

As set forth in John 8:32 of the Bible, “the truth will set you free”; I feel it is important to bring the truth to light in relation to the false narrative that has been crafted against me based upon half-truths, innuendo and hearsay. Did I recommend my wife to the Governor for the position of Chancellor? Absolutely. I cannot think of any husband I know who would not recommend his wife for a position especially when she is exceptionally qualified for the position. Was I willing to compromise the will of my constituents in exchange for the Governor appointing my wife to a judicial position? Absolutely not. If I was at all willing to do so, then I would have voted in favor of the Governor’s key piece of legislation back on April 23 – the school voucher bill also known as the ESA bill. However, I didn’t despite significant pressure and arguments that are part in parcel of controversial legislation, and speculation that a failure to support the bill could negatively impact any judicial appointment considerations regarding my wife. As many are aware, there have been reports of an F.B.I. investigation surrounding whether improper incentives were offered to state house members in exchange for their vote in favor of the school voucher bill. This was on the heels of Rep. Hawk reporting to the media that he was asked what he wanted in exchange for his vote, and Rep. Ramsey reporting that “the suggestion was [made to him] that [voting in favor of the school voucher bill] could favorably affect revenue expectations in [his] district”. I was never expressly promised anything by anyone in exchange for a vote in favor of the ESA Bill; however, I did fear negative repercussions if I voted against it. As some may remember, I solicited feedback from my Constituents in newspapers across the district regarding how I should vote on the school voucher bill, and I specifically warned constituents that there could be negative consequences to our district if I voted against the bill, stating as follows:

I have been seeking support from the Governor and his Administration with respect to, among other things, economic development in our district, highway projects in our district, expansion of vocational education opportunities in our district and assistance with revenue shortfalls in our district created by the demolition of Paris Landing Inn (which I fundamentally opposed). While the ESA bill does not effect schools in District 75, I fear that failure to support the ESA bill could have a negative impact on District 75 in other ways, and I ask constituents to keep this mind in formulating their opinion on how I should vote on this bill.

In response to the above, the overwhelmingly majority of constituents who participated in my poll or communicated to me were opposed to the bill and asked that I vote against it, and I did so. However, I felt that the adverse consequences of voting against the bill would apply not only to my district, but also to me and my family personally, and I think the timeline of events buttresses this. Indeed, on March 11, roughly 6 weeks prior to the vote on the school voucher bill, Carma McGee’s name was submitted as 1 of 3 finalists for the Court of Appeals position vacated by Brandon Gibson who resigned her seat to work for the Governor’s administration. On April 11, roughly 1 ½ weeks prior to the vote on the school voucher bill, Governor Lee appointed Carma McGee to the Court of Appeals, opening up the judicial seat at issue for which my wife applied. The seat was already open at the time I cast my vote against the Governor’s

controversial ESA/school voucher bill. Before casting my vote, I even discussed with my wife the fact that if I voted against it that it was highly unlikely that she would get appointed to the judicial vacancy despite her qualifications. Nevertheless, we both agreed that it was imperative that I vote the will of my constituents no matter what, and I did so. In fact, I have always done so and will always continue to do so. As many know, I have done my best to ensure that constituents were aware of legislation that came to me for a vote by publishing articles in the local newspapers, speaking on the radio and informing constituents on social media. I have also done my best to solicit feedback from constituents to ensure I voted in accordance with the majority will of the district by conducting polls, attending as many community events to speak with constituents and requesting constituents email me with their feedback/input.

Despite all of the above, when the application period opened for the vacant judicial seat, my wife nevertheless decided to apply. The decision, however, was made after discussions between ourselves and others of the possibility that my vote against the school voucher bill would negatively impact her appointment. She determined to let her qualifications stand on their own inasmuch as she graduated in the top of her law school class, was the longest practicing attorney who applied, was the only AV rated attorney who applied, was the first and only woman who made partner in the top regional law firm for which she had previously worked in Memphis and Tampa, had the greatest diversity of practice experience, and had the greatest number of publications and awards including the 2017 TN Impact Award from the Department of Human Services, among other things.

She regrets having applied today inasmuch as there has been speculation that King was possibly promised the position before any applications were ever received. In other words, my wife had to endure attacks over the course of the process for something she may have never stood a chance to receive from the beginning. During the applicants questioning by the selection committee, my wife was critically questioned due to my co-sponsorship of what is known as the “bathroom bill” – a bill to protect school-age girls from having to go to the bathroom with boys or undress in locker rooms with boys. My wife was also critically questioned about my sponsorship of bills to deter illegal immigration in TN. She was the subject of criticism in media as well over my sponsorship of these bills. In essence, my wife was singled out for me honoring my campaign platform and voting the majority will of the constituents in my district.

I always have and always will work on addressing the issues around which I campaigned and will always vote in accordance with the opinion of my constituents – not in accordance with what I am told to do by others outside my district. I am no puppet. I don’t follow the principle of “go along to get along”. I did not go to Nashville for the goal or purpose of being popular with the Governor or my fellow legislators or lobbyists. I went to Nashville to try to make a difference and a positive change for my district and serve as an honest voice for my constituents, and that is what I have done. Unfortunately, not many at the Capitol want change, particularly when it comes to change that aligns with Christian conservative principles, and when Christian conservatives like me push for change, they sadly become a target for elimination. However, as

long as the citizens of District 75 will allow me to serve them as their voice at the Capitol, I will continue to execute their will and advocate for their interests.

In fact, I did just that when I advocated for a caucus to select the Republican nominee for Chancellor. I did it to protect the interests of Henry Countians in my district. Despite Ms. King's unsupported allegation that the decision to caucus was made to somehow keep her from being selected as the Republican nominee, the decision to caucus had absolutely nothing to do with Ms. King. The decision to caucus was made to ensure all 5 counties in the judicial district could participate in the nomination process. If a primary as advocated by King was held, the two largest counties in the district (Henry and Hardin) would have been entirely excluded from having any voice whatsoever in the process due to a notification deadline to local Administrators of Elections that was regrettably missed by both Henry and Hardin. For this reason, discussions regarding holding a caucus were already being held long before Ms. King was nominated by the Governor. It was a matter of fundamental fairness in allowing all 5 counties in the district to participate and was done in accordance with the TN GOP Bylaws. Ms. King was aware and had knowledge that the counties in the district were discussing caucusing before she received her appointment and she accepted the appointment.

In my opinion, Henry County as well as Hardin County deserved to have a voice in the process of selecting the Republican nominee for Chancellor, and the primary for which King advocated would have stripped any voice from Henry and Hardin Counties. I felt my constituents would prefer having some voice over no voice at all, and I advocated for a voice for my constituents. Ultimately, however, neither I nor my wife had control over the decision that was made. The decision was made by the majority of GOP organizations in the judicial district by vote. Neither I nor my wife had any vote in that process.

Ms. King could have chosen to participate in the caucus just as with a primary; however, in either instance, it is my understanding that King's Republican status would have been challenged inasmuch as she did not qualify to run on the Republican ballot under TN GOP Bylaws based on her voting record. I did not create the Tennessee Republican Party Bylaws, and I certainly did not try to manipulate them. However, I did hear speculation there were efforts by King and her supporters in the Governor's Administration to convince TNGOP Chair Scott Golden to declare King a bona fide Republican despite her voting record and override the majority decision of the GOP organizations in the judicial district to caucus and force a primary.

Additionally, if King was unhappy with the decision of the Republican organizations in the district to caucus, an additional option for King was to run on the ballot in the general election as an Independent. However, instead of campaigning and participating in the election process, she chose to instead quit when she didn't get her way. More importantly, instead of Ms. King being open and forthright, and acknowledging her inability to qualify to run as a GOP candidate based on the TN GOP Bylaws and her voting record, and that she only joined the local GOP party in Carroll County earlier this year around the time period the judicial position was coming open, she decided to lay the blame on me and my wife.