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August 28, 2005 - February 7, 2006

## CANDIDATES ON THE PACLEANSWEEP BOARD

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What are you running for?

It's the question I'm asked most often, and the one that usually has no answer. Other than when I was planning my very first run, the answer is rarely ever clear. I can't tell you how many times I'm asked and how many times I can't answer.

In the back of my mind is always the reply: "Waddaya got?"

The truth of the matter is this: since the time I first became politically active, I'm never sure what I'll actually do until the day to start gathering signatures on petitions arrives. I don't know if I'll ever run for office again, but I do know every single office I'm eligible for. If I think I can make a difference by running for any particular office, I will. If I think I can make a difference by not running for office, I'll do that. I keep all the options open as long as possible.

Of course no one believes it, even though it's the God's-honest truth. Everyone assumes that political types like me are always scheming and plotting for the next run. Although I certainly take stock of events and put them into the context of how they might or might not effect a run in whichever races I'm eligible for, I consider it to be nothing more than keeping all my options open.

What are you running for?

Nothing. Everything. Whatever it takes to make a difference. That's what I'll do, every time. The only thing I won't do is lie about it.

The speculation over my plans for 2006 began as soon as I switched my voter registration to Republican in January 2005, long before the pay raise. Party affiliation is another thing I differ from most people on. I do not view my party label as being on par with my religion. My religion actually means something. Party labels, on the other hand, are only tools for creating opportunity. I live in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, so being a registered Republican makes sense. If I lived in Philadelphia, I'd be a

registered Democrat. Heck, I'd register under the Bull Moose Party if I thought it would do any good.

It's all a matter of what you want to use your party affiliation for. Most of my life I was a registered Independent. I did that because I *am* independent minded, but it locked me out of the only elections that count in Pennsylvania - the primaries. When I first ran for office, I ran as a Libertarian because the libertarian philosophy appeals to me more than any other. I want government to leave me alone and I want it to leave my neighbors alone, too. That experience educated me on the finer points of third-party politics in Pennsylvania - most of which stink.

After I switched to Republican and my local paper made a big deal about it, the rumors started to fly immediately. Who was I looking to take on? Tim Holden or Mauree Gingrich again? What about Chip Brightbill - he was up in 2006. I never told because there was no answer, but the speculation persisted. Showing up at the county Republican Committee's Spring 2005 dinner likely fueled more speculation. Actually, if one is planning a run for office, speculation beforehand can be beneficial.

Although I was asked the question many times in early 2005, I had no plans to run for anything, but I was keeping all my options open. My decision to run for school board was made at the last minute. I gave it plenty of thought beforehand; it's just that I didn't make the actual decision until it was time to gather signatures, the same time I offered to gather signatures for Lebanon County DA Deirdre Eshleman

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Before I started PACleanSweep, I was thinking about the possibilities of running against Brightbill or Gingrich - they were in offices I was eligible for, after all. A week after the effort started it looked like it just might go somewhere, so I thought about it again. If it really took off and I ended up running for a legislative seat, PACleanSweep would only look like a stepping-stone. I had no idea how successful it would eventually become, but I did promise myself to not be blinded by the temptation to run against Brightbill or Gingrich.

However, what if I raised a bunch of candidates all across the state, but ignored my own area where one of the biggest payjacking Goliaths was a Senator? Wouldn't that be irresponsible? As a result, I modified my stance. I would only run against either of my own incumbents if no one else stepped up to the plate. That would be dependent on whether Pennsylvanians would carry their outrage that far. In those early days, nothing was certain. For all I knew at that juncture, G. Terry Madonna and the rest of the pundits might have been right.

When the media asked - which they started to do when I was at the PA Press Club in August - I didn't just say no. I always qualified it by saying that if no one else came forward against Brightbill or Gingrich, I'd jump in at the last minute to give them a primary challenge.

When I asked others to join me in forming a more formal organization, I realized I'd have to be ready to change that strategy if my position somehow became a deal-breaker. When the 15 original board members met in Philipsburg six weeks after I started the movement, the question of whether candidates for public office should serve on the board was discussed.

Besides the issue of whether to incorporate or not, it was the most discussed issue of all. Certainly, since we were planning to form a PAC for state election purposes, we'd want to exclude any federal candidates from any official role in the organization. The rules for state and federal political committees are so different we wouldn't want to mix the two. I relayed my experience with the Republican State Committee to help drive that point home.

What if a board member decided to become one of our PACleanSweep candidates for a state office? We had a case-in-point in Dan Galena, who was already planning to run against his local payjacker. After some discussion it was decided that indeed, once someone became a candidate for state office, they too would be prohibited from serving on the board. It certainly made sense. If we succeeded in raising the 228 candidates I wanted to raise, we wouldn't want 227 of them claiming the one who sat on the board was receiving preferential treatment.

We came to an agreement and moved on to discuss other details of our budding corporate bylaws. My personal strategy and public comments would not need to change one iota. Even if we made a decision to allow candidates as board members, surely once they were on the ballot and running they wouldn't have time to monkey around with our board of directors anyway. It all made sense.

I continued to field the question of what office I was going to run for and I continued to give the same answer: None, unless my Representative or Senator did not have a challenger. It was a good answer for someone who was speaking regularly on behalf of a statewide group aimed at challenging incumbents - and it was the truth.

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A week or so after our historic victory over Russell Nigro, I received a somewhat cryptic letter from a gentleman named David Lynn from Philadelphia. He talked about his excitement over what we'd done in