




FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20463

MEMORANDUM

**TO: The Commissioners
Staff Director
Deputy Staff Director
General Counsel**

FROM: Office of the Commission Secretary 

DATE: May 3, 2002

SUBJECT: Reply to Statement Of Reasons for Pre-MUR 395

Attached is a copy of the Reply of Commissioner Scott E. Thomas to Statement Of Reasons of Commissioners Mason, Smith, and Wold.

This was received in the Commission Secretary's Office on Friday, May 3, 2002 at 12:14 p.m.

**cc: Vincent J. Convery, Jr.
OGC Docket (5)
Information Division
Press Office
Public Disclosure**

Attachment

22.04.405.3758



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20463

In the Matter of)
) Pre MUR 395
College Republican National Committee)

**REPLY OF COMMISSIONER SCOTT E. THOMAS
TO STATEMENT OF REASONS
OF COMMISSIONERS MASON, SMITH AND WOLD**

At issue in this matter was whether the College Republican National Committee ("CRNC") failed to register and report as a "political committee" under the Act. See 2 U.S.C. §§ 433 and 434. On November 6, 2001, by a vote of 2-3,¹ the Commission failed to approve a motion to keep this matter on the enforcement docket. On November 9, 2001, I issued a Statement of Reasons explaining my disagreement with that vote and why I believed the matter should have remained on the enforcement docket. In particular, I explained:

Where a case presents a fairly significant apparent violation—in this case the failure to disclose hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on hard-edged partisan communications—and where leaving it on the docket will simply allow OGC to activate it if warranted, the better judgment would have been to preserve the agency's options.

Pre MUR 395, Statement of Reasons of Commissioner Thomas at 5 (November 9, 2001)("Thomas Statement").

On February 21, 2002, Commissioners Mason, Wold and Smith issued their own Statement of Reasons. They stated that "Commissioner Thomas's Statement of Reasons, with its strong language suggesting that CRNC has violated the law, *needlessly and unfairly impugns the CRNC.*" Pre MUR 395, Statement of Reasons of Commissioners, Mason, Wold and Smith at 1 (February 21, 2002)(emphasis added).

I stand by my earlier Statement of Reasons. As a recent *National Journal* article points out, it is more clear than ever that the College Republican National Committee may be operating as a political committee and not reporting its activity. *National*

¹ Commissioner McDonald and myself in favor; Commissioners Mason, Smith, and Wold opposed; Commissioner Sandstrom abstaining.

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Journal, March 16, 2002 at 798 ("The GOP's Big Move on Campus")(attached). For example, the article reports that:

This March, the committee plans to invest \$600,000 to \$700,000 to hire 40 field representatives (mostly twenty-somethings just out of college) to work full-time for 12 weeks this fall in states with tight Senate, House, and gubernatorial races. The plan is ambitious: The field reps will work on eight Senate and 20 House races. [RNC Chairman Scott Stewart] will not name targeted states, but Republican Senate candidates in Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota are likely to benefit from the campus activists.

Id. at 798. The article further reports:

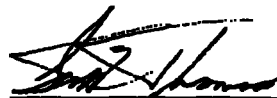
[I]n 1999, [the College Republican National Committee's] annual budget was around \$250,000. Today, it is \$1.3 million. Most of the Committee's funding comes from small contributions, and the new money is allowing the group to hire field Representatives. The Republican National Committee is picking up just a quarter of the tab for field reps; the college committee is paying the balance.

Id.

My colleagues believe that to raise questions about whether this activity should be disclosed to the public "needlessly and unfairly impugns the CRNC." I continue to believe, however, that this is exactly the sort of enforcement matter that the Commission should be looking at. As I wrote in my earlier Statement, "the heart of the Federal Election Campaign Act, as amended, is disclosure." Thomas Statement at 3. By casting a blind eye to such undisclosed federal activity, the core provisions of the Act are undermined.

5/3/02

Date



Scott E. Thomas
Commissioner

22.04.405.3760

Issues & Ideas

THE GOP'S BIG MOVE ON CAMPUS

HIGHER EDUCATION

BY MARTIN DAVIS AND CRAIG COLGAN

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GRANT WEINICK



SCOTT STEWART: The head of the College Republicans has a master plan to revive the party's campus organization and to get students to help in the fall elections.

Osama bin Laden, with machine gun in hand, spent a breezy January afternoon on the University of Florida's Reitz Union North Lawn. He was perched on a platform above a water tank surrounded by a tall cage, where he hooted at and insulted everyone within earshot. Dressed in a long, off-white gown and sporting a full beard, bin Laden—actually Adam Guillette, the university's College Republican chairman—dared all to dunk him by firing softballs at a bull's-eye that, if hit squarely, would unceremoniously drop him into the water.

Guillette's mission this day was to raise money to bring conservative speakers to the campus. After a splash-filled afternoon, the Florida College Republicans were \$100 closer to their goal.

Although student political organizations still have to scratch (or splash) for every dollar, the College Republican organization in recent years has come back to life. Several other politically or culturally conservative student groups have arrived on campuses or enlarged their presence there as well. Left-wing students may garner most of the headlines and have louder voices on campuses, but it is conservative students who are quietly solidifying their organizations nationwide.

Helping that resurgence along has been Scott Stewart, who became national chairman of the College Republican National Committee in 1999. When Stewart arrived, the committee had a modest and barely energized presence on America's campuses. But Stewart brought with him a determination to reinvigorate the sleepy organization and its 409 campus chapters.

A 1998 graduate of Yale University, Stewart quickly launched a three-phase program, with the first two phases focusing on recruiting and training new members. The third phase, begun in the fall of

1999 and expanded each year since, has aimed to improve the campus organizations. In the fall of 1999, Stewart hired six paid, full-time field representatives for 10-week stints. In 2000, the number of paid reps rose to 15, again for 10 weeks; their tasks were to organize students and sign up volunteers to work in that year's election campaigns.

The results have been impressive. Today, the committee has 940 chapters and more than 100,000 members. By the end of the year, the committee will have 1,200 chapters, Stewart projects. How to explain the rapid expansion? Stewart says that it has little to do with students' becoming more conservative. Conservative students have always been there, he insists, but "people don't ask them" to participate.

So College Republicans and Stewart are doing some serious asking. This March, the committee plans to invest \$600,000 to \$700,000 to hire 40 field representatives (mostly 20-somethings just out of college) to work full-time for 12 weeks this fall in states with tight Senate, House, and gubernatorial races. The plan is ambitious: The field reps will work on eight Senate and 20 House races. Stewart will not name targeted states, but Republican Senate candidates in Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota are likely to benefit from the campus activists.

Stewart's plan has paid off in more ways than rising membership. When he took over the committee in 1999, its annual budget was around \$250,000. Today, it is \$1.3 million. Most of the committee's funding comes from small contributions, and the new money is allowing the group to hire the field representatives. The Republican National Committee is picking up just a quarter of the tab for the field reps; the college committee is paying the balance.

The revival of campus conservatism is not limited to the College Republicans.

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Other conservative groups are investing more time, money, and effort on American campuses, and gaining more attention for doing so.

One group finding new momentum is Young America's Foundation Inc., which bills itself as the "principal outreach organization of the conservative movement." The foundation organizes conferences, seminars, and internships at campuses across the country; it also arranges for right-leaning speakers to make appearances. The organization evolved from Young Americans for Freedom, a conservative campus group active in the 1960s. In 1998, Young America's Foundation purchased the Reagan ranch in California and has used it ever since as a training and retreat site for conservative students. Following the attacks of 9/11, students have been packing campus halls to hear foundation-paid speakers Ann Coulter, Ben Stein, Oliver North, Dinesh D'Souza, and Ed Meese, said foundation President Ron Robinson. Robinson has been involved in campus activism since 1968, when he was a student at Canisius College in Buffalo, N.Y. There, he cut his political teeth working on James Buckley's Senate campaign and Jack Kemp's House campaign; both Republican candidates won. "Seeing a conservative speaker on campus was an isolated event back then," Robinson said. "Students on campuses today are just more open to hearing conservative ideas."

So too are young female conservatives. The conservative Independent Women's Forum, itself barely a decade old, began an outreach to campuses in 2000. Last summer, the Arlington, Va.-based group garnered attention nationally as it hosted teach-ins on several campuses promoting a survey that excoriated the "hook-up culture," a reference to one-night stands. In February, the forum took out ads in campus newspapers decrying the controversial but popular play *The Vagina Monologues*. One of the forum's recent ads was denied publication in the student newspaper at Pennsylvania State University (University Park). "What we are seeking to do is to spark a debate," says Kate Kennedy, the forum's manager of campus outreach. "For conservative students, campuses can be hostile atmospheres. We want to have a free exchange of ideas, so all sides can be heard. That is supposed to be what college is about."

The notion that college campuses are hostile places for conservative groups has been around since the 1960s. But not everyone agrees the hostility is real. Christine Kelly, associate professor of political science at New Jersey's William Paterson University, is writing a history of campus activism. The belief that conservative stu-

dents are somehow oppressed on campus is nonsense, she says. Kelly says the majority of college students are neither liberal nor conservative. Most students, she asserts, are in the ambivalent middle and, because of the events of September 11, "were frightened into asking political questions.... Our national leaders will have a larger impact if they call upon young people to get involved in politics and vote."

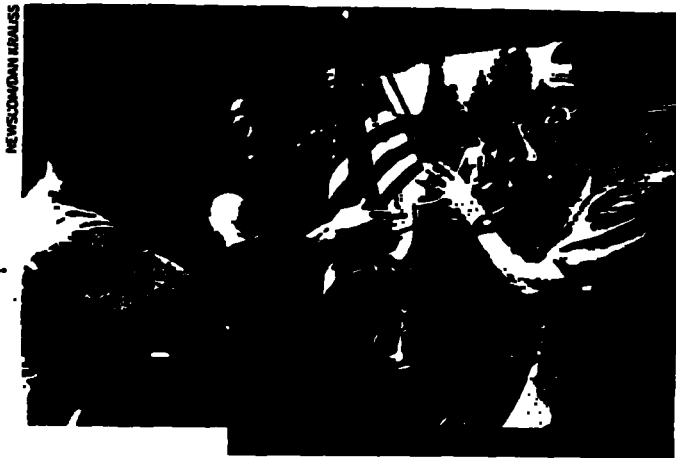
A study released in January by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute lends support to Kelly's position. It found that 49 percent of college students considered themselves "middle of the road." Only about 30 percent considered themselves liberal or far left, the highest figure in two decades, while 21 percent called themselves conservative or far right. The Independent Women's Forum countered with its own survey two weeks later reporting that 65 percent of students were happy George W. Bush was President, and ranked him even higher as a hero than "Jesus and/or God."

Helping to fortify the new conservative activism on campus is the Internet. In 1970, Jane Fonda used a station wagon to go from campus to campus to spark student opposition to President Nixon's Cambodian bombing. Today, e-mail and Web sites can do the trick. David Horowitz, the 1960s New Left activist turned 1990s conservative activist, has energized conservative students nationwide with his Web site. University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) Chancellor James Moeser received more than 600 e-mails and 50 phone calls, many from alumni, after a story was published on Horowitz's Web site detailing the university's first anti-war "teach-in," held only a couple of weeks after 9/11. But neither Horowitz nor any of the other regular contributors to the site wrote the piece. Instead, it was written by two students, UNC junior Michael Burdei and graduate student Michelle Oswald.

If college Republicans are sailing, the College Democrats are foundering. Nick Bouquet, a consultant to the College Democrats of America, notes that his group has between 200 and 300 campus chapters today, down from some 800 in 1993. He denies, however, that students are becoming more conservative. "Conservatives are on campus, and they're being very loud and very vocal. On the left, we're very splintered and quieter than the Republicans."

He attributes the increase in College

Republican numbers and the decline in College Democrats to the usual ebb and flow that follows a presidential election. These numbers, Bouquet says, "are a combination of George W. Bush getting elected and the money the Republican Party is pouring in."



CAMPUSES UP FOR GRABS: Students at the University of California (Berkeley) debate the merits of U.S. military action in Afghanistan.

Stewart suggests that the Democrats have been temporarily quieted on campus because they don't want to be identified with the anti-war protests organized by some members of the campus Left, protests that Stewart views as anti-American. Bouquet says that's a misreading of the situation. "It comes down to this: We are a smaller organization, and we've taken some beatings in the national press. As far as the war goes, we agree with the actions being taken.... There was only one response, and that was to go to war."

The November elections will tell a lot about the effectiveness of campus conservatives. David Yepsen, who has been watching Iowa politics for 26 years as a writer for *The Des Moines Register*, suspects that young Republicans may have an impact on the race for Sen. Tom Harkin's seat, and in the state's newly redrawn congressional districts. "In Iowa ... there's a lot of young people not registered to vote," Yepsen said. "If any party can find them, they'll be important." After all, Yepsen notes, Iowa went for Al Gore in 2000 by only 4,500 votes—or just two votes per precinct.

If young conservatives prove they really can turn out voters in November, money from national political and cultural organizations should continue to flow to campus conservative groups. Otherwise, for many of these students groups, it will be back to the dunk tank. ■

Craig Colgan is a Washington-based writer

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