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DFL Fined \$100,000 for illegal 2012 campaign practices; Why should you care?

On December 17, 2013 the Minnesota Campaign Finance Disclosure Board fined the DFL Senate Caucus one hundred thousand dollars because it illegally contributed over \$300,000 to support the election of 13 DFL Senate candidates in the 2012 general election by developing and publishing certain campaign communications. In aggregate, the 13 DFL candidates illegally received \$312,641.19. Inexplicably, while the board found that those candidates "involvement consisted at a minimum" of actively participating and full cooperation, it did not either fine them or require their campaign funds to repay the money, even though it had the legal authority to do so.

So why should we care about an event that had so little notice it was barely mentioned by the media? The following is an explanation why I think it is important for you to be aware of, consider and allow it to influence your decision making process in future elections.

All candidates for state office must raise money to run a campaign because it is universally recognized that a well funded campaign means votes. Consequently political fund raising and campaign expenditures are highly regulated by Minnesota law. In that context, think about the fact that of the 13 senate races in which the \$300,000 was spent, all were considered "swing" districts because either party candidate had a good chance of being elected. However in these races which included the illegal campaign contributions, 11 of the 13 DFL candidates were successful and are today sitting Minnesota Senators. A success ratio of 85% in close elections is a distinct anomaly that I believe directly correlates to the Senate DFL caucus and its candidates having employed the win by any means mantra, even if it requires cheating.

So is this important, other than an expectation by the public to hold their elected officials to a higher standard than active participation in a scheme to win elections by illegal means? Yes, I think it does.

Consider this; there are 67 Minnesota Senators. In order for the Republicans to have held onto the majority in the 2012 election, they would have needed to win 6 or about half of the subject 13 races. While there is no way to definitively state the outcome if the DFL caucus and Candidates would have conducted their campaigns in a fair, legal and honorable manner, it is not beyond speculation that had they done so, today Minnesota would not have the travesty that is MNsure, the government oppression that forcibly created day care unionization or the onerous weight of \$2 Billion in new taxes, none of which would have ever passed with a majority held by the Republicans in the Senate. Looking at it that way, perhaps a \$100,000 fine is cheap or not nearly enough, depending on one's individual personal political goals and ethics.

In 1978 the people in Minnesota having perceived a violation of principled conduct by their elected officials, threw Wendell Anderson, Rudy Perpich and every other democrat they could get their hands on out of office. Columnist George Will once called Minnesota voters “magnificently ungovernable”. Perhaps we will find out in 2014 whether they still are and if they have appreciably changed in how they view the morals and standards of their elected officials.

If you wish to read the Board’s Findings and exhibit listing the involved Senators and the amount each illegally accepted, follow this link:

http://www.cfboard.state.mn.us/bdinfo/investigation/12_17_2013_DFL_Senate_Caucus_Findings.pdf .

Respectfully Submitted,

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