

"ANYTHING TWO PEOPLE KNOW IS NOT A SECRET."

THE  
CHEYENNE

HERALD

the local advocacy journal

In depth. Independent. Stories of Local Interest. Since January 2002.

FREE!  
TAKE ONE

August 28, 2006 • Issue No. 106 • Next issue September 18, 2006 (three weeks)

# Republican Party chairman Drake Hill must be replaced

by DaveFEATHERLY

Every day that goes by with Drake Hill at the helm of the state Republican Party pushes Ray Hunkins further and further away from the possibility of being elected governor. Every day that he remains chair of the Party makes it more unlikely that Ray will even be competitive in November. He will get trounced without change.

Every day that goes by with Drake Hill at the helm of the state Republican Party transfers more and more political contributions from Republican voters to the Democratic Party.

Having just been a participant in a statewide political campaign (as campaign manager for Bill Winney), I've heard from many Republicans who are fed up with Drake Hill's misstep after misstep. I've been told many other things that I cannot reveal without betraying confidences but all of what I've been told leads me to the conclusion that the Republican Party will continue to swirl down the drain if this guy remains in charge.

Ray Hunkins' showing in the recent primary election was telling. The fact that his nominal opponent, John Self, got more than 25% of the vote - 25% statewide! - was a direct reflection of Republicans all over Wyoming being unhappy with the actions of the state chair. Self's performance on a recent Wyoming Public Television debate was all anyone had to witness to determine that he is neither qualified nor ready for this position.

Self, a kindly and elderly man, received 17,684 votes. One out of each four Republican votes for Governor went to him.

That spells huge trouble for the candidacy of Ray Hunkins.

Four years ago, between the primary and general elections, a newly formed political action committee tried stunts against Dave Freudenthal and his family. It didn't work then and they're not working now.

In 2002, Freudenthal had commented about the PAC leaders, "I think they're the monkeys, and Eli [Bebout, the Republican candidate for Governor] is the organ grinder." Other than a mediocre attempt at humor, there was nothing offensive about that reference.

Ken Clark, the PAC's treasurer and co-founder, asserted that Dave was racist - on the basis of that remark. For those who had never heard possible racist names he knew from somewhere, Clark offered "sand monkeys," "prairie monkeys," and "porch monkeys" into the mix.

His accusation was that using the word "monkey" in any context, even in the teasing reference by Dave Freudenthal, was the equivalent of the "n" word.

Four years later, an operative inside the Republican Party, Drake Hill, started the current mudslide by charging the Governor, his wife and his brother with suspicious, improper, or illegal behavior.

What Drake Hill and Republicans of his ilk seem to forget is that Dave Freudenthal is the lone Democrat at the Round Table of Wyoming Government and he is surrounded by four Republican members of the Land & Investment Board (the other four state elected officials) and more Republicans in the Wyoming legislature than there are in the state of Massachusetts.

All the Governor has to do to cover himself and those closest to him is to get the Wyoming legislature to approve all spending. Dave can do nothing beyond

what Republicans allow him to do. Drake Hill, as many will recall, is himself a Republican. So, every time he insults the spending of the Governor, he is also insulting the Republican majority, made up of the members of HIS own party.

When he questions the private use of the State's airplanes, he casts aspersions on the use of those airplanes by Joe Meyer, Max Maxfield and Cynthia Lummis - not to mention the leadership of the Wyoming House and Senate - and not to mention former Republican elected officials like April Brimmer Kunz. Republicans all!

Democrats could not do the damage to the Republican's effort to take back the governor's office that Drake Hill has done - and continues to do.

The August 21, 2006 Casper Star-Tribune editorial called Hill a liar.

They said his accusations about the photogrammetry plane in the state's fleet were knowingly false. They said Hill had been told in a letter that the plane did not fly passengers and the items he called extravagances (seats, etc.) were necessary and had been approved by the Republican legislature.

The CS-T did not mince words. They "would not call what Hill had said distortions," they wrote. They called the attempt, a few days before the primary election, as "this dirty campaign trick."

Why did Drake Hill waste public goodwill by trumping up charges before the primary election when the candidate he is trying to help, Ray Hunkins, had token opposition and whatever number of votes Ray received beyond what it took to defeat John Self was of no consequence? Hill has alienated many in his own party.

The dam has begun to leak. Finally, a local Republican chapter is speaking out in opposition to the tactics of its chair.

Teton County GOP chair Bill Scarlett has "distanced his organization from Drake Hill, chair of the Wyoming Republican Party," according to a story in the Planet Jackson Hole on August 23rd. Scarlett said neither he nor the other four members of the Teton County board were "never consulted nor were we asked to endorse this type of campaigning." He offered that the "politics of personal destruction provides nothing for our party or for the political process." Scarlett subscribes to the notion that "we will win with ideas and vision." Amen.

The ball rolling downhill on Drake Hill will gain much momentum if Ray Hunkins distances himself further from Hill's actions to date and disavows the attempt at demonizing the governor, his wife and his brother. Ray must cut Hill adrift.

It isn't working and it won't work. Four years ago, the Republican Party dug for all they could find and failed to convince the electorate that they had found anything to discredit the Freudenthal group.

Politics ain't beanbag and most who enlist in the cause have little practical experience or background for the task. Many take the low road. In Wyoming, voters can sort out the truth and lies. They will sort out suggestion and innuendo and discard both if not backed up with facts.

Has Dave Freudenthal adopted the "high-rolling lifestyle" for which Drake Hill has accused him? Well, the proof will be in the pudding and if Hill cannot prove his accusations better than he has so far, Ray Hunkins will be the unintended victim - not Dave Freudenthal.

The next four issues of the Cheyenne Herald will have full color printing, primarily to accommodate political advertising. Color will be available on the front and back pages, as well as the center spread. The use of full color is being done on an experimental basis. If it merits continuing, future issues will also have full color availability. Comparative rates for black and white or full color are shown on page 5 of this issue. Black and white ads will still be available and will cost less.

WWW.CHEYENNEHERALD.COM