



Citizens for a Responsible Government

Maryland Citizens for a Responsible Government

COUNCILWOMAN'S AIDE ON TAPE INTIMIDATING VOLUNTEERS DURING PETITION DRIVE

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Montgomery County, MD – Several volunteers participating in the petition drive to put a new ‘gender identity’ bill recently passed by the Montgomery County Council up for a referendum have reported several incidences of harassment and intimidation, according to Maryland Citizens for a Responsible Government. Most disturbing, a high level Council aide appears to have been directly involved in this harassment, it says.

Dana Beyer, a senior aide to Councilwoman Duchy Trachtenberg, and a member of Hillary Clinton’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Steering Committee, is seen on a cell phone video falsely telling petition collectors and would-be signers they would be asked to leave a Giant food store’s sidewalk, saying “An email went out; you’re going to be asked to leave. Any petitions gathered today are illegal.”

The video may be viewed at
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYqz2rffZ0w>

The petition collectors were gathering signatures at the Westwood Shopping Center in Bethesda last Monday. A volunteer for the group took the video as Beyer approached their table. When Beyer realized the incident was being videoed, Beyer quickly left the scene.

A call to Giant’s corporate headquarters found that no such email was sent. A spokeswoman for the company said the only email she was aware of

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regarding the petition drive was the one granting permission to Maryland Citizens for a Responsible Government to collect signatures in front of its stores.

It has been reported that Beyer and a group of others went around the county, blocking access to the petitioners, yelling invectives at them, arguing with would-be signers, and then complaining to management that the petitioners were causing a disturbance or had no right to be there.

"In all but one place we talked to the management of these grocery stores and the management had them removed," Beyer is quoted as saying in a newspaper account. (<http://www.thesentinel.com/297002578875068.php>)

"This conduct by Beyer and others is highly unethical and violates the public trust as well as Federal and state civil rights statutes," according to John Garza, an attorney who is assisting the group.

It also violates the County's Code which prohibits an employee from interfering in the political activities of citizens. (<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/ethics/docs/19a.pdf>) (Cited violation is in Sec. 19A-14)

Another one of the incidents involving Beyer occurred at the Rockshire Village Center in Rockville, when Beyer ordered residents Sabiha and Dan Zubairi not to sign the petition. Beyer also told the Zubairis, "You know what's going to happen to you if you sign this petition? You are going to be all over the Internet." At that point in the exchange, Mr. Zubairi asked, "Are you threatening me?" Beyer then left the area.

Garza is also acting as an attorney for several volunteers who were harassed and intimidated. He indicated he will probably file a civil rights violation lawsuit soon.

The petition drive collected 32,000 signatures. "The ease with which the signatures have been obtained, despite the intimidation of the voters by Council staff, demonstrates how isolated the Council is from its constituents," said Ruth Jacobs, president of MCRG.

If 25,001 signatures are validated by the Elections Board, the bill's enactment will be on hold and it will be put up to a popular vote next November.

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