Barletta's House Race

2002: Bognet Worked On Lou Barletta's Unsuccessful House Race. "In 2002, he came back from law school to help Lou Barletta in an unsuccessful run for the House seat that Barletta later captured." [Standard-Speaker, 1/24/20]

Bognet Was Paid \$676,393.33 From Federal Campaigns He Worked And Consulted On

Disbursements from Federal Campaigns to Bognet			
Year	Campaign	Amount (\$)	Notes
2018	Martha McSally for Senate Inc	\$47,875.42	Strategy Consulting
2014	Dr. Monica Wehby for US Senate	\$709.02	Reimb. Expenses
2012	Dewhurst for Texas	\$510,748.49	Consulting; Media Consulting
2008	Romney for President Inc	\$89,327.45	Payroll; Travel
2008	McCain-Palin 2008 Inc	\$22,982.16	Communications Consulting
2008	John McCain 2008	\$4,750.79	GOTV Consulting
TOTAL		\$676,393.33	

[FEC, accessed [2/11/20](#)]

Personal Political History

Personal Political Donations

Jim Bognet Has Given \$750 To Federal Political Candidates

According to the Federal Election Commission, Jim Bognet has given \$750 to federal political candidates.

Jim Bognet Political Giving History - Federal			
Date	Candidate (Office Sought) or Committee	Party	Amount
9/19/17	Lou Barletta for Senate	R	\$500
		Total	\$750

[FEC, Individual Contribution Search, accessed [4/21/20](#)]

Public Records

Voter Activity

Bognet Was Registered To Vote In Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District

Jim Bognet Was Registered To Vote In PA-08. [Votebuilder, accessed 4/21/20]

Bognet Voted Sporadically In Pennsylvania

Jim Bognet Voting History (1998-2019)	
Year	Description
2019	Did not vote
2018	Voted in the general and primary elections.
2017	Did not vote
2016	Did not vote
2015	Did not vote
2014	Did not vote
2013	Did not vote
2012	Did not vote
2011	Did not vote
2010	Voted in the general election
2009	Did not vote
2008	Did not vote
2007	Did not vote
2006	Did not vote
2005	Did not vote
2004	Did not vote
2003	Did not vote
2002	Did not vote
2001	Did not vote
2000	Did not vote
1999	Did not vote
1998	Did not vote

[Votebuilder, accessed 4/21/20]

Associated Entities

According to Bognet's Personal Financial Disclosure, he was paid by the following organizations:

Jim Bognet – Associated Entities (Compensation in Excess of \$5,000 Paid By One Source)	
Source	Brief Description of Duties
U.S. Government Executive Agency Appointment	SVP at ExIm

Martha McSally for Senate (Phoenix, AZ, US)	CEO of Campaign in 2018
JRB Strategies (Hazle Township, PA, US)	Founder/Owner/Managing Director of Small Business
Elevate Public Affairs (Los Angeles, CA, US)	Public Affairs services
Winning Kick Strategies (Hazle Township, PA, US)	Strategy/Media Consulting

[House Clerk, 2020 Personal Financial Disclosure, filed [3/28/20](#)]

NOTE: Further research necessary into Jim Bognet's associated entities.