

MI'S 3RD CD: "WEST MICHIGAN VALUES" OF EXCLUSION, OR AMERICAN VALUES OF EQUALITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL?

I was disappointed with Steve Pestka's announcement to run for the 3rd CD. While he promised jobs, he also repeated the "West Michigan Values" phrase a top Kent County Dem used when telling me and others to shut up. And he suggested he was running against extremists.

"I will fight for jobs and for West Michigan values, instead of for extreme political views from either side that lead us nowhere."

Really, "extreme political views"? Is Pestka suggesting that Trevor Thomas, who worked for and was endorsed by MI's moderate former Governor, Jennifer Granholm, is extreme?

Does Pestka think that working in bipartisan fashion to help men and women who have served their country win equal rights is "extreme"? Does he think fighting to help Eric Alva, who lost a leg in the opening hours of the Iraq War, be treated equally by the government is extreme? Here's what Alva says in an endorsement of Trevor today:

My name is Eric Alva and I was the first American wounded in the war in Iraq. On March 21, 2003, just three hours into the invasion, I triggered a landmine.

I was thrown through the air, landing 15 feet away. As my fellow Marines were cutting away my uniform, I wondered why they weren't removing my right boot. I would learn later that my leg was

already gone. I served my country for 13 years as a Marine receiving the Purple Heart for my service.

I met Trevor Thomas while working with a coalition of bipartisan forces to repeal the discriminatory *"Don't Ask, Don't Tell"* law. Trevor was a key voice and strategist in repealing D.A.D.T. He helped me tell my story on World News Tonight with Diane Sawyer.

Trevor worked tirelessly on behalf of thousands of members of the military to create a more just and equal world.

The suggestion that someone who has fought for a "more just and equal world" is extreme and the invocation of "West Michigan values" precisely when people try to raise Steve Pestka's past efforts to roll back women's autonomy concerns me.

Make a case why you're the better Democrat to represent the working men and women of Grand Rapids. Explain how you'll help create jobs.

But I always thought Democrats fought for the American values of equality and justice. Folks keep telling me I haven't lived in Grand Rapids long enough to know about West Michigan values. But if those values say fighting for equality for women and our service members is extreme, then I prefer good old-fashioned American values.