

**The following appeared in the News Journal March 7, 2010...**

Dear Editor,

A recent article in the News Journal, which Democrats in the State House of Representatives used to make made self-serving and misleading allegations about House Republicans, reminded me of a quote by Mark Twain: "Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please."

House Democrats praised themselves for cutting costs by reducing staff, eliminating travel, and restricting postage. The reality is that when Democrats took control of the House in 2008, the state was facing a recessionary budget gap of historic proportions that required every state agency to dramatically cut expenditures. To congratulate themselves for cost-cutting the rest of state government was forced to undertake is, at best, disingenuous.

While House Democrats patted themselves on the back with one hand, they used the other to point an accusatory finger at House Republicans, claiming past leaders and former members had wrongly benefited from "perks." What Democrats neglected to mention, and the News Journal failed to investigate, was that these alleged perks were decades-old policies that were applied equally to both Republican and Democrat lawmakers and their staffs. While in the minority, House Democrats traveled extensively and engaged in mass mailings to constituents at state expense.

The article also paid particular attention to a House policy that paid departing staff for half of their accrued sick time, which was instituted to compensate staffers for the many hours of unpaid overtime they work during the legislative session. However, the story focused solely on payments to former Republican staffers, disregarding sick leave payments made to past Democratic staffers that dwarfed those cited in the NJ piece.

Another aspect of article, while offering nothing more than rumor and innuendo as substantiation, accused House Republicans of temporarily hiring a "political consultant" as a state employee nearly two years ago. While House Republicans did hire a young man who had a strong public policy background, he left state employment two months after the end of the legislative session to pursue his interest in campaign work. Again, the article neglected to cite that the House Democrats' current chief of staff is also the chairman of the New Castle County Democrat Party.

House Democrats claim they never mentioned all these alleged abuses because they were in the minority and powerless to stop them. Are we to believe that being in the minority rendered them mute?

The News Journal has willingly let itself be used by House Democrats to engage in partisan politics. House Democrats could best serve the citizens of this state by focusing on the challenges of the present, rather than reconstructing the past for their political advantage and own aggrandizement.

Sincerely,

State House Minority Leader Richard Cathcart  
State House Minority Whip Dan Short