



VERMONT DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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Anthony Pollina
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March 19, 2008

Dear Anthony,

I write to report on the Vermont Democratic State Committee's discussion last Saturday of your request to be placed on the agenda of one of our upcoming meetings. The Committee's discussion of your request, which lasted well over an hour, was thoughtful, respectful, and consistently focused on the ultimate goal of finding the most viable candidate to challenge Jim Douglas in November. Ultimately, however, the Committee decided not to place you on an upcoming agenda, but rather to revisit the issue at our June meeting.

You are, of course, already aware of the Committee's decision, since I called your colleague Chris Pearson shortly after the meeting adjourned to let him know of the result. In the press, however, it was reported that you were "bewildered" by the State Committee's decision. In an effort to remedy your bewilderment, let me provide some of the details of the discussion.

On the one hand, several Committee Members were of the opinion that little harm could come from simply listening to you make a case for your candidacy. There was even some discussion of trying to arrange an informal meeting with you after a subsequent State Committee Meeting. As the discussion progressed, however, a greater number of Committee Members expressed concern, in one way or another, that you have not demonstrated a genuine interest in working with Democrats – in this election cycle or previously – sufficient to warrant having you present your candidacy to the State Party at this point in time.

Let me offer concrete examples of what some State Committee members said. Concerns expressed by the Committee included:

- (1) your lack of interest in running in the Democratic primary;
- (2) your apparent disinterest in our party's formal endorsement process – a simple process, laid out in our bylaws, which I have explained to you on more than one occasion, and which was utilized with great reciprocal benefit by Bernie Sanders in 2006;
- (3) your refusal to agree not to actively campaign against Democrats seeking legislative seats in this very election if Progressives are running in the same race (some opined that until

Democrats see that you are willing to do for them the same that you are asking of them, you will likely experience a continued lack of enthusiasm for your candidacy);

- (4) your lack of support for even progressive-minded Democrats for any state or federal offices in past elections (one committee member noted that, while you ran for office as a Democrat in the mid-80's, there is no evidence to suggest that you have done anything to support the interests of the Party since then, but rather have consistently sought to undermine it); and finally
- (5) a few Committee Members referenced, but did not specifically discuss, the concerns that I raised in my last letter to you, *i.e.*, your negative campaigns against Democrats in the recent past, your recent litigation against Democrats, and your public celebration with Republicans of Peter Shumlin's defeat in the 2002 lieutenant governor's race.

None of these concerns were raised with a tone of disrespect. They were points made as matters of fact to consider.

In light of the foregoing, and especially given that you will not rule out actively working *to defeat Democrats in this very election*, but rather are merely hoping that Democrats will vote for you in November, there is no rush for the Party to embrace your candidacy at this juncture.

As a general principle, our Committee collectively believes that our meetings should be open to any speaker or topic. However, in this particular case, concern was expressed by several Members that you might attempt use the occasion of speaking to the State Committee to inaccurately construe it as some sort of implicit support for your candidacy. Many believe you did this after your recent meeting with the Barre City Democrats.

Let me return for a moment to the issue of the Democratic primary. It is still my strong belief that the Democratic Party will field a strong and highly qualified candidate for governor this year. Therefore participation in the Democratic Primary remains an option for you, and in my view could go a long way towards changing Democratic sentiment towards your candidacy. Please consider once again the enormous difference in sheer vote totals between the Progressive and Democratic primaries. While the recent Progressive primaries have attracted substantially less than 1000 voters, Democratic primary turnout this year may well exceed 40,000. As I have stated before, anyone who hopes to defeat Jim Douglas in November will need the enthusiastic and unified backing of the Vermont Democrats. These primary numbers certainly bear that out.

Unless I hear otherwise, the State Committee will revisit your request at our June meeting. As always, I am happy to discuss the governor's race, Democratic-Progressive relations, or any other matter of political concern you may have at any time.

Sincerely,
Ian Carleton
Vermont Democratic Party Chair

Cc: Vermont Democratic State Committee