

To: Texas Voters

From: Luis Saenz, Director of Texans for Rick Perry

Re: Carole Strayhorn's latest attack

You may be wondering why Carole Strayhorn is now attacking Secretary of State Roger Williams. Before answering the question, "why", it may be helpful to review the facts.

Because Ms. Strayhorn was no match for Governor Perry's strength in the Republican Primary, she announced her intention to file as an independent candidate for governor. There are clear petition requirements for candidates that file as independents. They must gather 45,540 signatures (a number arrived at based on turnout in the last gubernatorial election) by May 11. In order for someone to legally sign her petition, they cannot vote in either party primary.

The law doesn't allow signatures to be collected until after the primary is over unless there is a runoff, and then she must wait until that is concluded. The law is also clear that Ms. Strayhorn cannot begin collecting signatures until the day after the primary (if there is no runoff). In a news story yesterday her campaign indicated it would ignore the law and begin collecting signatures once the polls close (7:00 p.m.), which is odd because they just sent out an "Independence Day" mailer in which they told prospective petition signers, "remember your petition signature is only valid if you do NOT vote in the March 7th primary election and do NOT sign until March 8th after the primary election is over."

Kinky Friedman's campaign said, "we've known for some time we can't collect until then (12:01 a.m. on March 8th). We're a little surprised they're just finding out." (Associated Press, 2/27/06.) Why would Strayhorn's campaign threaten legal action over waiting five hours to collect signatures, as the law prescribes, when their campaign spokesman said, "we're going to blow the barn doors off this drive"? (Associated Press, 2/27/06.) With millions of dollars from trial lawyers pouring into Ms. Strayhorn's campaign, it should be a simple task to collect 45,540 signatures from a pool of millions of people eligible to sign.

They are also asking Secretary Williams to ignore the law and allow for a "rolling" signature process, where they turn in signatures as they are available instead of all at once. And she has threatened litigation over these complaints and others against Secretary Williams.

This is nothing more than a transparent attempt by a desperate candidate to bully the Secretary of State into misinterpreting the law, or once he refuses to be bullied, to politically tarnish his reputation. It won't work.

First, Roger Williams has a reputation of integrity (one of the strongest supporters of his selection as Secretary of State was none other than liberal Fort Worth Star-Telegram columnist Bob Ray Sanders.) Second, he took an oath to uphold the law,

and that is precisely what he is doing in this case. Third, if he were inclined to play politics with the enforcement of election laws, he would have had an easy opportunity to do so when Ms. Strayhorn misspelled her name...not once...but twice on her paperwork declaring her intent to be an independent candidate. He didn't do that. He simply did his job.

Yesterday Ms. Strayhorn called on Governor Perry to ask Secretary Williams to resign because he raises funds for an office-holder account. But several previous secretaries have done the same, including those appointed by then-Governor Bush (Tony Garza, Elton Bomer and Al Gonzalez), and curiously Ms. Strayhorn never raised this complaint before. Clearly, what matters most for Ms. Strayhorn is what is most politically expedient at the time, hence her switch to the Republican Party in the 1980's when high office was too crowded with fellow Democrats, and her recent abandonment of the Republican Party to fuel her ambition for higher office.

The fact is, Ms. Strayhorn backed herself into a corner with her negative attacks that turned off Republican Primary voters, and now that she has suddenly decided to be an independent candidate, she doesn't want to follow the law and is therefore attacking a good man who is not only a former contributor to Ms. Strayhorn, but a friend of President Bush. Interestingly, Ms. Strayhorn has developed a habit of attacking the president's friends and befriending his enemies (anyone remember the antics of one of her top supporters, Ben Barnes, who joined Dan Rather on the set of 60 Minutes to attack the President's claims about his guard service?)

But why is she engaging in a smear campaign against Roger Williams? **It's right out of the Democrat playbook for the 2004 presidential election.** In states where secretaries of state were either elected as Republicans, or appointed by Republicans, the Democrats made reckless charges before election day in order to politically tarnish election officials so that, if they had to make decisions in a close contest, they would be intimidated and rule their way. Remember how they bragged about their Army of 10,000 lawyers descending on polling places in battleground states? It was all a part of their intimidation effort.

Strayhorn hopes she can tarnish Roger Williams' reputation so that he will look the other way if she runs into problems with her petitions. It's a political pressure campaign.

But Roger Williams won't be intimidated. He will uphold the law. And frankly, Carole Strayhorn attacking his ethics would be laughable if she hadn't done so much to corrupt her own office. A state audit report showed she has provided close to a half billion dollars in tax favors to those who have contributed to her campaign.

So when you see the stories in the coming days and weeks attacking Secretary Williams, keep something in mind: desperate politicians do desperate things.