

EXCLUSIVE: Milwaukee County Consultant Campaigns For Congress While Being Paid By County To Perform Training Seminar

I have learned Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele has notified the Wisconsin Elections Commission and Milwaukee County Board of Ethics about apparent brazen campaigning done by a local congressional candidate while he was being paid to give a seminar to county employees.

Tom Palzewicz is running as a Democrat against longtime Republican Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner. Palzewicz is a partner in an Elm Grove consulting firm named Action Coach. Palzewicz was running a training seminar last week for employees of the Milwaukee County Department On Aging. During the seminar, according to witnesses who were there, Palzewicz began talking about his campaign against Sensenbrenner and urged the audience to go to his campaign website and consider supporting him.

The training seminar was mandatory for the Aging staff employees.

County Aging Director Holly Davis has sent an email to Aging Department staff apologizing for Palzewicz' conduct. She indicated she immediately contacted Abele after learning what Palzewicz had done. The county executive then contacted the two state agencies that deal with violations of ethics and election laws. Davis, in an email, tells me that Palzewicz and his firm will not be paid for the event because of his campaigning.

It is a violation of state and federal law to do political work while being paid to do government work. At this point, I have not been able to determine if the company has done other events for county agencies. Allegations that aides to Scott Walker did political work when he was Milwaukee County Executive in the 2000s resulted in a lengthy criminal John Doe investigation.

Palzewicz has not responded to my calls about the matter. Palzewicz is better financed than most Democrats who seek to topple the entrenched Sensenbrenner and he has yard signs scattered throughout the congressional district.

Mark Belling

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