



OFFICE OF
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THE OPPOSITION
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

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URGENT

BY HAND DELIVERY

His Excellency, Mr. Duncan Taylor, CBE
Governor of the Cayman Islands
Cayman Islands Government
Government Administration Building
George Town
GRAND CAYMAN

Dear Sir,

Re: UDP Funding and Promotion of Anti One Man One Vote (OMOV) Campaign

I am writing to lodge an official complaint with your office regarding what appears to be abuse of office and misuse of public funds by the Premier in relation to the anti-OMOV campaign currently being conducted by the Premier and the UDP administration under the guise of an education campaign. By copy of this letter I am also registering the complaint with the Office of the Auditor General, the Commission on Standards in Public Life and the Anti-Corruption Commission.

In February this year two of my colleagues, MLA Ezzard Miller and MLA Arden McLean in conjunction with the OMOV Committee launched a petition seeking a people initiated referendum on the question as to whether the Cayman Islands should adopt the principle of one man, one vote and convert our system of electoral districts to single-member constituencies. The petition called for a referendum to be held by November 2012 and if the question was answered in the affirmative, that the new system be implemented in advance of the elections to be held in May 2013. The petition quickly gained a groundswell of support and by April the number of signatures had approached 25% of the electorate, the constitutionally required figure to trigger the holding of a people's initiated referendum.

Although the government had previously indicated that it would not be holding the referendum in advance of the elections, as the number of signatures grew the government changed its position. On 10th April the Premier made a surprise announcement that the government would be holding a referendum on OMOV and single-member constituencies on July 18th. The practical effect of this decision by the government was to sideline the people-initiated referendum and to impose in its place a government referendum. In addition to creating major challenges for the success of the referendum question by holding the referendum in the middle of the summer holidays, the government has also included a provision in the Referendum Law requiring that a majority of the registered voters are needed to approve the question as opposed to a majority of votes cast.

Astonishingly, the government then adopted the unprecedented approach of campaigning against its own referendum question. However, what is even more irregular and objectionable and which must amount to abuse of office and to misuse of public funds is the campaign that has been underway by the

government and particularly the Office of the Premier ever since. Although the Premier initially said the government would be engaged in an educational campaign about the pros and cons of single-member constituencies, this is not what has occurred. Instead, what has been happening is that the populace has been subjected to a massive "Vote No" campaign utilizing every media outlet and paid for by the Office of the Premier. The following are some examples:

- Full page advertisements are appearing daily in the local newspapers appealing to the public to vote no.
- Advertisements are being run on the radio stations urging the public to vote no.
- Advertisements are being run on television doing likewise.
- Public funds are being used to hold public meetings which serve not to educate the public but only to provide a platform for the proponents of the OMOV initiative and the Opposition to be berated by the Premier and his cohorts and for the electorate to be urged to "Vote NO". Some of these meetings are being broadcast live on Radio Cayman, again presumably being paid for from the public purse. At some meetings, e.g. the public meeting held in Cayman Brac over the past weekend, the public is being treated to meals, again paid for from the public purse.
- The government has engaged the services of well known Caymanian boxer Charles Whittaker in an extensive marketing campaign for the "No" vote. This includes a number of television advertisements produced using government resources, including the Dalmain Ebanks Boxing Gym. Mr. Whittaker himself is and has been for years the recipient of a significant government stipend to enable him to pursue his craft. Additionally, he has received government sponsorship over the years amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars to assist him with the training and the promotion of various boxing events. He continues to receive both a stipend and other financial assistance from government.

The foregoing appears to amount to abuse of office and misuse of public funds and may well also amount to election offences. This is not a case of the government using public funds for the purposes of an educational campaign at the conclusion of which the electorate will be better enabled to decide how to vote on referendum day. This is the flagrant abuse of the Office of the Premier and the blatant misuse of public funds to pursue the agenda of the UDP which is vehemently opposed to the principle of OMOV and the adoption of single-member constituencies. I therefore request that these matters be investigated and the appropriate action be taken following your findings.

Yours faithfully,

Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MLA
Leader of the Opposition