City records show Valero, others have pooled $104,200 to oppose Kari Birdseye with negative ads & phone calls

Shocking documentation of outside money plans to influence Benicia election

By Roger Straw, The Benicia Independent
October 13, 2018

Get ready!

If you think the Benicia City Council race has been nasty so far, with negative campaigning through secretive push polls and negative phone calls, just wait… Valero and others in a new Political Action Committee (PAC) have joined together to raise over $100,000 to influence our election with additional hard-hitting negative campaign tactics. $100,000 – over 3 times the limit each individual candidate is allowed to spend on their campaign!

So… you can expect to see negative ads making outrageous claims against Kari Birdseye on TV and Facebook. Expect nasty signs around town, more negative telephone campaign calls, glossy mailers delivered to your door, and who knows what else? To understand the dark nature of their plans, you really do need to check out the phone script and photocopies of ads in the City reports at right. They want to buy a seat on Council.

According to official City of Benicia documents *(see below)*, Valero wrote a $14,200 check to help fund a Political Action Committee that goes by the nearly endless name, "*Working Families for a Strong Benicia, a Coalition of Labor, Industrial Services Companies, Public Safety and Local Leaders Supporting Christina Strawbridge and Lionel Largaespada and Opposing Kari Birdseye for Benicia City Council in 2018*."

Besides Valero's $14,200, the other interested parties are throwing in another $90,000 to fund the WFSB anti-Birdseye campaign.

My opinion? They better hope this works. Can you imagine campaigning this viciously against someone and then losing? Not the smartest way to try and "mend fences" after a near disastrous chemical release in 2017 and a pledge to be a "good neighbor." Is this how good neighbors act?

We're not all that far away from the election – you can expect the PAC to spend this huge amount in the next three weeks. Benicia will be inundated with their anti-Kari messaging.

Remember: this tactic was tried by Big Oil previously when Chevron spent $3 million to try and buy four city council seats in Richmond in 2014. It failed spectacularly. San Francisco State political science Professor Robert Smith wrote of the Richmond outcome, "This means that big

money doesn't always win, that ordinary people can defeat huge corporate power." *sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Chevron-s-3-million-backfires-in-Richmond-5873779*

Let's hope that Benicia voters see past the slick mailers and negative hit pieces that will soon be flooding our mailboxes and FaceBook feeds. Kari Birdseye for Benicia City Council!

Links to City of Benicia documents:

- WFSB PAC – Contribution Report (First 3 contributions, $74,200) https://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/vertical/sites/%7BF991A639-AAED-4E1A-9735-86EA195E2C8D%7D/uploads/PAC_Working_Families_for_Benicia_Form_497_1.pdf
- WFSB PAC – Expenditure Report #1 PRO-STRAWBRIDGE (Expenditures of $9,900, repeating first 3 contributions, and with phone script) https://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/vertical/sites/%7BF991A639-AAED-4E1A-9735-86EA195E2C8D%7D/uploads/PAC_Working_Families_for_Benicia_Form_496_1.pdf
- WFSB PAC – Expenditure Report #2 PRO-LARGAESPADA (Expenditures of $9,900, with phone script) https://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/vertical/sites/%7BF991A639-AAED-4E1A-9735-86EA195E2C8D%7D/uploads/PAC_Working_Families_for_Benicia_Form_496_2.pdf
- WFSB PAC – Expenditure Report #3 ANTI-BIRDSEYE (Expenditures of $9,900, with phone script) https://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/vertical/sites/%7BF991A639-AAED-4E1A-9735-86EA195E2C8D%7D/uploads/PAC_Working_Families_for_Benicia_Form_496_3.pdf
- WFSB PAC – Expenditure Report #4 ANTI-BIRDSEYE (Expenditures of $6,689, with 1 additional contribution of $30,000 and PHOTOCOPIES OF NEGATIVE ADS) https://www.ci.benicia.ca.us/vertical/sites/%7BF991A639-AAED-4E1A-9735-86EA195E2C8D%7D/uploads/PAC_Working_Families_for_Benicia_Form_496_4.pdf

---

Roger Straw
The Benicia Independent