

Editorials

The Summer of the First Schlegel Recall - Part 1

I'm presenting information on the effort to recall Kurt Schlegel in two parts. Part One is the final results. Part Two will be cover our adventures circulating a petition in Elbert County, and will undoubtedly have more car chases and special effects.

by Mike Phillips

Here's the Short of It

First please allow me the luxury of dispelling the Old Guard and Mr. Schlegel's characterizations of this recall. No, it was not a "partisan" effort. The committee was comprised on one Democrat, one Unaffiliated (me), and one Republican. The majority of the folks collecting petition signatures were Republicans and Independents. It was not a "vast leftist" inspired anything; it was simply a group of people who are fed up with the corruption and dishonesty that has permutated the elected leadership of the Elbert County in the last 15 years or so. Only a moron or dedicated liar could twist it into anything approaching "partisan."

The recall petition to put the issue of recalling Commissioner Kurt Schlegel on the November ballot came in approximately 450-500 signatures short on August 8th. The deadline to turn in the petition was August 10th at 5:00 pm. That left about 60-hours to secure the remaining signatures, get them collected, counted, and notarized; still physically possible, but cutting things too close. Here is why.

If we ran the petition all the way to the end (August 10th) and failed to get enough signatures, by law no one else would be allowed to do another recall attempt on Schlegel during the remaining two years of his term. However, if our petition was formally withdrawn before the deadline, other citizens would still be allowed the opportunity to file recall petitions in the future. In fact, there could be a petition active every 59 days for the next two years if necessary.

To paraphrase the old Zen Master, "When faced with two choices that suck, one still has to choose." So on August 9th I formally withdrew the petition to allow future recall efforts to take place.

Now in typical Schlegel fashion, two things appeared on his Facebook page to begin spinning the recall as a failure: "...I was informed that the recall petition against my office was withdrawn by the petitioners on 11 August, 2012, thereby voiding the petition." Kurt, who seldom admits or corrects his mistakes, failed to mention the follow up letter he received from the Clerk and Recorder stating that the petition was withdrawn August 9th (with time stamped documentation to prove it) thereby allowing future recall petitions. Oops.

"THANK YOU to everyone that supported me in this failed attempt!" To put a small chink in that towering ego - of the approximately 1,700 who signed the petition, about 90%+ declared themselves as registered Republicans. In fact, only a small handful of people we ran across stated they supported Commissioner Schlegel. And because Elbert County is so geographically spread out (and other migrating factors I'll detail in Part 2), we barely scratched the surface of registered voters. So with a bare minimum of 1,700 voters thinking he is a Turkey, and lots more voters out there yet to be contacted, it seems to me that Schlegel should really consider hiding out over Thanksgiving. Gobble, gobble.

For the record I'll say the success of this recall would have allowed Kurt Schlegel the least painful path to resigning and moving on. The future that is likely to unfold for him now will be much less appealing in hindsight.

Although "this particular" recall effort didn't achieve its final goal, several good things did come out of it:

We registered several new voters (whether they signed the petition or not) who now will be able to cast their vote in the General Election.

We raised a great deal of awareness among our widely dispersed population ill served by the lack of a viable county wide newspaper as to what is happening in our local government and with their tax dollars.

We opened the way for future recalls and legal remedies to bad governance.

We discovered that the Republican rank and file are less tolerant of bad behavior on the part of its elected officials and willing to "clean house."

So there you have the upshot of what happened. Did we learn anything? Absolutely, and I'll be happy to share it all with next recall group to help assure their success. Was there a whole lot of political silliness? Oh yeah, and a formal compliant has been filed with the *Secretary of State* as a result, but I'll tell you about that in Part 2.

