



# SHIELD OF FAITH

"Take Up the Shield of Faith" - Paul

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Friday August 2, 2019

## **Carol Conelly Vs. Donald Trump**

A dear friend spent about 18 hours in the sun and wind gathering signatures in Maine a few days ago. She is not young, so she fought her body — in addition to the elements — in order to complete her task. And I wish that her volunteer task were complete at that point. It should be.

Petitioning should be celebrated and nourished in our Republic. It isn't. The people are supposed to rule, after all. Petitioning is a nuisance to politicians. And they have so encumbered the process that it is impossible to manage without spending tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of dollars in Maine. I'm sure it's the same all over the country.

Normally petitioners are given a year to gather signatures. There are at least seven petitions circulating in Maine right now. They are all peoples vetoes. This version of the referendum is allowed only 90 days to cross the finish line.

This will all be over by the end of September, in less than two months.

I've been involved with two successful Peoples Vetoes, and a number of year long petition drives. I was intimately involved with the funding of one of the Vetoes. The other one was funded by the Roman Catholic Chancery in Portland. Both required the hiring of professional signature gathering outfits. Even with that it was a nightmare to manage the process.

In addition to raising the funds for the one I led, in partnership with a lay Catholic and the Christian Coalition, I was the public face of the effort. In that role I wrote candidly to the public every weekday morning. I was tweeting and I didn't know it. Twitter and Fakebook hadn't been invented yet. I used email. I would do three "tweets" per email. I'd respond to arguments that were current in the news against our effort. These emails tamped down concerns among our petitioners, and helped make the media's job easier.

People are smart. They work with numbers to determine the feasibility of a project. We started that effort before the 90 day clock started running. We did the math looking at the calendar, along with the total number of signatures needed, and developed what we called a Petition Circulator Commitment Form (PCCF). On day one of the 90 day clock we were closing in on having 800 of those signed forms in our Augusta office. Each form represented a volunteer commitment to obtain 60 signatures. We knew we needed 1000 signed forms to have any hope of crossing the finish line with volunteers.

*Continued on Back*

***Call me if I can help. 1-207-956-0819.***

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By August we were putting paid professional signature gatherers on the streets. Our tracking was telling us that things were not moving fast enough — even with over 1000 signed PCCF forms. When all was said and done we had marshalled the energy of 1800 volunteers.

Money flowed into both the ministry I was leading, and into the Christian Coalition. Lots of it.

The petition gathering in churches (all that is happening right now, as far as I know) was almost more trouble than it was worth. The certification process at the end would prove brutal, requiring a sustained round the clock effort by dozens of volunteers for three days. We ended up with thousands of 11X17 petitions with only one signature on them. This was a consequence of the encumbered certification process, along with many other issues. Mostly it was because so many of the volunteers who committed to gathering 60 signatures didn't end up doing that. Many were in small churches. The issue was homosexual rights. They weren't going to go outside the church to get signatures. Hence we ended up with thousands of petitions with only one signature on them. Another issue is keeping the towns separated for certification purposes.

It was these realities, and many others, that caused me to abort two referendum efforts since I was involved with the successful ones in the early 00s.

In both aborted efforts I couldn't bring myself to pretend we were going to succeed with the public, and these wonderful volunteers, when I knew the effort was going to fail. These aborted drives hurt me politically. So be it.

If I were in Maine I'd be asking Carol Connelly some hard questions before I gathered even one signature. His petitions are the only ones I'd consider carrying. He's the only leader with connections to money. As far as I know the Chancery isn't involved financially. Apparently they're going to allow Carol's petitions into their churches. A reliable Catholic source tells me that won't produce more than 15,000 signatures of the 80,000 needed. Carol is loosely tied to small evangelical churches.

If Carol didn't assure me of the fact that he was prepared to spend AT LEAST \$100,000 on paid signature gathers I wouldn't be diverting myself from more important pursuits. And that amount of money is in addition to the money he *must spend* to turn his Augusta office into a full time petition drive headquarters.

I see no evidence he is doing either thing. I, however, am in North Carolina. There is much I don't know. Maybe the Chancery is stepping up with some significant money. It is the abortion and euthanasia issues after all. There are Catholic businessmen in Maine with deep pockets. A few calls from the Bishop could probably produce hundreds of thousands of dollars.

My hands on leadership of efforts like this are in my rear view, thank God. I would love to see all the vetoes succeed. As you can see, however, the likelihood is slim to none.

I also don't see the required grit, courage, imagination and determination in Carol and his Board. They're just a tool for the Republican Party. And the Republican Party never lifted a finger to help me on any civilization-destroying moral issue. Trump and the Republicans are using the abortion issue to keep evangelicals in the fold. Evangelicals come cheap. Republicans know they don't need to lift a finger on Carol's vetoes to get evangelicals to the polls in 2020.

It's sad, but all too true, that Christianity is so weakened in the West that it is merely a political pawn. The path to cultural relevance doesn't include petitioning anymore. The only hope is courageous Christian political leadership. Some of the character traits of this kind of Christian leadership are emerging. We Christians can learn much from a study of Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin. While there is much in their examples that *is troubling* ... their bold, instinctive style is working. Manliness, apparently, hasn't been thoroughly scrubbed from our perverted, gender bending sensibilities.

Amen.