

What \$10 million buys from the Democratic Party

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Dear Friend,

As many readers of this missive may be aware, I ran against Patrick Murphy in the August 30 Florida Senate Democratic Primary. A few months earlier, a Murphy political operative had an interesting conversation with someone working on my campaign. The operative said that Murphy's father, Tom Murphy, had promised to give the Democrats' Super PAC (Senate Majority PAC) and Patrick Murphy's captive Super PAC (Floridians for a Strong Middle Class) \$5 million if Patrick won the nomination, and that Tom Murphy would round up another \$5 million from his friends and colleagues. So the Democratic Party could expect to see \$10 million if it delivered the nomination to Murphy.

Very interesting, I thought. This explained to me why Sen. Harry Reid, head of the Senate Democrats, had been interfering in my primary and belligerently attacking me personally for months, and why the DSCC had been trying to plant "hit pieces" against me with its inside-the-Beltway pet reporters in the media.

I can't say that I was surprised by this. Patrick Murphy's father Tom, a Republican, already had passed around more than \$1.5 million to Democratic candidates and organizations to grease the skids for Patrick, including the purchase of several key endorsements by elected officials. I asked one of them why he had endorsed Patrick. He told me, "Alan, if you gave me \$20,000, then I'd be your best friend for life, too."

In fact, without Daddy's promise of \$10 million, it would be very hard to explain why Senate Democrats would give a fig for Patrick Murphy. Murphy won his seat by less than one-half of one percent of the vote, while the Democrat running four years earlier in the same district had won by ten points. Murphy is a second-term Congressman who has accomplished so little that he was named the least effective Member of the House. Completely bereft of any legislative accomplishments, he is forced to point to a GOP bill for which he takes credit, because the GOP author said something nice about him on the

Floor of the House. Murphy's main goal in Congress seems to have been to try to set some kind of record for party disloyalty, by voting for more than 60 times for bills that were so odious than President Obama threatened in advance to veto them, voting seven times to force the President to license the Keystone Pipeline, voting to "condemn" the President over the Bowe Bergdahl swap, and voting (with only six other House Democrats) in favor of the GOP's Benghazi witch-hunt committee. Murphy also voted (alone among 188 House Democrats) to vote to kill high-speed rail in Florida, even though it passes through his district, after his father's construction company withdrew its effort to win the bid on the project. And Salon magazine points out that Patrick Murphy was a lifelong Republican who switched parties the month he declared for Congress and then, after election as a Democrat, asked Speaker John Boehner if he could switch back. (Boehner wasn't interested.)

And me? I'm the only House Democrat to represent downtown Orlando in the past 42 years. I won my 2008 race by just four points. I lost in both 2006 and in 2010. House Democrats have a system for Member of Congress in shaky districts like mine, called "the pass." If such a Member wants to vote against the party for political reasons, you are supposed to tell the Democratic Leadership ahead of time, "I need to take a pass."

I have never taken a pass. Ne-ver. And I've passed 100 bills and amendments through the House in the last four years, all solid progressive legislation. And I won my last two House campaigns by double digits.

So, if the question is why the Democratic Party would endorse Patrick Murphy in a contested Senate primary, the answer has got to be Daddy's \$10 million. What else could it be?

Now, some might say, "OK, I'm not too thrilled with the idea that \$10 million buys a Senate nomination, complete with full support from the party bosses, but we have to fight back against the Koch Brothers' billions somehow, right?" I'm sorry, but that's not what that \$10 million is really all about. Media commissions are 15%. When the party's Super PAC spends \$10 million, then someone who is on very friendly terms with the party bosses makes a quick and easy (and legal!) \$1.5 million.

That's what that \$10 million is really all about. Payola.

Still, that conversation that was conveyed to me is just a story, right? Just one politico talking to another.

No. Because when the Democrat's Senate Majority PAC actually reserved TV time for that ten-week period between the primary and the general election, the

amount of Florida TV time that it reserved was . . . \$10 million. Precisely the amount that Tom Murphy promised to deliver.

It's worth considering how utterly implausible it is that the Senate Majority PAC and the DSCC each would reserve \$10 million for the last ten weeks of the Florida Senate race, without Tom Murphy's promised cash. Last time I looked, the Senate Majority PAC had a grand total of \$6 million in the bank. So it reserved almost twice the amount of TV time – in just one race – as it had cash on hand.

What is wrong with this picture?

And the DSCC? It had \$31 million in the bank – for 34 different Senate races, ten of which have been characterized as competitive. And in the polls for the Democrat in those ten races, Patrick Murphy is . . . tenth. Why would the DSCC plan to spend one-third of all of its cash on hand on its weakest competitive candidate?

In mid-July, I was up by eight points in my primary. On July 15, the Senate Majority PAC announced a \$1 million buy for a TV spot endorsing Patrick Murphy – almost unprecedented Democratic Party interference in a Senate Primary. By August 1, the TV spot had had its intended effect, with Murphy support zooming upward. The average Tampa voter saw that spot almost thirty times, in barely two weeks.

What happened next? Did Tom Murphy deliver on his \$10 million to Senate Majority PAC? Did the DSCC then match Tom's \$10 million, buying young Patrick a Senate seat?

No and no. Tom Murphy kicked in a rather pitiful \$250,000 to the Murphy Super PAC "Floridians for a Strong Middle Class" on Sept. 27, which has been dutifully trundling its cash over to the Senate Majority PAC. And after that earlier \$1 million purchase of the party endorsement ad on Aug. 13, Tom Murphy has given nothing to the Senate Majority PAC directly. Zilch.

So the Senate Majority PAC pulled the last of its \$10 million Florida Senate TV reservations three weeks ago, and the DSCC followed suit a week later.

FWIW, at that time, Patrick Murphy had trailed Marco Rubio in 28 out of the last 28 Florida Senate polls posted at Real Clear Politics. Apparently, Florida voters are not as stupid as the Murphy clan thinks they are.

Did Tom Murphy ever intend to come up with \$10 million for Patrick's campaign? I don't know, but I doubt it. Did the Democratic Party ever intend to match Tom Murphy's \$10 million? I don't know, but I doubt it.

All I know is that just getting a whiff of \$10 million of Tom Murphy's money, just a glance at that mirage, was enough to turn my party against me – in favor of

someone contemptuous of my party and its principles.

I once told a national TV audience, “you have only three friends in life: God, your mama, and the Democratic Party.”

Cross that last one off the list.

Courage,

Rep. Alan Grayson

“Washington, DC wanted to defeat Alan Grayson as the Democratic candidate for the Senate, and now they’re happy to allow Marco Rubio to resuscitate his political career.”

- Reporter Marc Caputo on WPLG-Miami (Oct. 17, 2016).

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