

Wednesday, November 1, 2006

Politicians: Weed out security goons.

Security goons are not wedded to any one political party, political stripe or politician. Witness, for instance, the First Amendment-violative arrests and hyper-security at recent Democratic and Republican national presidential conventions. Witness the manhandling of my former client and political conservative Ben Wetmore, who, after videotaping Tipper Gore's 2002 American University campus speech experienced the following by the admission of the Public Safety official judicial complaint: When Wetmore refused to turn over the videotape, "the officers pried the camcorder from Mr. Wetmore's hands, put him on the floor and placed him in handcuffs. The videotape was confiscated." (See <http://www.thefire.org/index.php/article/69.html>). Then, to add insult to Mr. Wetmore's injuries, he was victimized by a kangaroo Star Chamber disciplinary hearing that followed the customary rule to force the student's lawyer -- in this case myself -- to stay out of the hearing room and in the adjacent hallway. Going back further in time, it was at the 1968 Democratic national convention, not at a Republican national convention, where police goons' brutality led to the chant "The whole world is watching." Fast-forward to Halloween, October 31, 2006, when the political roles were reversed, and security goons (or were they but mere supporters?) for Senator George Allen tackled Senator Allen's nemesis Mike Stark, who has openly blogged to wanting to repeat Roger and Me with George Allen and to use guerrilla tactics to win elections. Here are accounts on the security goon incident -- depicted in the above YouTube video, from the Associated Press (via the pro-business Forbes.com site, so no liberal bias there) and the conservative National Review. For whatever reason, as of today, silence is the result of my search of Senator Allen's official website concerning this goon incident, macaca-gate, and Senator Allen's denial that his mother was raised Jewish subsequent to the date she says that she confirmed to him that she was raised Jewish. I imagine that plenty of Democrats' websites remain silent on serious scandals, but such silence is a serious mistake no matter whose website is silent. UPDATE: I re-reviewed the foregoing paragraph, recognizing that the official website that I referenced is Senator Allen's website in his official role as a senator. Therefore, I looked for his campaign site, which seems to be www.georgeallen.com. A google search of Allen's campaign site (inputting site:georgeallen.com [search phrase]) and a direct search of the site find the following: - The site says nothing about the strongarm violence against Mike Stark shown in the above YouTube video, but instead attacks Mike Stark here (showing him raising legitimate questions about whether Senator Allen used the N word before, and about why he had a Confederate flag and noose in his office (if the latter items were indeed there)), and by highlighting the above-listed National Review article. If Senator Allen does not publicly reject and state his opposition to this strongarm treatment of Mike Stark, he will be giving the green light for his supporters and security assistants to continue such activities in the future. - The site seems completely silent about macaca-gate. - The site includes a press release about Senator Allen's pride in his Jewish heritage, but the site does not appear to explain why he denied that his mother was raised Jewish subsequent to the date she says that she confirmed to him that she was raised Jewish. - The site provides this comparison chart of where George Allen and Jim Webb stand on such issues as immigrants' rights, free choice on abortion, gay marriage, and flag burning. I come out against George Allen's positions on those four issues. - The above YouTube video does not look doctored, and apparently was captured by a local television station. Moreover, I have been inside the same Omni Hotel in Charlottesville, Virginia, many times, which is next door to the federal courthouse. The video does not look like it was staged somewhere else. It is time for Senator Allen to speak up honestly about the gooning against Mike Stark, and to reject it. I would say the same if the gooning had been by Jim Webb's crew or anybody else's crew. POST SCRIPT 1: On a related note, Mike Stark has filed a criminal complaint over this incident. Charlottesville News Channel 29's website reports that: "One of those people who tackled Stark is former Albemarle County GOP chairman John Darden. In a statement released to NBC29, Keith Drake, current chair of the county Republicans, said Darden declined to comment on the incident because the campaign ought to be about 'issues and a record not public stunts.'" It goes without saying that in criminal court, I would as readily and aggressively defend a person whose actions and views I despise, as a person whose actions and views I love. All suspects in the assault of Mr. Stark deserve full protection of the Constitution in any criminal investigation or prosecution, as do all criminal suspects. POST SCRIPT 2: Charlottesville News Channel 29's website reports that: "Senator Allen (R) commented on the series of events, saying, 'This person, and this has been typical of the webb campaign, wanted to provoke and create an incident. And it's unfortunate. I would like to see Mr. Webb denounce this sort of activity.'" Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon's news & views at 20:00