



David W. Johnson
-County GOP Chairman-
-State Republican Committeeman (33rd District)-

January 4, 2017

Dear Fellow Members of the Republican State Central Committee:

On January 6th, we will gather together for the purpose of deciding who will be the next State Republican Chairman. For the last thirty days, of course, we have all been subjected to numerous calls and emails, to lists of highly respected leaders in our Party that purport to favor one or another candidate, and to an otherwise *all out* campaign for the heart and soul of our state Party.

All of this is the aftermath, clearly, of the 2016 Ohio presidential campaign. Many of us were early supporters, delegates, surrogates, fundraisers...you name it...for John Kasich. I was all of the above and remain one of his biggest supporters to this day. But when John Kasich dropped out of the race and Donald Trump had garnered enough Primary votes across the country to become the *de facto* Republican nominee for president, all was not so well for Donald Trump *at the ORP*. At the very least, there remain some very honest, albeit stark differences of opinion about the degree to which the ORP did or did not support Donald Trump.

Here is why I say this:

At the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, it was very clear that Donald Trump did not have the support of our State Chairman. This is not hearsay. This is not conjecture. This is first hand, eye-witness account. I spoke with the Matt Borges about this, directly. He knew well how I felt about it. I had hoped he would alter his course.

Subsequently, there were various interviews of Matt, in different venues, that cast *continued* serious doubt as to his support of the Republican nominee. A prime example of this was that infamous *Cincinnati Inquirer* article in which the Chairman stated that he “just did not know” whether he would even be voting for the Republican nominee.

This is not smoke and mirrors. It is not innuendo. It happened. And it occurred at a *critical* juncture in the national presidential campaign cycle. This whole matter, frankly, floored me and most every Republican that I know – and I shared that with Matt.

After the election, of course, everybody at the ORP appeared to be sheepishly “on board” with President-elect Trump. At the last State Central Committee meeting, though, great credit was taken by the ORP for winning every race in Ohio...without any attribution to Trump’s considerable coattails. Meanwhile, apologies were offered. Constructive thoughts for moving the Party forward were advanced. And questions were fielded by Matt from the floor.

But not *all* questions were answered as completely and as forthrightly as perhaps they should have been at that meeting. I am not going to rehash this here and now, but in my mind, questions about transparency and, frankly, about candor still linger.

Going forward, there is *one* central and overriding question that the State Committee must ask of itself: depending on how the vote for State Party Chairman goes, will we have a *unified* state Party organization...from the State Committee to the County Chairs to the finance leaders of our Party to the Republican officeholders, at all levels, and to rank and file Republicans all across this state?

Secondarily: what will the consequences of our election for State Party Chairman be with the new Trump Administration and the RNC or does that even matter, as some suggest? We have already heard directly from the new Co-Chairman of the RNC on this. It matters to him.

In the final analysis, there can be no question but that Matt Borges has worked hard for the Party. Certainly, I (we) have far more in common with Matt, philosophically, than any mortal soul on the other side of the political isle. That is not in question. Indeed, Matt has many, many fine qualities as a person, chief among them his devotion to the Governor, a devotion which we all share.

Yet, there is an unmistakably wide *and* deep division among our Party faithful not only over the manner in which the ORP handled the presidential campaign, but to some degree over matters of transparency and Party governance. I would not be honest with myself nor with any of you if I were to assert anything other than that I, too, have very serious concerns over these matters.

And so, on January 6th, I will nominate Jane Timken of Stark County to be the next State Republican Chairman. The matters painstakingly raised in this letter will *not* be discussed further. Rather, I will focus on Jane's personal strengths: her impressive educational background, her known abilities as a Party activist and prodigious Party fundraiser, and her exemplary leadership traits...all of which I believe would serve her well as the next Chairman of the Ohio Republican Party *and* as our voice at the new RNC.

I have, frankly, dreaded writing this letter. Many of us had hoped for...some quietly worked for...a more diplomatic resolution. Apparently, it was just not to be. In the final analysis, though, the Party is bigger and more important than any particular, singular political agenda. And, it is worth defending even at the risk, nay the *certainty*, of jeopardizing more than one friendship, however regrettably so.

Respectfully yours,



David W. Johnson
Columbiana County GOP Chairman
State Republican Committeeman (33rd District)