

From: Randy Wertz [<mailto:wertzer@montgomerycountyva.gov>]

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Subject: Last Sunday's Editorial

Folks,

I know that many of you read the editorial in last Sunday's Roanoke Times regarding my office. In the last few weeks, The Roanoke Times and especially, Christian Trejbal, have been attacking the Montgomery County Electoral Board and the Registrar's Office. Someone not familiar with the individuals involved or the process for becoming a candidate would wonder what is going on. I will attempt with this email to give everyone some more background, which Mr. Trejbal and his cohorts do not want you to know.

Let's begin with how Mr. Trejbal got involved in the Christiansburg Town Mayoral and Council races. Soon after the deadline passed for candidates to file for these races, an individual within the campaign for the candidate who was running for Mayor, asked for copies of the petitions filed by their opponent. We provided the information, and soon after this Mr. Trejbal came by our office and asked to review the same information. We provided the information to him and before he left our office, he informed me that several of the names on the petitions were obtained prior to January 1, 2010. In reviewing the petitions, I found this to be true and immediately contacted the Secretary of the State Board of Elections while Mr. Trejbal was present to determine what actions needed to be taken. The Secretary directed me to the Assistant Director of Elections, and he gave us instructions on how to resolve this issue. The candidate had more than enough signatures to be qualified so we simply replaced the ones that should not have been utilized.

One would ask why these names were used and it is quite simple. The General Registrar-Electoral Board Handbook provided by the State Board of Elections, clearly states, "The person who signs a candidate's petition must be a registered voter at the time the petition was filed by the candidate. The petition search results grid in VERIS will return only those registered voters who were registered on or before the date the petitions were filed." This is what my staff followed in reviewing the petitions for all candidates. The staff was following the instructions for reviewing petitions provided to us by the State Board of Elections.

It should also be said that my office has always taken the position to assist those individuals wanting to run for office. The process to become a candidate is an arduous one and many decide not to run for office because of it. So our position has always been to assist people to get on the ballot and let the voters make the decision, not us! In this particular instance, a small group of people were desperately trying to disqualify the opponent to their candidate. They tried everything – even trying to disqualify several names on a petition where the person carrying the petition also signed it. They were saying we should disqualify all of the names, when we only disqualified the name of the person carrying the petition. To ensure we were correct on this, we contacted the State Board of Elections and they confirmed our actions. **It is also ironic that the candidate of the people trying to disqualify their opponent was endorsed by Mr. Trejbal and The Roanoke Times.**

The Montgomery County Electoral Board and the Registrar's Office have always worked extremely hard to ensure fair and equitable elections. Just ask the candidates who have run in past elections.

They all get treated the same and we try to provide the best customer service to those who have chosen to run for office. Our approach also goes for voter registration. Although a couple of years ago, we were accused of trying to keep the students at Virginia Tech from registering, we have never done so. When I first became registrar, I contacted the registrars in localities similar to ours with a university within their borders, i.e. Charlottesville, Albemarle County, Fairfax County, Williamsburg, etc. They dealt with the students differently. I chose not to make a distinction between a student and a regular registrant. The student was 18 years of age and was an adult. Therefore, they can make the decision where they want to vote. This policy has been upheld by the State Board of Elections with their updated registration policy and we were fortunate to have one of our Board Members, Ms. Cynthia Chappelka, as one of the Committee members to write this new policy.

Do Mr. Trejbal and the staff of the NRV Office have an agenda? You can decide for yourself based on these facts. They did not tell you this and would not because it would damage their credibility and their story. We believe there is no other explanation for their actions. We have always been transparent, as Mr. Trejbal indicated in his editorial, and we will continue to do so.

Everyone has always been told not to fight the newspaper because they have unlimited use of ink and paper. However, I felt it important that you get the whole story and not just one side of it. Whatever happened to the news media we grew up with? You know the one that gave you the facts and then let you make up your own mind. Today's media tries to tell you what to think – including The Roanoke Times.

Some of you have called to express your support. The Electoral Board, Freda, Glenna and I appreciate it. We need to make sure we don't lose the support of the voters so if you feel compelled to do so, would you consider writing a Letter to the Editor in support of this office? The public needs to know that Mr. Trejbal or Ms. Carter do not speak for everyone within Montgomery County. If you would consider doing so, you can send your letter using the following email address: letters@roanoke.com. Thank you again for your support.

Randy

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