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# Secret memos outline ways to launder campaign money

By Robert Ruth  
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Legislators who want to reform Ohio's campaign-finance laws should read strategy memos written by two political consultants to discover what's wrong with the system, good-government advocates say.

"These memos are an attempt to hide, camouflage, launder and obfuscate campaign contributions from public view," said Jack Shaner, a spokesman for the Ohio Environmental Council. "They provide a road map to legislators for what needs to be changed in the law."

Catherine R. Turcer, legislative director for Ohio Citizens Action, agreed.

The documents, written in September by consultants Kyle S. Sisk and Brett T. Buerck, suggest five ways state Sen. David Goodman could hide from voters the sources of money he raises in his campaign to unseat Franklin County Commissioner Mary Jo Kilroy, the Democratic incumbent.

Goodman, a Bexley Republican, has said he did not use any of the campaign money-laundering methods recommended by Sisk and Buerck, who he fired in May.

"I have been upfront and open about every donation," Goodman said. "I did not follow any of this advice."

However, news media reports about efforts in other political races to hide the sources of campaign money have led to majority Republican leaders in the General Assembly vowing to close loopholes in campaign-finance laws. A Senate-passed reform bill is now before the House State Government Committee.

The Dispatch recently obtained copies of the secret Sisk and Buerck documents.

In his memo to Goodman, Sisk suggested that money laundering could be used in soliciting contributions from three Republicans — state Sen. Jeff Jacobson of Vandalia, Ohio House Speaker Larry Householder of Glenford, and former Columbus Mayor Greg Lashutka, now a



Consultant Brett T. Buerck, left, suggested ways that state Sen. David Goodman, right, could hide the sources of campaign money from voters.



vice president of Nationwide.

Referring to Jacobson, Sisk wrote, "You need to have access to the Montgomery County Republican Party State Candidate Fund." Until this year, Jacobson was chairman of the Montgomery County GOP.

County state candidate funds have been used by Republican officeholders in the past to launder campaign money. Under this scheme, donors are instructed to contribute money to a county fund, not directly to an officeholder's own campaign fund.

The money in the county fund is later used to help finance the candidate's campaign. The scheme allows contributors, especially business people, to avoid having their names linked to a candidate's campaign.

Sisk recommended that Goodman repay Householder for any donations the speaker makes to Goodman in excess of \$10,000. Goodman's reimbursements to Householder then could be laundered through the Ohio GOP, Sisk recommended.

"Pledge to him (Householder) that you will repay him everything over 10k . . . over a reasonable period of time via the ORP (Ohio Republican Party) state candidate fund and other funds agreeable to the speaker," the memo said.

Sisk suggested that the Ohio GOP could be used to launder contributions from other donors, also.

"Ask the speaker to sit in on a meeting between the two of you and (state Republican Chairman Robert T.) Bennett to talk about

the ORP's role in your race to include, but not limited to, use of the (Ohio Republican state candidate fund)," according to the memo.

In the paragraph on Lashutka, Sisk suggested Goodman ask the former mayor to funnel contributions "to county candidate funds around the state so they don't show up on your report. This should be an option for everyone. Try for 10k (\$10,000) before the end of the year to Montgomery County and either Muskingum or Hocking County."

Critics have alleged that Republican officeholders routinely used funds in these three counties to launder campaign money into their own funds.

Buerck's memo outlined a plan for "guerilla warfare" whereby campaign money from corporations would be solicited. Usually, companies are prohibited from donating to candidates' campaigns.

However, corporations can contribute to so-called "issue-advocacy" campaign committees, Buerck noted. Ads produced by these types of committees are allowed to criticize candidates but cannot directly advocate the election or defeat of any candidate. Also, the identities of contributors to these committees can remain secret.

Buerck proposed setting up a campaign committee that would criticize Kilroy on a series of issues, including crime and land development. "Can we use corporate dollars that will discuss issues that we want this race to be about?" Buerck wrote.

Informed of the memos' contents, Shaner said, "Voters have the right to know whether candidates are propped up with housewives or industrial polluters."

Referring to the money-laundering suggestions, Turcer added, "They may be legal, but they are deeply unethical. I'm amazed these people felt so confident and comfortable about this kind of stuff that they risked putting it all down in writing. It's shocking."

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