

# 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.

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## **THE EMPTYWHEEL PRIMARY TRASH TALK**

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Primary you ask? Well silly, because today is the Super Tuesday of GOP primaries in both Michigan and Arizona. My Mormons versus Marcy's Hutaree. Gonna throw down baby.

I want to tell you how thrilling the excitement of the Republican primary has been for us here in Arizona. Except, well, I can't. Because it hasn't. It is now 5:00 pm here on the day of the primary, and I have not seen one single campaign ad on television. Other than a flurry of coverage on the day of the debate here, Nada. Zero. Zilch. As for campaign signs, which are always up everywhere in my busy area that sits at the intersection of Arcadia, Paradise Valley and Scottsdale. There are major roads leading to a lot of voters – many of them affluent – and this is a quite Republican district (it elected Ben Quayle handily just as an indicator). The pitiful tiny little Santorum sign in the picture above is the only sign I have seen within a two mile radius. That's it.

As for Michigan, Marcy reports the same there. CNN and MSNBC says the GOP candidates have been traipsing around Michigan, but Marcy has not seen much in the way of advertising or excitement either. Charlie Pierce gives a rundown on the wonderful candidates in Michigan. Here is what Marcy reported on Twitter yesterday about the level of excitement:

Honestly though, it just seems like a

non-event to me. I have yet to see an  
ad-not TV, direct mail, robo, signs.  
Nothing!

So, two decent sized primaries in pretty  
interesting states, for differing reasons,  
and....bupkis.

It looks like Romney has Arizona solid unless  
there is a major upset, which is not shocking  
with the large contingent of Mormons here. But  
Michigan has been shockingly tight given  
Romney's roots there, and that could really be  
interesting depending on how a few key counties  
go. And Ron Paul has better strength than you  
think in Michigan. So this is a thread for  
election chatter, and anything else in the world  
you got (hint FOOTBALL and other sports, etc!).

On piece of pretty interesting news today,  
Olympia Snowe has announced she is retiring  
after this term and will not run, so there is a  
scramble underway up in Maine. The big Dem names  
floated so far to replace Snowe are current  
Representatives Chellie Pingree and Mike  
Michaud, as well as former Representative Tom  
Allen. Of those, it is hard not to think Pingree  
has the edge, and she is already thinking about  
it hard. This could be a great pickup  
opportunity for the Dems in the Senate, and  
would sure help the effort to keep the majority  
control of the Senate. DDay has more.

So, with that, let's hoop and yak it up for The  
Emptywheel Primary! Music by Bo Diddley and  
Roadrunner, which he first released in 1960.