

KERM CAROLIN

A

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 4, 2013

CONTACT INFORMATION: KERMIT CAROLINA: 203-927-3614

RE: CAROLINA RESPONDS TO GREATER NEW HAVEN CLERGY ATTACK

As reported in the October 4, 2013 edition of the New Haven Register, the Greater New Haven Clergy Association - a loosely organized group of local religious leaders – sent me a letter which, in effect, seeks to dictate to me what I should do with my personal time after work. This is my response.

The Greater New Haven Clergy's statement amounts to nothing more than a thinly veiled political attack against me which comes about as a result of its questionable alliance with the Toni Harp campaign. As Quinnipiac Law professor William Dunlap rightly points out, "religious organizations that have 501 (c) (3) status are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elected public office." Not only did the group possibly violate federal law when saying publicly that it supports Toni Harp, and then doubling down on this support when its President, James Newman, said that the Association was "proud that she is our candidate", but they appear to further violate the law by intervening in a political campaign by telling me not to engage in the political process. At this point, I am considering contacting the Internal Revenue Service in order to request that the group's status be reviewed and to further determine if any laws have been violated.

At first glance, any reasonable person would have to wonder why the Association would attack me

for simply exercising my constitutional rights and my rights under the laws of this state as it pertains to my involvement in the political process. If Reverend Newman actually had any authentic concerns about my political activities, he could have simply called me or come by Hillhouse High School. Other local church leaders -all of whom are smart, dedicated servants working hard to make a difference in our community, and none of whom, ironically, are members of the Association – have been strong supporters of Hillhouse High School in a plethora of ways. These individuals recognize the positive changes that have taken place at the school due to the commitment of parents, teachers, administrators, staff and of course our students.

One of the things that is most striking about the Association's statement about politics is that the organization – especially through the clearly partisan behaviors of its former President Boise Kimber – has not only engaged in direct political activities, but has said nothing as former Superintendent of New Haven Public Schools Reggie Mayo openly and repeatedly engaged in partisan political activities in support of Mayor John DeStefano. Not only did the former superintendent consistently serve as a fundraiser for John DeStefano, but during the 2011 general election, Superintendent of Schools Reggie Mayo was observed passing out DeStefano's palm cards in front of a polling place! Obviously, the Association was not going to say a word about separation of politics and education because standing right next to Dr. Mayo was the Association's former President, Boise Kimber, who is now a strong supporter of Toni Harp.

The Association generally, and Newman in particular, displays an astonishing degree of hypocrisy by attempting to chill my civil liberties while remaining silent on more than 20 years of continued political activities by the school system's former leader. Does Newman choose to ignore the bizarre quid pro quo that lasted for more than 20 years in which educators in New Haven Public Schools, especially school administrators and aspiring administrators, understood that they were fully expected to support John DeStefano's many campaigns for Mayor, both financially and otherwise? Those outside of the school system find difficult if not impossible to believe that such behavior could have lasted for so long, but it did. For more than 20 years, school system employees dared not exercise their constitutional or statutory right to engage in political activities outside of work, unless those activities were in support of John DeStefano or his cronies. Did Newman ever once condemn that behavior?

So what exactly is the Association's very thinly veiled attack *really* about? The Association, though admittedly a minor player, is part of the political establishment that seeks to maintain the political status quo in New Haven. Given their very public support of Toni Harp, I can only conclude that the Association, and for that matter the Harp campaign, is terribly concerned about the possibility of Justin Elicker winning this election. Justin's consistent support for good government –which, in my opinion, starts with a city government free of the corrosive influence peddling of the suburban union leadership, wealthy developers and other donors - not to mention the likes of Reverends Kimber and Newman – resonates with people throughout the city.

I believed so strongly that we need to usher in an era of good government that I ran for Mayor myself. I didn't win, and when I lost, it would have been easy for me to simply walk away. But with Justin Elicker, New Haven voters still have a chance to take a giant step away from politics as usual, towards a more ethical, people-centered government.

In the same New Haven Register article mentioned earlier, Reverend Newman is quoted as saying that he "laughed" when he heard that I referenced Dr. Martin Luther King's statement that people should be judged by the content of their character, and not by the color of their skin. He also says that he thought my reference to Dr. King's statement "was a joke." Maybe I'm a little slow on the uptake but what is so funny about me invoking Dr. King's statement in regards to my support of Justin Elicker?

If Reverend Newman wants to disagree with my support of Justin Elicker, that is one thing but to infer that my referencing what Dr. King said is a joke deserves some clarification from Newman. When Dr. King made that statement, I interpreted it to mean that all people, irrespective of their ethnicity, should be judged by their character and not their skin color. I still stand by my original statement that if we are choosing a candidate for Mayor based, at least in part, on character, then we have to look beyond skin color or gender and do what is best. In the general election, doing what is best is voting for Justin Elicker.

Although the Register article also points out that Reverend Newman does not have one iota of evidence that I at any time pushed a political agenda at Hillhouse High School, I would welcome a face-to-face conversation with him about any concerns he may have regarding my political activities. Given that I have been completely transparent, there are only three qualifications I would have for such a face-to-face meeting with Newman: 1) That the discussion take place at the end of my work day; 2) That Newman provides clarification regarding the "joke"; and 3) We invite the media to the meeting. If Reverend Newman will agree to those three stipulations, I would be more than happy to meet with him.

Finally, my support for change in New Haven remains unabated. I will continue to exercise my constitutional and statutory rights to engage in free speech and free expression. In fact, Reverend Newman's oddly timed, amateurish letter has only made me more determined to bring about change in this city. All of New Haven's residents, irrespective of where they lay their heads at night, deserve a Mayor who will put our needs before the desires of those who are politically connected. Toni Harp represents the status quo. Justin Elicker represents change. The choice is clear.