

February 25, 2020

Bjorn Handeen
Kootenai County Central Committee

Dear Bjorn,

Please accept this letter as my response to your request for a statement on the
anonymously owned and authored fake news website that has made untruthful allegations against
1 me, and which are plainly intended to benefit Tim Kastning, my opponent in the race for Idaho
House Seat 2B. My understanding is that you are acting on behalf of the Kootenai County
Central Committee.

2 Although I have been advised by some to not respond to your request, unless, or until,
you have answered the questions that come later in this letter, I decided that since I have nothing
to hide, I will address the ridiculous allegations made about me on the fake news website
anyway.

3 To begin, the fake news website's anonymous author, and in turn Don Bradway via an
email he sent to Legislative District 2 precinct committee people, both accuse me of contributing
money to Democrats. However, I didn't make the contributions to which Mr. Bradway takes
exception. In fact, I neither wrote nor approved those checks. Furthermore, that was not my
money, and I have *never* personally contributed money to anyone but Republican candidates. As
for the referenced PAC controlled by my employer, it has contributed infinitely more to
Republicans and Republican causes than to Democrats. Don Bradway even goes so far to
suggest in his email that my employers' handful of contributions to Democrats constitutes a
cardinal sin. But, how can he reconcile that position with the fact that President Trump has

contributed massive amounts of money to Democrats in the past. Doesn't Mr. Bradway still support President Trump? Has he instead become a Bernie supporter? I don't believe that to be true. Rather, I think Mr. Bradway is simply trying to help his close friend Tim Kastning when he says things like this about me.

4 When considering the comparatively few contributions to Democrats made over the years by my employers, I think it is important to remember that Donald Trump has also contributed vast sums of money to Democrats, including Joe Biden, Chuck Schumer, and Kamala Harris (2019, Politico), and that he considers doing so a standard business practice. President Trump's response, when his political opponents question his past contributions to Democrats, is to explain that is how the system is set up for conducting business. And, if you don't like it, change the system instead of asking him to not participate in it. I still emphatically support President Trump. And, I strongly suspect that Don Bradway does too.

5 Next, the absurd allegation that a former Ada County Commissioner conducted an investigation of my employers is completely untrue and utter nonsense. There was no investigation by the county, or anyone else, as alleged by the anonymous author of the fake news website. Instead, the fake news website is attempting pass off a former commissioner's completely nutty and unofficial claim that she made about my employers almost a decade ago on her personal blog site. This same person also made similarly outlandish claims against others around the same time. Including, alleging that the retired member of law enforcement who ran against her and defeated her for her county commission seat had previously murdered a police officer (2012, Boise Guardian; Boise Weekly). That was nonsense too. As I am sure you are completely aware, just because someone is willing to put something crazy on the Internet does not make it true.

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Next, the anonymous author of the fake news website claims that the secret motivation behind my run for office is to pass gambling legislation. That is a bald-faced lie. I don't trust people who claim they can read minds. Hopefully you don't either. I have no interest in gambling issues, and I am completely willing to recuse myself from any future legislation that expands gambling. And, I will point out again that these completely unfounded claims appear to have only been put forward for the sole purpose of aiding my opponent, Tim Kastning.

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I am actually running because I want to try and be the right kind of legislator for our community. I think we need more people like Steve Vick in the state legislature, for example. And, although he sets an admittedly high bar, it is one that I would absolutely shoot for. Unfortunately, most folks are understandably unwilling to subject themselves and their families to unfair and unscrupulous activities, like the mean-spirited nonsense we are discussing right now.

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The fake news website in question also alleges that I have a conflict of interest with a business partner who was finishing his term as a racing commissioner when I joined him on a board of directors. This is not true. Before I joined that board, the company's principals first requested that the Governor review my proposed appointment to specifically rule out any potential conflicts with the soon-to-rotate commissioner. And, the Governor approved the relationship before I joined. So, no surprise, there is absolutely nothing to this allegation either.

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Lastly, the fake news website's anonymous author points to a fine I had to pay after not correctly packing a firearm at an airport. Big deal. I travel with firearms all of the time. I am a competitive shooter, a hunter, and an avid supporter of our 2nd amendment rights. I got fined for my mistake and I paid it.

10 There are a handful of other smaller, silly statements, allegations, and mistruths throughout the webpage directed at me. But, like the above they are nonsense. So, for the sake of brevity, I will not waste your time or my own bothering with every tiny piece of fake news. Instead, please keep in mind that the website's sole motivation is to publish fake news about me in order to get my opponent elected. Please treat it with the contempt that it deserves.

11 Consistent with the confrontation clause within the 6th amendment of the U.S. Constitution, I believe that I should have the right to face my accusers in this instance. Former Supreme Court Justice, Antonin Scalia, explained that "it is always more difficult to tell a lie about a person 'to his face' than 'behind his back'" (Coy, 487 U.S at 1019). And, "since 1895, the Supreme Court has stressed the role of the jury to assess the witness, *not the defendant*, to determine the witness's credibility" (Coy, 487 U.S. at 1019, emphasis added).

12 I hope you and the central committee will focus on the anonymous accusers instead of those they are unwilling to accuse in person. Idaho State Representative Ron Mendive recently said, "making accusations, true or false, we need to investigate the accusers first, or we will never get anyone worth having run for office" (January 25, 2020, Town Hall Meeting at Candlelight Christian Fellowship).

13 Since I have responded in detail to your query, I want to ask you something important, Bjorn: Did you question any of the people *who would actually benefit from the negative allegations* directed toward me before you asked me to defend myself from the anonymous attacks? I think that would have been appropriate.

14 As you are probably aware, the fake news website's owner(s) went to great lengths to secretly purchase their web address by employing a privacy company to buy the URL on their

behalf just so they could hide the true ownership information from the public and operate anonymously (<https://lookup.icann.org/>).

15 It seems that the most appropriate focus for your investigation here is to determine who are the owners/authors of the site and what, if any, relationship they have to the beneficiary and his close supporters.

16 To that end, although I make absolutely no accusations against Tim Kastning or Don Bradway, it does seem logical and appropriate to ask the intended beneficiaries of the fake news if they might know who is actually hiding behind the proverbial curtain.

17 Consider, for example, when there is an attempt on the life of someone with a large life insurance policy, the would-be beneficiary is, at least initially, the primary person of interest in that investigation. The obvious corollary in this case would be Tim Kastning, and those who want to do all they can to get him elected.

18 I know you are not a criminal detective by profession, but I imagine that if you were, you might begin an investigation of the fake news website in this case by asking at least the following handful of questions:

1. Is the beneficiary of the fake news website, or are his close friends, involved in any way with the website or its content?
2. If not, have they communicated with those who own, operate, or who are intermediaries with those who own and/or operate the website?
- 19 3. Who, *other* than Tim Kastning, could possibly gain as much from the innuendo, half-truths, and lies that the website directs toward me?
4. What does Mr. Kastning say he knows about the ownership and authorship of the website?

5. Who does Don Bradway say owns the website, and/or authored its contents?
(After all, Mr. Bradway seemingly had early information regarding the website's existence, as he is the first person I am aware of who shared a link to the newly created website with other people.)
6. Did Tim Kastning, or Don Bradway perhaps, even fund the website in whole or part, either directly or indirectly? (I suspect not, but an investigator would still ask this question.)
7. Would they be willing to share their credit card records for the time periods surrounding the purchase of the URL and the purchase of the subscription to the website?
8. Have either Tim Kastning or Don Bradway contributed, or know anyone who has contributed, to the website's content?
9. If it is someone else, did the anonymous author at any time request input from either Tim Kastning or Don Bradway?
10. How did Mr. Kastning and Mr. Bradway initially learn of the fake news website's existence?

19 Cont.

Please let me know what your investigation is able to discover, including the owner(s) and/or author(s) of the fake news website, as well as any contributors. Any information you have, or acquire in the future, will be very interesting and could be helpful to law enforcement.

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It is my understanding that the Idaho Secretary of State and the Attorney General's offices are presently examining this fake news website over apparent violations of at least state election laws. And, depending on who owns, authors, and/or contributes to the website's

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content, an investigation into unlawful cooperation, coordination, and/or consultation with a candidate, or his agents, could follow.

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Sadly, but not surprisingly, the owner(s), author(s), and contributors to the fake news website seem to be willing to lie, cheat, steal, and even break the law, just to help their chosen candidate win. Republicans are supposed to be better than this. A lot better.

Sincerely,

Doug Okuniewicz

Links

<https://boiseguardian.com/2012/06/28/ullman-assassinates-cases-character-on-facebook/>

https://www.idahopress.com/boiseweekly/blogs/citydesk/sharon-ullman-s-not-too-friendly-facebook-post-about-dave/article_7b808056-3b1e-5dbe-93a8-8980ddeb5333.html

https://www.idahopress.com/boiseweekly/best_of_boise/public_eye/best-awkward/article_abde2cb7-65a9-58c0-a37f-fb0d9200467e.html

<https://www.politico.com/story/2019/03/05/2020-presidential-dems-trump-money-1202938>

<https://lookup.icann.org/>