

October 14, 2009

To the Board of Directors:

I've been contacted by several people today regarding a report by an unnamed web poster about political contributions made to the Mayor and city council candidates. This has led to wild speculation about the chamber's involvement in the upcoming Myrtle Beach city elections.

I'd like to set the record straight. I, as an individual businessman, raised the contributions listed on this website from like-minded businessmen and women. I delivered these contributions to candidates that deserve re-election. This website suggests chamber funds were redirected through these entities. This is not true.

As your chairman, I hope this has not caused you any distraction. Having stated that, it appears these critics intend to demonize these business owners for supporting candidates that they believe demonstrate the best vision for a bright future for Myrtle Beach. But by attacking these local businesses, the critics are literally attacking job-generators in Myrtle Beach. This led to several questions in my mind:

- What do these critics who hide in the shadows and couldn't read the truth out of the Bible have against entrepreneurs who are committed to creating jobs in our local economy?
- In demonizing these entrepreneurs, do the critics hope to intimidate them and keep them from speaking out? Do they wish to squash free speech?
- Do these critics oppose the property tax relief paid for by the tourism development fee, or do they simply not want to see our tourism industry grow and prosper?

Naturally, these critics didn't attach their names to their claims, unlike the local businessmen and women who, like me, legally participated in the political process. The contributions referenced on the website were purposely made well in advance of any campaign, to ensure that there was no question where these businesses stood. As someone who has raised money for over 100 local, state and federal candidates, I cannot allow the integrity of the Chamber or these entrepreneurs, many of whom I have known for decades, to be called into question. Like the Chamber, they have a right to be heard and participate in the political process.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. In the coming days I am confident that the critics of property tax relief, job-creators and free speech will continue their misleading and false attacks. As leaders in this community, we must aggressively combat this underhand tactics so that the public will have the facts when they head to the polls next month.

<http://discovermyrtlebeach.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=2683>



Brant Branham
Chairman Board of Directors