



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FINDINGS IN THE COMPLAINT OF
George Amedore Jr. -v Mark Blanchfield
Complaint 2008-2
Mark Blanchfield v George Amedore Jr.
Complaint 2008-3 and 2008-4

Fair Campaign Practices For The Capital Region Inc. (FCP) held hearings September 29, 2008 to consider a complaint made by George Amedore Jr. against Mark Blanchfield and complaints made by Mark Blanchfield against George Amedore Jr. Both are candidates for the New York State Assembly in the 105th Assembly District.

Present were hearing panel members: Katherine Henrikson (chair), Jeannine Laverty, Helen MacDonald, James Ruhl, Linda Ward, and Joan Elliott (president). Also present was Coordinator Betsey Swan. Thomas Buchanan, Schenectady County Republican Party chairperson and Anita Thayer, Working Families Party steering committee chairperson were ex officio representatives. Both Mr. Amedore and Mr. Blanchfield attended the meeting. Michael Cuevas represented Mr. Amedore.

Complaint 2008-2

George Amedore Jr. complained that Mark Blanchfield broadcast a radio advertisement that intentionally distorted one of Mr Amedore's public comments. In response to a question, Mr. Amedore had said:

...I have building in my blood, that's my job. I don't look at the Assembly position as my job, I look at it as serving, giving back..

Mr. Blanchfield's radio advertisement said in part:

"Listen to what George Amedore said about being our Assemblyman in his own words: 'I have building in my blood, that's my job. I don't look at the Assembly position as my job,'" (sound of brakes) Did Assemblyman Amedore really say the Assembly wasn't his top priority?" 'I have building in my blood, that's my job. I don't look at the Assembly position as my job,' Similar quotes were used in automated telephone advertisements.

FINDING: UNFAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICE

The radio and automated advertisements violate principle #4: a candidate will not permit distortion or falsification of facts regarding an opponent. By using only the first sentence, "I don't look at the Assembly position as my job" and omitting the second sentence, "I look at it as serving, giving back," the advertisements distort Mr. Amedore's attitude towards his position in the Assembly. This distortion is further amplified by Mr. Blanchfield's implication, without basis in fact, that the Assemblyman's elective position was not his top priority. There is a long tradition in New York State of citizen-legislators who serve as lawmakers in addition to their regular occupations. Mr. Amedore considers himself in that tradition.

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Fair Campaign Practices For The Capital Region, Inc.

First Complaint: 2008-3

Mark Blanchfield's first complaint dealt with a flyer that was paid for by the Schenectady County Republican Committee. The flyer said, "Blanchfield and the Albany political bosses are distorting George Amedore's words. Don't believe their lies!" The flyer did not, however, describe what Mr. Blanchfield had said that was untrue, although the parties agreed at the hearing that the alleged untruths were the ads that distorted Assemblyman Amedore's stated feelings about serving in the Assembly.

FINDING: UNFAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICE

Candidates are admonished that when they use words attacking their opponent's character, they must assure that such words are used truthfully. Ideally, when characterizing an opponent in an unfavorable moral light, as was the case here with use of the word, "lies", the candidate preparing the materials should be specific about the material s/he considers to be untruthful. Failure to adhere to these requirements creates the risk that the materials will constitute a misleading attack on the character of an opponent, in violation of Principle #2. It creates a further risk that such materials will violate Principle #4 by using material that distorts or falsifies facts regarding an opponent. In this particular case, the political flyer would have violated both Principles #2 and #4 had it been issued by the Amedore campaign. Although the ads in question were misleading, they did not contain lies. To characterize the offensive material as such, is in itself both a character attack and misleading. In this particular case, Assemblyman Amedore violated Principle #7: promptly disavow the actions of any group which violates this Statement of Principles. The flyer was paid for by the Schenectady County Republican Committee on Mr. Amedore's behalf. Since it was in violation of two principles, Mr. Amedore had a duty under Principle #7 to promptly disavow the flyer.

Second Complaint: 2008-4

Mr. Blanchfield's second complaint was about an anonymous web site that attacked his character and record as a Schenectady City Councilman. The website characterized Mr. Blanchfield as a "Union Buster". The parties agreed that this characterization was untrue. Mr. Amedore denied any knowledge of the origin of the web site, although he stated at the hearing that he had been aware of its existence since August. It was unclear when Assemblyman Amedore became aware of its offensive nature. Mr. Amedore issued a press release dated September 29, 2008 repudiating the website and calling for its immediate removal.

NO FINDING

Because Mr. Amedore has disavowed the web site, and because it is unclear when he became aware of its offensive nature, FCP will not issue a finding in this matter. However, the panel notes that Principle #7 does call on candidates to "*promptly*" {emphasis added} disavow support from individuals or groups who violate this Statement of Principles. While these anonymous web sites are very difficult to police, candidates have a duty to disavow websites as soon as the unfair material is brought to their attention.

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Candidates are advised not to misrepresent these findings. Misleading quotation or misrepresentation of Fair Campaign Practices Findings constitute an unfair campaign practice.

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