

Lukert Under Fire For Alleged Improper Campaigning

Editors note: Since this story was first published Friday afternoon, Lukert has responded to the allegations.

Allegations of improper campaigning are made against 1st District Kansas Senate candidate Steve Lukert.

That follows a vote of the Vermillion School Board on October 8th to investigate the allegation of political campaigning in school classrooms during the school day.

That word is received in a press release sent by the Oskaloosa law firm of Knutzen and Ney.

According to the release, the school board decided to vote for the investigation against the Democratic challenger of Republican Senator Dennis Pyle following a complaint brought by Centralia resident Emmett Koch.

Koch claims Lukert campaigned to a senior government class at Centralia High School during school hours.

Koch told the Board of Education for USD 380 that the incident happened September 14th after Lukert asked Centralia School officials for permission to speak to the class.

Lukert calls that allegation false(Play Audio)

Lukert also responds to another allegation made by Koch, who says while it may have been appropriate for Lukert to speak about running for office and the democratic process in general, he crossed the line when he expressly advocated his own election and criticized his opponent and Governor Sam Brownback(Play Audio)

Koch's attorney, Joshua Ney, attended the school board meeting. He indicated, during the session, that at least two state statutes may have been violated, both of which make it a Class C misdemeanor for state employees to use public resources to conduct political activity.

While Ney has so far been unavailable to comment specifically to this news department, despite a phone message placed with the law firm, he does clarify his client's position in the news release. In the document, Ney states Koch believes the issue can be handled locally by the school board fully investigating the matter and setting new policies and procedures to prevent the district's schools from, in Ney's words, "being taken advantage of in this manner in the future." However, Ney says without such corrective action being taken, his client plans to review all of his options, including the possibility of referring the case to the county attorney or state governmental ethics commission.

Koch, in the press release, says, following visits with school administration, he does not believe that individual school officials intended for Lukert to campaign in the school, with Lukert making the decision to, quote: "cross the line between education and advocacy without the officials' knowledge."

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