



Alaska Democratic Party Leadership
2602 Fairbanks Street
Anchorage, AK 99503

October 8, 2020

Dear Alaska Democratic Party Leadership:

The prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault continues to be an issue that plagues our state and so many of our communities. As elected officials, we have a responsibility to work together to find solutions to confront this scourge in order to create a safer and healthier Alaska. Now, during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and every day, it must be the goal of ALL political leaders to speak up when these issues arise.

As such, we write today to express our extreme disappointment in learning that Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate Al Gross hired and continues to employ a political operative, a Mr. David Keith, who was fired from his position as the Political Director of the Progressive Caucus PAC in June or July of 2019 under allegations of “sexual harassment, abusive behavior and inappropriate language.”

According to reports, Keith was fired following well-documented allegations and a subsequent investigation into alarming behavior that included “inappropriate sexual comments”, “crude and derogatory language to describe women and gay people,” “angry outbursts” and “throwing things at his subordinates.”

Following his dismissal, Keith relocated to Alaska where he accepted a position as Campaign Manager for Dr. Al Gross for U.S. Senate. According to Gross’ own financial disclosures, Keith’s employment began within days of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel’s June 24, 2019¹ news report on this highly toxic and unacceptable behavior.

Attached you will find a July 16, 2019 article, entitled, “Congressional Progressive Caucus PAC staffer accused of sexual harassment no longer working for group” from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*² for your reference. The article states:

“Seven sources ... told the Journal Sentinel that Keith routinely made inappropriate sexual comments about female staffers and volunteers, used crude language and had angry outbursts – at times yelling and throwing things at his subordinates.”

¹<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2019/06/24/progressive-caucus-pac-director-faces-accusations-sexual-harassment/1525513001/>

² <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2019/07/16/progressive-caucus-pac-staffer-accused-harassment-out-group/1743865001/>

“In one incident last year, sources said Keith screamed at staff and threw a water bottle during a meeting after learning some campaign workers left before 9 p.m....

“Keith also frequently used crude and derogatory words to describe women and gay people, and threatened to punish staff who didn't obey his orders, sources said. Several recalled him telling them, ‘If you cross me, I'll destroy your career.’”

The Gross campaign's hiring of David Keith was so alarming that on August 5, 2019, the Alaska Young Democrats sent a letter to the Alaska Democratic Party Leadership voicing their serious concerns. Their letter stated:

“There are serious allegations of inappropriate conduct and abusive behavior perpetrated by the U.S. Senate candidate's current campaign manager while on previous contracts outside of Alaska.”

In addition to raising concerns, the Alaska Young Democrats requested copies of the Human Resources Investigation Report conducted by the Congressional Progressive Caucus PAC and “a justification for the hiring decision in the wake of such serious and public allegations.”

Given our state's unfortunate history with issues of sexual harassment and abuse, including within Alaska's own political circles, we too – like the Alaska Young Democrats — would like answers.

We know the very strong record Senator Dan Sullivan has in combatting issues of domestic violence and sexual assault in our state and country. But Alaskans deserve to know the type of record Al Gross has in addressing these critical issues. Unfortunately, it appears that as one of his first decisions as a candidate for the U.S. Senate Al Gross turned a blind eye to abuse and sexual harassment. This type of behavior should not be tolerated.

Respectfully,

Colleen Sullivan-Leonard
Representative District 7

Sara Rasmussen
Representative District 22

Sharon Jackson
Representative District 13

Rep. Cathy Tilton
Representative District 12

Shelley Hughes
Senator District F

Kelly Merrick
Representative District 14

Rep. Sarah Vance
Representative District 31

Rep. DeLena Johnson
Representative District 11

To:

Casey Steinau – Alaska Democratic Party Chair
Katherine Pfeiffer – Alaska Democratic Party Secretary
Carolyn Covington – Treasurer
Brenda Knapp – DNC Committee Women
Charles Degnan – DNC Committee Man
Lindsay Kavanaugh – Alaska Democratic Party Executive Director

CC:

Speaker Bryce Edgmon,
Representative Matt Claman
Representative Harriet Drummond
Representative Zach Fields
Representative Neal Foster
Representative Sara Hannan
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Andy Josephson
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tompkins
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Andi Story
Representative Geran Tarr
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Adam Wool
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Senator Tom Begich
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senator Scott Kawasaki
Senator Jesse Kiehl
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Anchorage Daily News
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Juneau Empire
Associated Press
Alaska Public Media Network
MatSu Valley Frontiersman
YourAlaskaLink
Peninsula Clarion
Ketchikan Daily News
News of the North – KINY
KOTZ Radio
Homer News
Sitka Sentinel

Political director for Congressional Progressive Caucus PAC faces accusations of sexual harassment, abusive behavior

Mary Spicuzza Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published 2:33 p.m. CT Jun. 24, 2019

A top staffer for the Congressional Progressive Caucus PAC — a group that recruits liberal candidates for the House of Representatives — is facing accusations of sexual harassment, inappropriate language and other abusive behavior.

David Keith, the political director for the PAC, last year served as the campaign manager for Wisconsin Democrat Randy Bryce, a union ironworker known as "Iron Stache" who ran for the southeastern Wisconsin congressional seat held by former House Speaker Paul Ryan. Bryce lost to now-U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, a Janesville Republican.

Keith was hired by the PAC in March to oversee 2020 strategy and candidate recruitment. The Congressional Progressive Caucus is co-chaired by U.S Rep. Mark Pocan, a powerful Madison Democrat.

The Progressive Caucus PAC has hired a human resources firm to investigate concerns about Keith.

Seven sources, including some former Bryce staffers, told the Journal Sentinel that Keith routinely made inappropriate sexual comments to and about female staffers and volunteers, used crude language and had angry outbursts — at times yelling and throwing things at his subordinates.

In one incident last year, sources said Keith screamed at staff and threw a water bottle during a meeting after learning some campaign workers left before 9 p.m., which is the time Bryce campaign staffers were required to stay to make fundraising calls.

Keith also frequently used crude and derogatory words to describe women and gay people, and threatened to punish staff who didn't obey his orders, sources said. Several recalled him telling them, "If you cross me, I'll destroy your career."

Multiple sources, who asked not to be identified out of fear of retribution, said they had recently been contacted by the human resources firm hired by the PAC to investigate concerns about Keith.

Keith's lawyer told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel that he disputes the accusations.

"David Keith absolutely denies the allegations, which appear to come from political consultants with scores to settle," New York-based attorney Lesley Brovner said. "He will not allow this to distract him from continuing to work to elect Democratic candidates."

Pocan and his chief of staff, Glenn Wavrunek, did not respond to requests for an interview.

Keith's former boss, Bryce, said Monday he was stunned by the accusations.

"If it happened, I wish I would have known," Bryce said. "Nobody said anything about it. We had an amazing team, and I love every single person that came here to help me do what we did."

Bryce noted that his campaign staff took the unusual step of unionizing, adding, "We wanted to have a campaign that protected everybody."

It's unclear whether the human resources investigation began as a result of complaints linked to Keith's work for the Progressive Caucus PAC, last year's Bryce campaign or a previous job.

Meg Reilly, a Campaign Workers Guild representative who worked with the Bryce campaign, could not immediately be reached Monday for an interview.

The contract, which was ratified in December 2017, included provisions for a formal grievance process and a third-party reporting system for sexual harassment.

Keith, 28, has worked in politics for about a decade. His previous jobs include serving as campaign manager for now-U.S. Rep. Jimmy Gomez (D-California) in 2017, and working as deputy campaign manager for Chuy Garcia's failed bid for Chicago mayor, according to his LinkedIn profile.

The PAC's mission is to elect "strong, progressive leaders to Congress" who share its vision for the country's future, its website says. It supports issues such as debt-free college, protecting and expanding Social Security, raising the minimum wage, and expanding access to affordable health care.

The group says it's committed to delivering victories for working people, women, immigrants, those living in poverty and the most marginalized of society. It added nearly two dozen freshmen members to its ranks in 2019, and plans to expand its political operations in 2020.

Congressional Progressive Caucus PAC staffer accused of sexual harassment no longer working for group

Mary Spicuzza Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published 11:32 a.m CT Jul. 16, 2019

A staffer for the Congressional Progressive Caucus PAC who faced accusations of sexual harassment, inappropriate language and other abusive behavior has left the group.

David Keith served as political director for the PAC, which recruits liberal candidates for the House of Representatives.

"He is no longer employed at the Progressive Caucus," U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Wis., said when asked about Keith during a call with reporters about his recent visit to a migrant children's shelter in Florida.

Pocan, a powerful Madison Democrat, is a co-chairman of the group.

Keith previously served as the campaign manager for Wisconsin Democrat Randy Bryce, a union ironworker known as "Iron Stache" who ran for the southeastern Wisconsin congressional seat held by former House Speaker Paul Ryan. Bryce lost to now-U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, a Janesville Republican.

Keith was hired by the PAC in March to oversee 2020 strategy and candidate recruitment.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported last month that the Progressive Caucus PAC had hired a human resources firm to investigate concerns about Keith.

Seven sources, including some former Bryce staffers, told the Journal Sentinel that Keith routinely made inappropriate sexual comments to and about female staffers and volunteers, used crude language and had angry outbursts — at times yelling and throwing things at his subordinates.

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Multiple sources, who asked not to be identified out of fear of retribution, said they had recently been contacted by the human resources firm hired by the PAC to investigate concerns about Keith.

Keith's lawyer last month told the Journal Sentinel that he disputes the accusations.

"David Keith absolutely denies the allegations, which appear to come from political consultants with scores to settle," New York-based attorney Lesley Brovner said. "He will not allow this to distract him from continuing to work to elect Democratic candidates."

Contact Mary Spicuzza at (414) 224-2324 or mary.spicuzza@jrn.com. Follow her on Twitter at @MSpicuzzaMJS or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/mary.spicuzza>.



August 5, 2019

Alaska Democratic Party Leadership

Re: Memorandum of Concern

We are writing to call your attention to serious concerns the Alaska Young Democrats (AKYD) Executive Committee has regarding the political campaign of the current Independent U.S. Senate candidate participating in our primary. There are serious allegations of inappropriate conduct and abusive behavior perpetuated by the U.S. Senate candidate's current campaign manager while on previous contracts outside of Alaska. As you are undoubtedly aware, our political community has a history scarred by abusive and unacceptable behavior directed at women and young campaign staffers, with the perpetrators seeing minimal punishment and the victims finding little recourse — behavior that could have been prevented with proper vetting and discourse amongst party leaders. As Young Democrats, we prioritize fostering inclusive and safe spaces, especially in political campaigns. In the Alaska Democratic Party, we all have an obligation to improve campaign culture as a key goal in the broader movement to promote Democratic values.

We believe it best reflects our values as Alaskans, and as Democrats that this situation be handled proactively and with a guarantee that abusive conduct, as alleged, is not welcome or tolerated in our state. We have outlined issues we would like to see addressed and remedied by the campaign;

- Details on the hiring process of the campaign manager, with a justification for the hiring decision in the wake of such serious and public allegations.
- A copy of the Progressive Caucus PAC Human Resources Investigation Report on said allegations.



- An enforceable Code of Conduct, including guidelines for a safe, inclusive workplace environment, outlining inappropriate behavior, and a process to address repeat or serious violations of such guidelines.
- The campaign will assign a point of contact (NOT the candidate or the campaign manager) to address any HR-related grievances and concerns, and enforce their Code of Conduct in an unbiased, process-guided manner.
- A guarantee from the campaign that sexual harassment, abusive behavior, and toxic campaign culture is not tolerated; and should said behavior occur, will immediately be acted upon to ensure the safety of volunteers and staff.

This Memorandum of Concern is not being brought forward with the intent to bring about termination of employment or to deny the potential opportunities of anyone involved in the parameters of this situation. The ultimate goal is for the campaign to address toxic workplace behaviors, and ensure a zero-tolerance harassment policy.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Genevieve Mina".

Genevieve Mina, President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacob Sears".

Jacob Sears, Vice President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leighan R. Gonzales".

Leighan R. Gonzales, Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sterling Huntington".

Sterling Huntington, Treasurer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynette Pham".

Lynette Pham,
National Committee Representative

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erik Gunderson".

Erik Gunderson,
National Committee Representative



JSOnline - Politics  @js_politics · Jul 16, 2019



Congressional **Progressive Caucus PAC** staffer accused of sexual harassment and abusive behavior no longer working for group



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jsonline.com

