**Letter to the Editor**

**June 20, 2018**

Politics is a messy business. This is especially true when it comes to campaign rhetoric in an era where five-second posts and large font mailers are the norm.

Attacks are made, responses get lost, and soon the voter finds themselves in a vortex of the now common lexicon of “fake news,” and frankly doesn’t know what to believe.

I have represented Mount Pleasant and Charleston in the South Carolina Legislature for 2 years now and have enjoyed my time serving my hometown on issues like infrastructure funding, flooding relief, conservation efforts, and the restructuring of our state government to make it more accountable.

The negative side of my public service is that I get to deal with cyber stalking, slander against my business and family, and ridiculous claims that are floated into the ether that have no grounding in reality.

Good times. It is no wonder we see fewer and fewer qualified people willing to step up and serve.

The truth is not always easily articulated, and hack websites and social media trolls don’t like anything that cannot be summarized with a hashtag. The purpose of this missive is not to complain but to set the record straight so voters can make an informed decision in next Tuesday’s primary run-off.

It is wordy I’ll admit, but sometimes people want to read the truth and not just a headline.

My opponent’s primary platform (having unsuccessfully run for this office three times) has been to attack me, and given the fact that we are in a run-off, it unfortunately shows that negative campaigns are effective no matter how gross their inaccuracies.

His first claim- as seen on recent television ads- is that I know and associate with corrupt legislators. This is absolutely false. I do not know any of the individuals he had photo-shopped into the picture he put on the air. He knows this, but when confronted with inaccuracies his response has been is “it’s just politics,” and that I should “stop whining.”

Second- He pushes the narrative that I am not present in Columbia and have missed a number of votes during my first term in office. Regarding the attendance, per the House Journal I am at 90% which is above average for a legislature that, in theory, is only part time. The missed votes explanation is more nuanced in that I did miss some votes on the days I wasn’t there (ex. my daughter’s birthday, a shoulder injury), but the overwhelming majority of the bills that are “No Votes” for me were either procedural votes (i.e., I already voted on once) or a result of conflicts of interest centered around my day job as defined by ethics laws. The end result is that I voted on well over 90% of all legislation during my term, and I will gladly stand by my record.

His latest and most egregious claim has been filtered through a known paid “journalist” and asserts that I have acted unethically because I sought funding for a non-profit organization, The Library Society, on whose board I was recently elected to serve. This is a non-paying board and per the ethics laws I recused myself from voting on the allocation (another missed vote!). All of this was done by the book and cleared with the House Ethics Commission. He further (not so subtly) implies that I must be getting kick-backs because the requested funding was for the repair of their historic building because I too am in the renovation business. To this I can only state that it is not true and shows no matter how far apart the dots may be, some will still try to connect them.

I am proud of my service to date on behalf of the Lowcountry, and I appreciate the opportunity to set the record straight. Regardless of how things turn out next Tuesday, I respect the voting process and the people’s ability to choose what type of person represents them in government.

Representative William Cogswell

South Carolina House 110

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Charleston

***Response from Ginny Bush to Will Folks regarding his article on the Library Society.***

As President of the Charleston Library Society, I believe it is necessary respond to today's article that casts suspicion on the Library Society for involvement in an alleged scandal.

This morning’s FitsNews article states you “don’t have a dog in this particular fight,” but adds that you “believe Guerard has uncovered what could be a significant ethical lapse on Cogswell’s part.”  If you do wish to be objective and unbiased, you will welcome documented facts that refute the suspected ethical lapse the article describes.

* On March 1, 2017, Anne Timberlake’s  firm was engaged as a lobbyist by the Library Society to assist its state grant request for a historic rehabilitation of its building.  At that time, Ms. Timberlake had already left the Conservation Voters League to begin her own consulting firm.  On the same day, the Library Society approved a contract with the general contractor for the construction work.  Mr. Cogswell was not on the Library Society Board or any committee during 2017, nor was he involved with engaging the lobbyist or contractor, nor with the scope or plans for the rehabilitation project.
* During the spring and summer of 2017, Ms. Timberlake and Library Society leaders contacted a number of members of the Charleston delegation (including Mr. Cogwell) and relevant legislative committees to discuss the grant request.  A grant was approved in the budget, but was vetoed by Governor McMaster in 2017.  Ms. Timberlake’s engagement was extended for the purpose of continuing to seek a grant in 2018.
* Mr. Cogswell was nominated and elected to the Board by the members of the Library Society on January 23, 2018.  As our district representative and a member of the Charleston delegation, Mr. Cogswell made a member request for a grant, which was supported by a number of other legislators.  This proposed grant is one of many line items in the proposed state budget for educational, historical and cultural entities.

I hope the foregoing demonstrates that all decisions relating to the Library Society’s lobbyist, contractor and rehabilitation plan predated Mr. Cogswell’s Board membership.  Therefore, there is no basis for any implication that the Library Society or its Board was complicit in any unethical behavior.  In fact, based on the foregoing, there is no basis for alleging any scandal or breach of ethics relating to the Library Society.

On behalf of the Library Society, I trust that FitsNews will correct its unfounded suspicions involving the Library Society — or at least refrain from publishing future commentary that is contrary to facts.

Thank you,

Ginny Bush

President, Charleston Library Society