

MEDIA RELEASE

Date: October 16, 2017

To: All Media

From: Atty. Dom Leone, Candidate for Judge of Struthers Municipal Court

A statement to the media / public from Atty. Dom Leone

The purpose of this statement is to address the two (2) affidavits filed at the Mahoning County Board of Elections on October 13, 2017. The affidavits were filed Sarah Yacko and Courtney Mayer-Hoaglin. I acknowledge I did have a personal relationship with each of them in the past and I believe the end of those relationships played a role in their decisions to file the affidavits. I also believe that persons affiliated with the campaign of opponent in the November 7, 2017 General Election approached Ms. Yacko and Ms. Mayer-Hoaglin, asked them to create the documents and then delivered them to the BOE.

I categorically and unequivocally deny all allegations made in the affidavits. When I decided to run for the office of Judge of the Struthers Municipal Court, I promised myself, my supporters and my family that I would conduct a positive, issue-focused campaign. I have kept that promise. Unfortunately, my opponent, his supporters, operatives and other associated with his campaign have clearly decided to engage in the politics of personal destruction and disseminating half-truths and outright lies in an attempt to win the election. Their behavior is deplorable and demonstrates a lack of temperament, decorum, and discretion that the public expects and the Canons of Professional Ethics demand of a judge.

To correct the record, I will address the allegations made in the affidavits beginning with the document filed by Ms. Yacko:

The allegation that I accepted illegal campaign contributions is totally false. I have never and would never solicit or accept an illegal campaign contribution.

The allegation that my campaign refused to reimburse Karyl Ventresco \$211.15 and instead listed it as an in-kind contribution without her permission is false. At least two witnesses will testify that during a campaign meeting Ms. Ventresco said the \$211.15 was an in-kind contribution. Along with the \$211.12 in question, she also made another in-kind contribution of \$145.33. It is important to note that Ms. Ventresco was reimbursed over \$700.00 for expenditures she made during the campaign.

The allegation that Anthony Bell and Ursula Bell personally made contributions in excess of the amount allowable in a race for municipal court judge are false. Individuals are permitted to contribute up to \$600. As the attached copies of their checks clearly show, Anthony Bell contributed \$600 and Ursula Bell contributed \$600.

Paragraph nine of the affidavit states the following: "Mr. Dominic Muto Sr. (Attorney Leone's third cousin) gave Dominic Leone \$1200." The statement is totally misleading. To clarify, Dominic Muto, Sr. is deceased. The Dominic Muto who made the contributions is my second cousin, not my third. The contributions are completely legal because he contributed \$600 during the primary election reporting period and \$600 during the general election reporting period as permitted by law.

The allegation that \$600 contributed to my campaign by Ms. Mayer-Hoaglin was actually a loan is totally false. I never asked Ms. Mayer-Hoaglin for a loan. She voluntarily and willingly made the \$600 contribution to the campaign.

The allegation that I accepted \$5,000 in cash from Anthony Bell is both totally false and absolutely outrageous and Mr. Bell will so swear under oath.

Paragraphs 12 through 16 of the Yacko affidavit concern a rental property I own which is located at 8 State Street in Struthers, OH. A tenant was charged in Struthers Municipal Court with permitting drug abuse. To the best of my knowledge the case is still open. The tenant has been evicted. The allegation that I suppressed information regarding an alleged drug raid is totally false.

The allegation that I regularly smoke marijuana is totally false. I have submitted to a drug test and will make the results public as soon as they are available.

Ms. Yacko alleges that she was paid \$400.00 per week while working in private law office and that appropriate payroll taxes were not withheld from her check. Ms. Yacko was an independent contractor and will receive an IRS Form 1099 documenting the funds she received while working the office. She was never paid to work on my campaign.

The above evidence makes it clear that Ms. Yacko lied under oath in the affidavit submitted to the BOE. It is also clear that she lacks credibility. Therefore, any and all statements she makes should be judged in that context.

Regarding the affidavit filed by Courtney Mayer-Hoaglin, she alleges in paragraphs six through eight that I asked her to loan me \$1,500.00 and that she agreed to do so. She also states that she loaned me \$600.00. As stated above, the \$600.00 was a campaign contribution not a loan. In Paragraph seven she states that I told her \$600.00 was the most she could contribute to my campaign. That is true. The allegation that I asked her to contribute above the limit in increments of \$600 is totally false. It should also be noted that Ms. Mayer-Hoaglin does not allege that she made campaign contributions in excess of the legal limit.

At some point during the summer of 2017 I contemplated returning the \$600.00 contribution solely because I thought it might put a stop to the harassing text messages and telephone calls I was receiving from Ms. Mayer-Hoaglin. Ms Hoaglin made the contribution during the time we were involved in a personal relationship. When the relationship ended she wanted the money back.

As noted above, the allegation that I regularly smoke marijuana is totally false. The results of my drug test will be made public as soon as they are available.

The allegation that I threatened to send letters to both her and her sister's employers are totally false.

Concerning paragraph 25 of the Affidavit, because Ms. Mayer-Hoaglin resigned as Treasurer of the campaign before finance reports were prepared and filed there we no "records or books" for her to review. The campaign finance report was signed by me not Ms. Mayer-Hoaglin.

It is important to note that once our personal relationships ended both Sarah Yacko and Courtney Mayer-Hoaglin threatened to sabotage my judicial candidacy. Ms. Yacko has stated that she and Ms. Mayer-Hoaglin are now friends and are working together to damage my candidacy. In addition, Ms. Yacko is in regular contact with individuals who support or are associated with my opponent's campaign.

I am convinced and confident that the affidavits, both of which contain myriad false statements, were created and filed for purely political purposes. A cursory reading of the affidavits makes is clear they were not prepared by Ms. Yacko nor Ms. Mayer-Hoaglin but by a person or persons with a background in the law and/or politics. Both their content and the timing of their release were designed to wreak havoc in this important race immediately prior to election day. It is my sincere hope that the voters, the public and the media will reject these despicable tactics and the people who are utilizing them.

These actions and other accusations levied against me by my opponent's supporters are not unexpected. But they will not distract me from my campaign or motivate me to do anything other than work even harder--to knock on more doors, shake more hands and attend more events between now and November 7.