

MARK BREWER AND STEVE PESTKA: TAKING THE “DEMOCRATIC” OUT OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

As MLive reports, the state Chair of MI's Democratic Party, Mark Brewer, has asked the Democratic primary candidates in my congressional district to take the democracy out of the primary.

He doesn't call it that, mind you. His DoubleSpeak for asking Steve Pestka and Trevor Thomas not to talk about each other's record is “Clean and Fair Campaign Agreement.”

I write today to ask you both to put [commitments to focus on Justin Amash] in writing by signing and abiding by the enclosed “Clean and Fair Democratic Primary Campaign Agreement.”

One of the clauses in the proposed agreement is:

To avoid attacks on each other's records and positions by any means, **including the media**, campaign literature, advertisements, phone calls, mailings, e-mail and speaking engagements. [my emphasis]

Apparently, the guy running MI's Democratic Party thinks it's “fair” to voters to gag all discussion of candidates' past records. And Steve Pestka, who said he will sign this gag order, agrees!

A couple of notes about this proposed gag order.

This is yet another attempt (at least the fifth I have heard or witnessed over the course of this primary) by leaders in the Democratic

Party—the same one running against the GOP’s war on women—to silence all discussion of Democrats’ own attacks on women’s autonomy. As far as I’m aware, the only part of Pestka’s record that Thomas has addressed (thus far) was his anti-choice votes while serving in the MI House (indeed, MLive suggests that’s what this is about, as well). Pestka’s campaign, meanwhile, just wanders around saying Thomas has no record (ignoring, of course, Thomas’ role in getting DADT repealed; apparently that doesn’t count).

So this is not about gagging discussion on a policy that Justin Amash would use to bash the Democrat, cause he’s rabidly anti-choice too. Rather, it is about preventing voters from learning what Steve Pestka did the last time voters entrusted him to represent their interests. Mark Brewer’s idea of a “fair” primary is to prevent women from being reminded that Pestka’s record includes a history of legislating against women’s autonomy.

Apparently, we girls aren’t allowed to hold him accountable for voting against our interests.

Furthermore, Brewer built this gag order to be asymmetrical. He didn’t ask Pestka and Thomas to avoid talking about their **own** records—meaning Pestka would be gagged from mentioning he served in the House and Thomas would be gagged from talking about his role in a key civil rights victory. Rather, this gag order would allow Pestka to continue sending out lit pointing to his time in the State House as one thing that qualifies him to serve in Congress, without allowing Thomas to point out some of the terrible votes he made while there.

If you’re going to gag discussion about past records, Chairman Brewer, you’ve got to gag discussion on both sides!

There’s one more really disgusting aspect to this gag order. Brewer attempts to gag not just the campaign itself, but both his reference to “the media” in the passage above and in the scope of those the candidates would have to gag

if they agreed to this—"campaign teams, including staff, surrogates, advisors, consultants, vendors and volunteers"—people far beyond Thomas himself. I'm not formally part of Thomas' campaign at all (I have donated to his campaign, though), but I am "the media." I also happen to be a 3rd CD voter who finds the paternalistic way the Democrats have pushed Pestka—"shut up girls! don't talk about his anti-choice record!"—to be profoundly anti-woman. Is Chairman Brewer really proposing that Thomas be fined every time I speak, as a 3rd CD voter and registered Democrat, for the importance of a candidate who fully supports women's rights?

That's what the Democratic Party has come to?

Who knows. Maybe there's a bright side to this. Pestka's campaign loves to attack Thomas—who grew up, went to college, and worked in the area, then returned home after succeeding in DC—as a "carpetbagger." Since this gag order also imposes a fine for personal attacks, I assume Pestka's campaign will start doling out \$1000 to a charity of Thomas' choice every time they continue to make such stupid attacks.

Maybe Thomas should name Planned Parenthood as the charity Pestka will have to donate to?