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national news

Dodging dollars

Bob Dole returns a check from Log Cabin Republicans, which urges queer Dole donors to ask for a refund

by Bob Roehr

Senate Majority Leader and Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole (R-Kan.) appears to have his own "don't ask, don't tell" policy when it comes to gay campaign contributions: If the press doesn't ask about a check from Log Cabin Republicans, he won't tell his staff to return it.

But when syndicated columnist Deb Price began inquiring about a \$1,000 contribution made by Log Cabin on June 19, campaign spokesman Nelson Warfield quickly announced the donation was being returned.

The group's agenda is "100 percent at odds with Senator Dole's," said Warfield. "If we had been aware of this particular contribution in advance, it would not have been accepted."

That characterization is completely at odds with documentation supplied by Log Cabin. In a letter to executive director Rich Tafel dated May 24, Dole campaign finance chairman John A. Moran followed up on earlier conversations, writing: "I would appreciate any assistance you could give us in turning out your members at each [fund-raising] event. I am looking forward to working with you."

Tafel attended a \$1,000 fund-raising event on June 19 and wore a "Log Cabin Republicans" name tag. "Hi Rich, I know what you're wanting," he recalled Dole saying. "You're concerned about Ryan White [AIDS services reauthorization]." The exchange was amicable.

"The hypocrisy is ridiculous," said Tafel. "They definitely knew about our check. They definitely knew who we were."

"Our policy is to decline contributions from political groups that have an agenda that is in opposition to Senator Dole's positions on the issues," said Warfield. This is the first check returned for ideological reasons. He cited differences over "gays in the military" and asserted that Log Cabin supports a "special rights agenda," not Dole's "equal treatment for all."

Log Cabin spokesman David Greer pointed to areas of agreement with Dole. The group's first legislative priority is Ryan White, a bill which Dole co-sponsored. The group supported the Contract with America. And "we never said we are asking for special rights, we are asking for equal opportunity for all."

He and Tafel noted how Dole attacked the Hollywood media industry for "the debasing of

America" yet still managed to contain his outrage enough to pocket at least \$21,000 in contributions from Time-Warner over the last several years.

Most observers lay the incident to increased pandering to the far right by a Dole campaign which sees its lead eroding in the polls. The sense of panic was reinforced by the Aug. 19 Iowa straw poll where Dole slipped into a tie with arch conservative Sen. Phil Gramm and ideologue Pat Buchanan ran a strong third.

It marked the second time in recent months that Dole has backtracked from tolerance to an anti-sexual-minority position. In a May interview in *The New York Times Magazine* he supported civil rights and nondiscrimination for lesbians

and gay men and kept an open mind on military service.

When those positions drew flak from the right, he wrote two weeks later to the conservative *Washington Times*, "I oppose the special interest gay agenda that runs from gays in the military and reaches as far as to suggest special status for sexual orientation under federal civil rights statutes."

Greer doubts that Dole's action will placate the extremists or win their votes. "There is an integrity issue here. If you are on the far right, you need to

question when the going gets tough, is Bob Dole going to be in your corner then?" The measure of integrity comes on the tough issues not the easy ones.

Tafel is outraged by Dole's latest flip-flop. "This was an unnecessary and dishonest action, which could completely change the dynamic among moderate Republicans who thought they were safe supporting Bob Dole against Phil Gramm. Now he has become Phil Gramm, and moderates should look elsewhere." He urged gay Republicans who have contributed to Dole to "demand their money back."

Greer said they are aware of at least 15 of their supporters who have made large contributions to Dole. Several of them have already indicated their intention of requesting that their money be returned.

He also called upon gay men and lesbians serving on the Dole and Gramm campaigns "to confront their candidates on these issues, or they are becoming accomplices in the far-right takeover of America."



Bob Dole

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The eighth annual Creating Change conference is scheduled for Nov. 8-12 in Detroit, Mich. Sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the national organizing conference brings together hundreds of gay and lesbian activists from around the country.

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Britt, former member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors; Urvashi Vaid, former executive director of NGLTF and author of the soon-to-be-released book *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*; and Elias Farajaje-Jones, a self-described "Spanish-speaking african native-american and an anarchist guerrilla theologian/AIDS terrorist/writer/cultural critic/performance artist/ritual technician/two-spirit/queer-identified bisexual man."

For more information or a registration brochure, call (202) 332-6483, ext. 3329.

Kristine Chatwood