

Rep. Kronda Thimesch: Dark money interests lied about me and other candidates

By Kronda Thimesch

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Many Texas Republicans are getting bamboozled, and many of them don't even realize it.

Lulled by decades of political dominance, many of us have stopped caring who our candidates are, what their character is, and who's behind them.

Worst of all, we've stopped caring about the truth. And our state will suffer for it.

There's an element in our party that insists "the enemy is within." They're constantly creating new purity tests and refusing to recognize that our Republican-led Legislature has consistently passed conservative priorities for more than two decades, making Texas the best place in our nation to live and work.

This inconvenient truth means the only way the naysayers can get primary voters to buy into their outrage machine is by outright lying about those serving in office. My recent primary is the perfect example.

Nearly every day for two months, "dark money" organizations with conservative-sounding names likely spent hundreds of thousands of dollars sending text messages, mail and digital ads to voters lying about my voting record. We'll never actually know how much for sure because they do not report any of their political activity to the Texas Ethics Commission, as required by law.

First, they said I voted to give state funding to facilities that provide gender modification treatment to minors. In fact, I co-sponsored the bill banning those procedures — Texas Senate Bill 14 — which specifically prohibited state funding for those facilities. All of this is part of the public record that anyone

can access, and I've been clear about my stance throughout my career. But that didn't stop countless mailers and text messages to my constituents lying about my record.

They also claimed I voted to increase my legislative pension. Another lie made more outrageous by the fact that no such bill ever existed, and even if it had, I don't even qualify for a legislative pension!

These groups even claimed I tried to impose Sharia law on Texas by voting in favor of a resolution recognizing a Muslim holiday, a simple recognition of a faith held by many of our neighbors in a country whose bedrock principle is freedom of religion.

The audacity of making claims that are so easily disproven is breathtaking. Every candidate knows they will have to set the record straight at some point in a campaign, but this constant game of factual whack-a-mole successfully scares and confuses even the most diligent voters until they can no longer filter the truth from the lies.

Politics is one thing, but each election cycle seems to get more and more personal, and cross more and more lines of acceptable political conduct. My opponent went so far as to put up a billboard calling me a liberal liar near our home. Friends from our church (that my opponent and I both attend) called asking why the attacks focused on character and not policy. Certainly makes for interesting conversation over coffee after Sunday service.

This Republican-on-Republican violence has to end before it destroys our state from the inside out.

The truth is, the Texas Legislature is one of the strongest, most principled conservative legislatures in the nation. And importantly, it functions as an effective policymaking body, as proven by the passage of conservative priorities ranging from \$18 billion in property tax relief, to banning the teaching of critical race theory in Texas schools, to investing \$6 billion in border security so Texas can continue to serve as America's first line of defense on our southern border.

My colleagues and I take our oaths to our neighbors and the Constitution seriously.

It's not glamorous. It's not sensational. It is the hard work of governing. But, sadly, the sensational too often wins campaigns these days.

We must do a better job of demanding truth and integrity from our Republican candidates.

Many voters will continue to face a barrage of political advertisements as they prepare to cast their ballots in the primary runoffs. Many of the same attacks that were levied against me have been and likely will be levied against my colleagues who are in runoffs.

Because if someone has asked you to trust them with your vote, the least they can do is tell you the truth.

Krona Thimesch represents District 65 in the Texas House of Representatives.