

# GRAND RAPIDS DEM TELLING PEOPLE TO SHUT UP ABOUT CHOICE AGAIN

Even as Rick Santorum was losing MI, largely because he attacked women's autonomy, the same local operative who told me I wasn't well-informed enough to express an opinion on my own congressional district's politics was telling Howie Klein he should not criticize Trevor Thomas' presumed primary challenger, Steve Pestka, for his anti-choice views. Here's what Howie said:

Today we now know Trevor will have a challenger for the Democratic nomination. Steve Pestka, who has started talking to the local media about his campaign, may be a nominal Democrats... but not when it comes to equality for women. This guy is an anti-Choice fanatic of the Bart Stupak school of misogyny. MIRS, the Michigan political news service, reported:

[snip]

We reported earlier this month about rumors that folks with the local Grand Rapids establishment were looking at an anti-Choice, multimillionaire conservative who'd run on the Democratic ticket. It's now clear they found Pestka. They apparently miss the fact that this election is going to be about the working and middle class families hurting right now— not millionaires like Pestka and Amash— and it's quickly now turning to the rights of women.

[snip]

Trevor is the fighting progressive we need. He comes from a working class

family and he has a record of helping to pass major federal legislation, namely the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. But he needs our help to be the nominee against Amash. As we know, early dollars are critical. Let's help spread the word and work to stop this faux-Democratic challenge and stand by our party's platform to help protect women now.

And here's what Phil Skaggs wrote on Facebook:

Trevor Thomas, I'm calling on you to publicly disavow this attack on Steve Pestka. To call someone who has been a Democratic County Commissioner, a Democratic State Representative, and a supporter of Democratic and progressive candidates for decades a "nominal Democrats" [sic] and a misogynist is simply juvenile and "not consistent with the facts."

Trevor, when Marcy Wheeler called Grand Rapids Democrats "bigots" for not immediately supporting you, you told me personally that you did not tell her anything of the sort and didn't believe such things about us. But, again and again, your friends and surrogates have attacked hard-working, long-time Democrats and progressives in Kent County. Steve Pestka is a West Michigan Democrat with West Michigan values. The last thing we need are folks coming from Washington and Lansing carpet-bagging here with their hyper-partisan rhetoric and hatred. That's not our way.

Trevor Thomas, I call on you to publicly demand that your friends stop their negative and personal attacks on Grand Rapids Democrats and Steve Pestka.

Note, Skaggs didn't dispute that Pestka is anti-choice. He just objects that someone insulted what he calls Pestka's "West Michigan values" using language Howie has used to describe Dems

across the country—including far more conservative areas than Grand Rapids—who believe women should not have autonomy.

Now, first of all, you'd think Skaggs would be honest enough to mention I apologized (both in a post and to him directly via email) for using the word "bigot." Apparently, repeated good faith apologies are not enough for him. Or, he prefers to dishonestly leave the impression that I haven't apologized.

But I'm even more offended that Skaggs talked to Trevor about my post, as if those two men were in charge of what I was allowed to say or not, as if Trevor (or frankly, anyone else) tells me what to say in my posts. (Maybe Phil just repeated whatever political people told him to write back when he blogged, but I do not.)

I am not Trevor's "surrogate." I am a voter in Grand Rapids who expressed an opinion about my own congressional district. And in response to that Skaggs told me I shouldn't speak.

In a democracy, you see, citizens are permitted to express opinions.

One more thing. Skaggs goes on to write,

Steve's photo is from a fundraiser for the Michigan League of Conservation Voters this past summer. Steve Pestka was a host and has been a long-time supporter of environmental causes our pure Michigan. Indeed, in his years in the State House he had a 100% voting record on environmental issues as scored by the LCV. But Trevor and his surrogates don't know any of this (in part because they didn't live in the district this past August).

I assume Skaggs was including me again in that claim that "they didn't live in the district this past August." Skaggs' repeated erroneous claims about when I did and didn't live in Grand Rapids is getting downright stalkerish,

particularly since I told him clearly I've lived here longer than that (as would be apparent if he read my blog).

But I find it really funny that Skaggs—who told me he moved here in 2000—is trying to attack Trevor (who was born and raised just outside Grand Rapids) as a carpet-bagger and me because I haven't been here long enough to have valid views. Apparently, I must be indoctrinated in "West Michigan values" before I'll be permitted to speak.

I'm being told by a local Dem party activist 1) we shouldn't talk critically about the local party for actively supporting a guy who—like Bart Stupak, may be otherwise great but opposes autonomy for women, and 2) I'm not entitled to an opinion anyway because I haven't lived here long enough (no matter that he can't seem to figure out how long I've lived here).

So it's paternalism on top of paternalism, from an activist with the Democratic Party.

Even Rick Santorum figured out, the hard way, that doesn't fly in this day and age, not even in the most conservative parts of MI.