



Star Advertiser

Group escalates mudslinging by tying Cayetano to GOP

By David Shapiro

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Oct 17, 2012

The Honolulu mayor's race is resembling the NFL's New Orleans Saints bounty scandal: If you can't win with a good game plan and clean play, make dirty hits on the other team's quarterback.

Pacific Resource Partnership, which represents unions and contractors who profit from the \$5.26 billion Oahu rail project, has intensified its TV ad campaign falsely accusing anti-rail mayoral candidate Ben Cayetano of running a "pay to play" scheme when he was governor.

PRP spent more than \$1 million in the primary and appears to be spending even more in the general to distort Cayetano's record; former state campaign spending chief Bob Watada says he's appalled by the "lies."

Even venerable KHON-TV news anchor Joe Moore became disgusted with the spate of misleading ads on his newscast and commented after one airing, "If there was truth in advertising, there would be a disclaimer at the end of that commercial saying Ben Cayetano was cleared of any wrongdoing in the illegal-contributions issue."

Now PRP has opened a new front in its effort to bury Cayetano in mud with a brochure mailed to Oahu voters ridiculously attempting to tie the two-term Democratic governor to Republicans Mitt Romney and Linda Lingle, the tea party and the anti-Obama birther movement.

Cayetano has publicly endorsed Democrats Barack Obama and Mazie Hirono over Romney and Lingle. He was warmly received at the recent state Democratic convention and described by Gov. Neil Abercrombie as a "good Democrat."

PRP's basis for its ludicrous claim that Cayetano "will eat, sleep, breathe Republican" is that he's received support from Republicans who oppose rail.

Never mind that Oahu voters decided long ago to make city elections nonpartisan to get Democrats and Republicans working together on municipal issues that have nothing to do with the national partisan divide.

The "evidence" that Cayetano is in cahoots with the tea party and birthers is that a political action committee that endorsed Cayetano also endorsed GOP state Sen. Sam Slom.

While attacking Cayetano for his publicly disclosed donors, PRP has kept secret its own contributors who put up the millions to sully Cayetano.

When I asked to see PRP's donors to check whether any have contributed to Republicans, I was refused.

And I didn't hear PRP director John White refusing donations from those who also gave to Republicans when he ran for a nonpartisan City Council seat in 2010.

Cayetano's opponent, Kirk Caldwell, has gladly reaped the benefits of the sleazy attacks while tiptoeing around the tactics.

He told the Star-Advertiser, "I'm not going to condone it. I'm not going to criticize it. It's just part of the political process in our country."

That's like saying he won't criticize breaking the quarterback's leg for a bounty because it's part of football.

Reach David Shapiro at volcanicash@gmail.com or blog.volcanicash.net