

# Cunningham: Rudy preparing personal attacks

By CHRIS NOONAN  
Collegian Staff Writer

Republican Gregg L. Cunningham has notified Democratic opponent Ruth Rudy that he has received reports she is preparing personal attacks against him for the final phase of her campaign for the 171st state House seat as an "October surprise."

Rudy said she has received the letter but does not know what Cunningham is talking about.

In a letter to Rudy dated Sept. 22, Cunningham, who now represents the 77th District in the state House, said reliable sources close to the Rudy campaign told him that personal attacks based on the "skillful use of some unspecified distortions and falsehoods" would be used to discredit his candidacy.

In his letter, Cunningham said: "I have recently received a significant number of disappointing reports from reliable sources close to your campaign that personal attacks are being prepared in an effort to discredit my candidacy during the final phase of this campaign."

"We are further advised that these attacks will be based on the skillful use of some unspecified distortions and falsehoods."

"I would like to believe that these accounts are inaccurate but the credibility of our sources and the similarity of their reports make this information difficult to dismiss as mere rumor."

"I challenge you to conclude these final six weeks of your campaign on a high plane and join me in sticking to the real issues. I believe that we owe the voters that much."

and I intend to give them nothing less."

In an interview, Cunningham said: "I think the stature of the people who have shared these confidences with me has been the most disturbing aspect of this, and it has made it very, very difficult to simply dismiss these reports as rumors."

"These sources have come to me individually," Cunningham said. "I would assume that each assumed that they were telling me something that I didn't know, or something I had not been told before."

Cunningham said, "I would have no way of knowing whether the reports which have been reaching me for the last several weeks are accurate or inaccurate. It's my sincere hope that they are inaccurate. I have written this letter to Mrs. Rudy as a courtesy to alert her to the fact that these reports are circulating and if indeed they are rumors, I'm sure that she'll want to move to squelch those rumors as quickly as possible."

"And if the reports are factually accurate, then I would challenge her to keep her campaign out of the gutter and join me in debating the real issues in the campaign," Cunningham said.

Rudy said she is disappointed to hear that Cunningham is accusing her of running a low-road campaign.

The fact that he has publicly released the letter, Rudy said, proves that Cunningham is trying to use reverse psychology to plant seeds of doubt in the voter's minds.

"He's trying to prove that I'm the unscrupulous one when it is really him," Rudy said. "Up until now he's attacked me continuously on everything except the issues. I think it's another act of desperation on his part."

Rudy said. "He's in trouble and he's using any method he can to try to pull his campaign out of jeopardy."

"These are the identical methods he has used in the past," Rudy said. "He has in the past done exactly what he is accusing me of — I expected him to be doing this. It shows what an unscrupulous campaigner he is." She would not elaborate.

Cunningham said he challenges Rudy to cite one instance when he has used unscrupulous methods in his campaigns.

"All I'd like Mrs. Rudy to do is quit fooling around with these kinds of allegations and counter-allegations and start debating the issues. Elevate this campaign from some sort of a name-calling exercise to a serious debate of the issues."

Throughout the summer and fall, Cunningham has invited Rudy to a formal debate — a request she has repeatedly declined. Rudy has said Cunningham's insistence on a debate proves that his campaign is in trouble. The candidate who feels he is behind is usually the one who pressures for a debate, she said.

Cunningham said that the voters of the newly formed 171st District are unfamiliar with the candidates and their positions on the issues. Rudy has defied every effort of his campaign to get her to discuss the issues, Cunningham said.

"Many people are suggesting that Mrs. Rudy is afraid to debate because she is attempting to conceal her lack of familiarity with the issues and that she cannot effectively argue her position," Cunningham said, "or that she is attempting to conceal the fact that she has an extremely

liberal political philosophy that's very inconsistent with the governmental philosophy of most of the voters in this district."

Rudy and Cunningham also disagreed over who was ahead in the campaign. Rudy said the polls conducted by her organization and by groups such as Planned Parenthood, the GOP state committee and the Democratic Campaign Committee are definitely in her favor, although she refused to release the figures.

Cunningham said Rudy knows he is ahead in the polls, and said the fact that he is in the lead added to his concern that the reports of planned personal attacks might be true.

"Campaigns that are in the lead don't consider those kinds of tactics," Cunningham said. "If Mrs. Rudy's surveys indeed show her in the lead, I hope she didn't pay very much for them."

Rudy said she has conducted a high-plane campaign and welcomes Cunningham to begin to conduct his campaign in the same manner.

"I intend to abide by the fair campaign practices oath that I signed in February," Rudy said. Cunningham has not issued a public statement stating that he has also signed the oath, which is issued from Washington, D.C., Rudy said.

Cunningham did not say whether he signed any campaign oath but said he challenges Rudy to live up to the oath she signed.

"I in fact have pledged myself to an even stricter standard of campaign practice than that embodied in the so-called oath to which she has committed herself," he said.

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