



ILLINOIS BALLOT INTEGRITY PROJECT

Paper Not Vapor

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For Immediate Release

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THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK!

Sun-Times News Group falls for GOP disinformation

Evanston IL, March 3, 2008. In a March 2nd article, "Ballot group may have partisan ties - Election Commission critic has an agenda, GOP claims," under the byline of STNG reporter, Paige C. Winfield, the *Sun-Times News Group* launched an attack on the Illinois Ballot Integrity Project (IBIP), alleging ties with "left-wing" organizations like George Soros' Open Society Project, Public Campaign and the Streisand Foundation." The *Sun-Times* also repeated Republican allegations that IBIP is somehow "linked" to these organizations because another group with a similar name, ". . . the National Ballot Integrity Project . . . uses promotional material produced by the Public Campaign."

Responding to allegations, IBIP state chairman, Bob Wilson, said, "The Illinois Ballot Integrity Project is not now, nor has it ever been affiliated in any way with the National Ballot Integrity Project. We have never received any money from nor contributed any money to that organization. To the best of our knowledge no member of IBIP is a member of NBIP. IBIP is not a chapter, affiliate, coalition partner nor any other sub-group of NBIP."

"Further, the Illinois Ballot Integrity Project has never received any funds whatsoever from George Soros, Barbara Streisand, the Open Society Project, Public Campaign, the Streisand Foundation, or any other similar and/or affiliated organization. This connection is, in short, a complete fabrication - something the STNG reporter could have and should have fact-checked before making it the focus of the article," he added.

The STNG reporter also attempted to tie IBIP to other organizations by falsely asserting that IBIP's treasurer, ". . . serves on the steering committee of Operation Turn DuPage Blue - a local Democratic organization." "The individual named is not now, nor has he ever been an officer or director of IBIP," said Clare Tobin, the organization's secretary.

STNG's reporter also reported this damning information on two of IBIP members: "Next week they are speaking at a meeting of DuPage Against War Now - a local group opposed to the war in Iraq." WOW! The implied criticism of IBIP members addressing DuPage Against the War Now (DAWN) is especially humorous, considering that the IBIPers appearance follows that of DuPage County Election Commission executive director, Robert T. Saar, less than two months ago. "Now what are we to make of *that* connection?" asks Wilson.

The real story, of course is buried far down the page:

In 2005, IBIP discovered that the DuPage County Election Commission claimed that certain election records had been destroyed and it could not supply them in response to Freedom of Information Act requests. Research of

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the statutes and Commission financial records indicated that if the Commission was destroying public records without approval from the Local Record Commission, it was apparently violating Illinois law. These are facts and matters of public record.

The Commission responded by hiring the firm of Bond, Dickson & Associates, at taxpayer expense - apparently in an effort to buttress their position - and continued to destroy records without applying for or receiving the proper permits and certificates. The latter is a matter of fact, taken from the Commission's own records.

IBIP continued to insist that the Commission was subject to the Act, based on an earlier opinion from the Illinois Attorney General, coincidentally involving another DuPage public agency. IBIP believed that the Illinois Attorney General already resolved the issue in 1999 on the applicability of the State Local Records Act with the DuPage County Public Safety Communications Office in opinion 99-021. This opinion is a matter of public record, and was easily available to the Commission's counsel.

On December 26, 2007, the Illinois Attorney General agreed with IBIP's position and issued an opinion that stated in pertinent part:

"The DuPage County Election Commission must obtain the approval of the Local Records Commission before disposing of any public records in its possession. Although the [Illinois] Election Code and the Federal laws addressing the preservation of election records establish minimum retention periods for some election records, it is my opinion that these laws do not supersede or conflict with the procedural requirements of the Local Records Act."

In summary, IBIP alleged that the DuPage County Election Commission was violating Illinois State Law by not following the provisions of the Illinois Local Records Act. So far, an agency of the Secretary of State's Office and the Illinois State Attorney General agree!

The STNG reporter went on to write about another IBIP allegation, "While the election code does say that judges shall write their signatures on bound packages of ballots, such is not required by the commission." Or put another way, the Commission doesn't require judges to sign the ballot boxes as mandated by the Illinois State Election Code.

"Here we have, in the reporter's own words, two violations of Illinois law by the DuPage County Election Commission," said Melisa Urda, IBIP vice chair. "You'd think that the fact that IBIP had been proven right might have been the headline," she continued.

"This is a case study on GOP echo-chamber success," said Wilson, adding, "The DuPage County Election Commission hired Dan Curry for \$3,000 a month to do damage control, and he's delivered." "It's unfortunate that the *Sun-Times* bought the spin - their readers deserve better," he concluded.