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local news

KGW defends OCA contribution

Representatives from KGW NewsChannel 8 say they received several inquiries from callers who say they were distressed by a recent media report showing the station granted \$3,000 worth of advertising time to the Oregon Citizens Alliance.

According to RightWatch, an organization that monitors right-wing activity, KGW is listed among the more than 3,000 businesses and individuals who contributed to the OCA and its related groups since 1988. RightWatch recently published the "RightGuide to the Other Side" which lists OCA contributors, using information filed with the secretary of state's office. KGW is listed as having given \$3,000 worth of advertising time to the OCA's now-defunct Human Rights League, which was pushing Ballot Measure 8, a failed anti-abortion initiative.

The Sept. 21 issue of *Willamette Week* ran a story about the controversy, prompting a slew of calls to KGW from concerned citizens.

"Listen, I was shocked and amazed when I first heard about this, too," says Bob Blacher, KGW general sales manager. "But the fact is, I would suspect that most of the 200 employees here think what the OCA does is despicable. The station was only trying to comply with the Fairness Doctrine."

The now largely defunct Fairness Doctrine was a confusing set of Federal Communications Commission regulations that applied to ballot measure campaigns until 1992. It required broadcasters to provide "balanced coverage," though opinions vary about whether that coverage was to be in the form of news or advertising.

"If one side comes in and buys up a lot of advertising time, and the other side says, 'we don't have any money and can't get any coverage,' what do you do?" asks Blacher. "We did what our attorneys advised us to do."

According to Blacher, KGW contributed advertising time to six other ballot initiative campaigns that year, including measures promoting the shutdown of the Trojan nuclear plant until it was earthquake-proofed, seat belt use, and recycling.

Blacher says once that was explained to angry callers, they understood. He admits, however, that he is "a bit annoyed" with RightWatch for presenting the information "out of context."

"I called [RightWatch's] Peggy Norman five times when I heard that KGW was listed. Only once did I get a return call, but by then the story was out," he says. "I wish RightWatch had spoken with us first."

Tia Plympton of RightWatch says, "All we did was take information that was available to the public anyway and present it to them. KGW seems to be a little defensive about this, and maybe they should be, because they made a poor executive decision."

She adds, "No other station chose to donate advertising time to the OCA."

"All that we can say is we feel we did the right thing," says Blacher. "We are very supportive of the gay and lesbian community, and most of us can't stand the OCA. I don't think our relationship with the gay community has been hurt by this; I certainly hope is hasn't."

Inga Sorensen

Judgment against Lively and OCA eludes photographer

It has been nearly a year since the state Court of Appeals upheld a \$31,000 jury award against the Oregon Citizens Alliance and its spokesman Scott Lively, and the plaintiff in that case, free-lance photographer Catherine Stauffer, has yet to see a penny. According to her lawyer, she probably never will.

"The OCA has made the attempt to collect the judgment extremely difficult, because the two OCA entities—the Oregon Citizens Alliance PAC Inc. and OCA Education Foundation Inc.—that were named in the award are out of money, if not defunct," says Stauffer's attorney, Bradley Woodworth. "It will now be an incredible challenge trying to extract any money out of them because we don't have any judgments against the group's newer entities, such as its No Special Rights PAC."

On Oct. 8, 1991, Stauffer, who has worked as a *Just Out* photographer, attended an OCA event which she says she had received an invitation to. According to the OCA, the gathering—held at Portland's Foursquare Church—was only for the group's "members and friends," who had been invited to preview an anti-sexual minority rights videotape to be used in the Ballot Measure 9 campaign.



Lively, who recognized Stauffer, admitted to using physical force to remove her from the building. Stauffer sued, and a year after the incident a Multnomah County Circuit Court jury held Lively and the OCA liable for damages totaling more than \$31,000. The OCA appealed, but last January the Oregon Court of Appeals upheld the award.

"This is a very frustrating process, I just don't know what else to say," says 26-year-old Stauffer, who was 23 when the incident occurred. "I mean, I've been in court with the OCA for three years, need I say more?"

According to Woodworth, Stauffer has been invited to review the OCA's financial records for the two OCA entities named in the judgment. "But that takes hours upon hours of very tedious work," he says. "The only way that Catherine could maybe get something from the OCA's new entities is by showing the OCA had closed down or shifted funds from the old entities as a way to defraud its creditors. My instincts say that may have happened, but it's not easy to prove."

He adds, "Maybe Catherine should just chalk this up as a moral victory, not a financial one."

Records filed with the state elections division Oct. 10 show the OCA PAC with a nearly \$21,000 deficit.

Nola Wilken, a certified public accountant with Wilken & Lorenzen, a Portland accounting firm, reviewed the OCA's finances for the No on 9 Campaign two years ago. "What I learned from that is that the OCA has a prolific number of entities and is constantly shifting money among them," she says. "However, because of its numerous entities, it makes it really confusing to trace the money. The ultimate effect is that it becomes incredibly difficult and expensive to figure out what's going on."

But Stauffer says she is not giving up and has enlisted the help of RightWatch, an organization that monitors right-wing activity.

"We would be thrilled to take a look at the OCA's records," says RightWatch director Tia Plympton. "This would provide us with a terrific opportunity to expose the OCA as the charlatans they are. This could benefit not only Catherine but politics in general in Oregon."

Inga Sorensen