

Mark Pukita's Remarks on Primary Endorsement

August 17, 2021 – 4:30 PM – Governor's Residence - 358 N. Parkview Avenue, Bexley, OH 45209

What happened to your bribe picnic Mr. DeWine? A picnic designed to buy-off the State Central Committee to endorse you on September 10. You claimed it was canceled due to rain from tropical storm Fred. I beg to differ. It was canceled because it was exposed, and it was crooked.

As Republicans, we are supposed to stand for honesty, integrity, fairness, choice, and competition. We are supposed to stand against cronyism and patronage. Our founder, Abraham Lincoln, was nicknamed "Honest Abe." Our very foundation is a testimony to outsiders and underdogs.

ORP endorsements in Primaries are designed to rig Primaries in favor of insiders and to take away choice and the voice of Republican Primary voters. They are wrong.

Before the 2018 Primary, then-Party Chair Jane Timken spoke against ORP Primary endorsements. Asked, on camera, if she supported them, she said, "I do not. I think it is very important for the Primary voters to make their choice."¹

In 2020, under Ms. Timken's leadership, the process literally blew up in the face of the ORP with candidate Joe Dills who was running in the District 65 House GOP Primary.² Dills had been ORP-endorsed. His endorsement was then revoked in a special ORP meeting on February 6, 2020, based on a dossier provided to State Central Committee members detailing his many secrets.³

The series of events revealed how corrupted ORP endorsements are. Corruption begets corruption. At that time, Chair Timken commented in the special meeting, "I think moving forward this committee needs to consider how we do endorsements going forward."⁴ The answer is simple: stop Primary endorsements, like Chair Timken advocated before the 2018 Republican Primary.

But the Dills story of corrupt endorsement goes deeper. The dossier used against Joe Dills had been paid for by Growth and Opportunity PAC, as disclosed in their Federal Election Commission filing.⁵ That was illegal coordination. Timken did not disclose that connection even when asked about the origin of the dossier in that meeting. When asked about the firm who authored the document she stated, "I don't know who that firm is. I don't think it makes a difference." She is wrong, it does matter. Corruption begets corruption.

Choice is good. Choice in retail makes for better consumers. Choice in Republican Party Primaries makes for better Republican voters. Competition is good. Competition pushes us to do our personal best. Lack of competition never pushes us to do our personal best. It breeds laziness and a sense of entitlement. Rigged, flawed, corrupt ORP Primary endorsements seek to eliminate choice and prevent competition. Again, they are wrong.

¹ Watch / listen at 2:20 <https://youtu.be/wQ5tsnLjP78?t=140>

² Read <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/02/05/ohio-gop-reconsiders-endorsement-candidate-who-had-ashley-madison-account/4611048002/>

³ Read <https://hicksperience.com/DILLS-RESEARCHs.pdf>

⁴ Listen to the meeting at <https://www.facebook.com/HicksWatchdog/posts/2581208328779860> (listen at about 18:30 minutes)

⁵ Read the filing at <https://tinyurl.com/hr677w8w> (see PDF page 16)

While we all think the practice of ORP Primary endorsements should simply end, insiders want to double-down on the Primary rigging approach. In 2018, the SCC voted on Primary endorsements in February for a May Primary, 3 months in advance.⁶ In 2020, the SCC voted on Primary endorsements in January for a March Primary, 2 months in advance.⁷ Now, a panicked Governor Mike DeWine is seeking his endorsement, and those of other incumbents, in September for a May Primary, 8 months in advance. It is desperate, absurd, crony and insulting to Republican Primary voters. It is another reason to simply stop ORP Primary endorsements now and forever.

We know it is hard to stand up. We know that many on the State Central Committee have benefitted from gubernatorial appointments and a process by which they endorse themselves for re-election to benefit directly from the mailings and other support that comes from ORP Primary endorsements. We think they all know, deep in their hearts, that it is wrong. If they don't, they are not "honest Abe" types and should move on.

Back on July 28, 2021, my team reached out to all the candidates so that we could jointly stand against all ORP Primary endorsements done by the State Central Committee. Not just DeWine's. Not just this year. But forever and for all races. Real change and real reform.

Unfortunately, I have found that most candidates are only against the Primary rigging endorsements, quietly, when they cannot get them. Quietly because they want to be in a position to get them next time. It is not principle. It is purely self-centered and tactical. I am 100% against ORP Primary endorsements for all offices forever.

Since I reached out to other candidates, more things have come to light. We have learned of odd, to say the least, money transfers and payment of Mike DeWine's bills to the tune of almost \$900k in 2021 so far by the ORP.⁸ We have seen large amounts flowing to David Yost also. Why? Who authorized this? It came to light in financial reports filed at the end of July. That was weeks ago. Where are the explanations?

How about the explanations for members of Mike DeWine's circle enriching themselves like his PUCO Chair Sam Randazzo?⁹ How about explanations from JD Vance on his hiring Householder's corrupt inner circle, Bryan Gray and Megan Fitzmartin? How about explanations from Jane Timken for her financial stewardship of the ORP?

I am described in the press as a longshot candidate for US Senate. That is true but I think we are all sick of business-as-usual Republican politics in Ohio. I am an outsider and a citizen candidate.

I don't hire politicians with tainted resumes. I am not for or against ORP Primary endorsements based on whether I think I can get endorsed. I don't act like I want to blow up the SWAMP while also angling to control and use the SWAMP for my own benefit.

I have two big themes. "Let's beat the SWAMP" and "leave it better than we found it." Stopping ORP Primary endorsements now and forever is both.

We must reform. We must change. That starts with ending ORP Primary endorsements. That is why I am here.

Thank you so much for listening.

⁶ Read <https://www.cleveland.com/open/2018/02/ohio-republican-party-endorses.html>

⁷ Read <https://www.cleveland.com/open/2020/01/ohio-republican-party-leaders-decline-to-endorse-some-prominent-2020-candidates.html>

⁸ Read <https://theohiostar.com/2020/08/17/dewine-timken-householder-learn-the-art-of-funneling-donations-through-ohio-republican-party/>

⁹ Read <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/2021/08/02/firstenergy-paid-sam-randazzo-big-money-work-part-time/5436419001/>