

Is the Talbot Integrity Project illegally meddling in local politics?

It's time to clear the air on the meddling in local political races by the Talbot Integrity Project. It's time to be factual and transparent. A complaint has been filed with the Maryland Board of Elections, asking if the Talbot Integrity Project has legally filed as a Political Action Committee (PAC). Maryland campaign finance law requires that entities file as a PAC when involved in political activities. All candidates and political entities must report all cash transactions, loans, and in-kind contributions on a frequent cadence during election years. Is The Talbot Integrity Project a Political Action Committee? It is up to the State of Maryland to make this determination, but behold. First, Dan Watson "acting treasurer", has authorized the placement of signs around Talbot County with an authority line where the principal (Dan Watson) is also acting treasurer. Second, TIP claims to be a 501(c)4 non-profit organization. This writer asks that TIP make their approved, (not pending) filing as a 501(c)4 non-profit available for public review. Several Talbot Spy articles and other local publications have published articles to raise funds under the 501(c)4 umbrella. Citizens have been led to believe this is a non-profit organization focused on "no-growth" for Talbot County. IRS regulations prohibit political activities by non-profit 501(c)3 and 501(c)4. Is TIP operating as an unauthorized PAC? Or is TIP engaging in political activity not allowed by the IRS for non-profit organizations? A more disturbing factor is the endorsements, being "in-kind" contributions to 4 Democrat and 2 Republican Council candidates. Large 8x4 signs, "RESET Talbot County", are being placed around the county. As a concerned citizen, I ask all Candidates confirm they have authorized the use of their name and candidacy in these publications, mailers, and signs placed by TIP. I ask they confirm reporting TIP 's "in-kind" contributions on their Campaign Finance reports. The following are direct quotations from the National Council of Non-Profits. "Nonprofits and foundations may not "participate in, or intervene in (the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for political office." This prohibition applies to any and all candidates for federal, state, and local elections". "All charities...are absolutely prohibited from intervening in a political campaign for or against any candidate for an elected public office. If a charity does intervene in political campaigning, it will lose both its tax-exempt status and its eligibility to received tax-deductible contributions". Candidates, clarify your connections with TIP! Have you reported their in-kind contributions? TIP, clarify your status and disclose this information. Citizens deserve to know if contributions to your effort are being used and handled according to the law.

Surely, your name, Talbot Integrity Project, implies your organization, members, and endorsees are following appropriate election, and Non-Profit charitable organizational laws. It's time for the Talbot Integrity Project and their endorsed candidates to clear the air.

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