

Democrats' ad attacks NC House speaker's payments

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - A political committee supporting Democratic control of the U.S. Senate began running a TV commercial in North Carolina on April 16 seeking to remind voters about personnel issues that embarrassed the office of Republican Thom Tillis, speaker of the state House.

The Senate Majority PAC, which already has spent more than \$2 million on the state's Senate race, plans to spend nearly \$1 million more on the ad targeting Tillis, one of eight Republican candidates in the May 6 primary seeking to challenge Democratic incumbent Kay Hagan in the fall. Her seat is highly coveted by Republicans seeking a path to win a majority.

The ad recalls how two Tillis staff members, including his chief of staff, resigned in 2012 after Tillis announced they had inappropriate personal relationships with lobbyists. The chief of staff, also a former legislator, shared an apartment in Raleigh with Tillis. Tillis took criticism at the time for giving more than \$19,000 in severance payments to the workers, which the ad called "taxpayer-paid bonuses."

"Thom Tillis - spending our money to clean up his mess," the ad's narrator says.

Tillis said at the time that the payments were designed in part to pay for the time they spent working unpaid at the start of his tenure as speaker in early 2011. Tillis said "serious family obligations still existed" for both ex-workers, one of whom was a single mother.

The Senate Majority PAC, which is linked to Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada but barred by law from coordinating its efforts with individual candidates, said the escapades of workers in Tillis' office and how he handled them is fair game.

"Speaker Tillis is running for (the) Senate on his record as speaker and this is part of that record," committee spokesman Ty Matsdorf said in an email. He said the group is spending \$973,000 to run the commercial statewide.

The Tillis campaign was quick to respond.

"Harry Reid and far-left liberals hit the panic button yesterday. They have given up on propping up Kay Hagan, and they know their only chance at victory is meddling in the Republican primary. It won't work," campaign spokesman Jordan Shaw said. The campaign lamented Reid's interference in the primary while sending out a fundraising email later Wednesday.

Tillis is the fundraising front-runner in the GOP race, while Hagan and outside groups like Senate Majority PAC have treated him as Hagan's likely general election opponent. Airing the commercial before the primary could help trip up Tillis as he tries to get more than 40 percent of the vote to avoid a July runoff, which would siphon funds from a fall campaign.

Some of Tillis' Republicans rivals - particularly Greg Brannon and Mark Harris - have also mentioned the resignations and severance payment in fundraising letters or in polling, suggesting they raise integrity issues.

Hagan told reporters April 16 in Durham that she didn't know much about the ad but there are questions "when there are golden parachutes for staff members and no raises for our teachers." Public school teachers have received pay raises in one year out of the first three years in which Tillis has been speaker, in 2012.

The Senate Majority PAC has spent more than \$8.2 million nationwide on independent expenditures during the 2014 election cycle, the highest among super PACs, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

The lion's share of spending by outside groups in the Senate race has come from Republican or conservative-leaning groups, led by Americans for Prosperity. The group, which doesn't have to disclose its donors because of the type of group it is, has run ads critical of Hagan for her support of the health care overhaul law.

Memoir shows changes in Mississippi race relations

By Emily Wagster Pettus

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) - David Jordan was born on a Mississippi Delta plantation during the Great Depression, when segregation and poverty created a bleak outlook for a son of black sharecroppers.

Eighty years later, Jordan is a retired science teacher, longtime Greenwood City Council member and prominent state lawmaker known for advocating public education funding and opposing measures he sees as suppressing civil rights, including a new law that takes effect this year requiring voters to show photo identification at the polls.

In his new memoir, "From the Mississippi Cotton Fields to the State Senate," Jordan writes about growing up in the segregated South.

Before graduating from high school with future Oscar-winning actor Morgan Freeman, Jordan picked cotton and worked at a white-owned store that sold illegal liquor.

Jordan said one day in the mid-1940s, when he was 12 or 13, he had just served beer to white people sitting in a car outside the store. Then a black man, who appeared to be drunk, walked by and touched the car. The white man jumped out of the car and attacked the black man, while his wife and children stood by helplessly.

"He kicked him down to the ground, just kicked him, stomped him," Jordan recalled in an interview at the Mississippi Capitol. "The whole family was hollering - 'Don't kill him!' The children were hollering, 'Don't kill my daddy!'"

The white man went inside to demand the store owner's gun. The owner refused, and the black man's family was able to move him away from the scene.

Jordan writes that the attack "made me realize just how deeply entrenched was the hatred for African-Americans. I knew then that I didn't want to grow up and witness such horrible acts of racial brutality and do nothing to try to prevent them."

Jordan and Freeman were classmates at Greenwood's all-black Broad Street High School, graduating in 1955. The senator writes that Freeman was an exceptionally gifted actor as a teen. During a school play, one student forgot his part, so a teacher sent Freeman onstage.

"Morgan rushed to the stage and quickly developed a new character," Jordan writes. He ended the play with an impromptu performance and the audience never knew the difference."

In September 1955, when Jordan was a freshman at what was then Mississippi Valley State College, he and three other young men pooled their money, bought a tank of gasoline and drove about an hour up the road to attend the internationally reported trial of two white men accused of killing Emmett Till. The slaying of the black 14-year-old, who was visiting Mississippi from Chicago, galvanized the civil rights movement after a magazine published photos of his mutilated body.

Jordan writes that the courtroom felt like a sauna and he could feel people staring at him and his friends.

"I guess the local whites figured four young black men should be somewhere picking cotton," he writes.

An all-white jury acquitted Roy Bryant and his half brother, J.W. Milam. Months later, in a paid interview with Look magazine, the men confessed to the kidnapping and killing.

Jordan and his wife, Christine, married in their early 20s and both worked as educators while raising their four children. He earned a master's degree in chemistry at the University of Wyoming, traveling there for three consecutive summer breaks in the late 1960s while he taught science at an all-black Mississippi high school that had shabby, outdated lab equipment.

Jordan writes about working to increase black voter registration and participation, particularly after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 banned poll taxes, literacy tests and other obstacles. Mississippi now has hundreds of black elected officials, from constables to county supervisors to a congressman. Still, he sees potential new obstacles to voting rights.

"I am totally against voter ID because in my opinion it's too similar to the hated poll tax," Jordan writes, echoing an argument he has made often during Senate debates since the mid-1990s. "Voter ID can also be an intimidating factor that could possibly deter voters from voting, especially black seniors who once faced various forms of threat for attempting to vote."

Jordan wrote his memoir with assistance from Robert Jenkins, professor emeritus of history at Mississippi State University. It was published in March by the University Press of Mississippi.

SBI got warrant for 15 accounts in photo probe

RALEIGH (AP) - The State Bureau of Investigation obtained a search warrant for user information and content for 15 Instagram accounts in its probe of nude photos of students in Wake County.

Court papers show the SBI also wants to find out who signed up as followers of the accounts.

The SBI has investigated reported of nude student photos on Instagram accounts in Wake, Chatham, Craven, Durham, Edgecombe, Johnston, Pitt, Randolph and Surry counties. An agency spokeswoman said Monday that Alamance, Caswell, Cabarrus and Guilford counties have become involved in recent weeks.

Almost 70 nude and sexual images of local high school students were exposed to thousands of people Feb. 11.

Special Agent Kevin G. Roughton said in the warrant application that information connected to the accounts could help in bringing charges of second-degree sexual exploitation of a minor and cyberbullying.

Roughton said he wanted to a list of all followers associated with each account. No arrests have been made.

Durham Public School Teachers

support the following candidates for

Durham Public School Board:

District 1

OMEGA CURTIS PARKER

District 2

SENDOLO DIAMINAH

District 3

MATT SEARS

District 4

NATALIE BEYER

Early voting is from April 24th until May 3rd

Election Day is Tuesday, May 6th

Find your polling place at ncsbe.gov

Paid for by the Durham Association of Educators