



Central Jersey Progressive Democrats

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Bob the Bully's True Colors on Public Display

Central Jersey Progressive Democrats Respond to Senator Bob Smith's Thuggish Tactics at Norcross-EDA Hearing

Piscataway, NJ -- After Piscataway's hometown State Senator Bob Smith (D-17) had advocate Sue Altman, executive director of the NJ Working Families Alliance, forcibly and unfairly removed from today's committee hearing regarding EDA Tax Credits, Central Jersey Progressive Democrats released the following statement:

"The thuggery and violence that was on full public display at the EDA Hearing of George Norcross chaired by Sen. Bob Smith confirmed publicly what we have known for several years: Bob Smith is a bully and a coward who cannot tolerate any dissent to his imperial conception of public service, particularly when that dissent comes from women.

"We condemn in the strongest terms possible the tactics of violence and intimidation exercised by Smith, unequivocally support the constitutionally-guaranteed rights of free speech and assembly that were taken from Sue Altman and other protesters at today's hearing, and demand a full and public apology from Smith, including assurances that he will not resort to such tactics to suppress legitimate dissent and disagreement in the future.

"While we are appalled by the spectacle that took place in Trenton today, we cannot say that we are surprised. Today's events represent a continuation and escalation of the pattern of intolerance Smith has demonstrated towards progressive members of his own party for years.

"Ever since progressive members of the Democratic Party dared to participate in the democratic process by running in Primary elections, Smith's behavior has become increasingly hostile and unhinged. Sen. Smith is responsible for not only for what took place in Trenton today, but for his actions and those of his political allies over the past several years.

- Sen. Smith and Piscataway Mayor Brian Wahler removed Ralph Johnson, a sitting school board member, from his volunteer coaching position in Piscataway, after Mr. Johnson ran a competitive campaign for an Assembly seat in the 2017 primary.
- Later that year, Staci Berger was threatened with arrest for video recording a public meeting of the Piscataway Town Council.
- In June 2018 Primaries, Smith and his allies resorted to lies, smears, fake Facebook pages and photoshopped images photos against their opponents.
- In June 2019 Primaries, they opposed the right of women to serve together as county committee representatives and non-binary individuals to run at all
- Also this June, Sen. Smith financed a hateful, Islamophobic campaign flyer smearing a local Muslim resident as a "leader of a radical group" for which has offered only the most half-hearted apology.



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- In September 2019, Smith, Wahler and Piscataway Democratic Organization (PDO) Chairman Ted Light repeatedly threatened to forcibly remove Laura Leibowitz, Kamuela Tillman and Berger, all democratically elected members of the PDO, from their meeting, when they tried to introduce a resolution supporting Senator Smith's own single-use plastic bag bill.
- In October 2019, they shut down their own meeting to prevent discussion and debate.
- On November 3, 2019, Smith, Wahler and Light barred these same elected members from attending a PDO pre-election event, where U.S. Congressman Frank Pallone (NJ-6) urged Party unity.

Sen. Smith and his allies claim to be Democrats, but clearly have no have no loyalty to or understanding of the basic tenets of democracy.



This picture says it all – Sue Altman, NJ State Director of the Working Families Alliance, is dragged from the hearing room by State Troopers while a smirking George Norcross (left) looks on. Photo Credit: David Maialetti, Philadelphia Inquirer

There is no justification for the treatment of Altman. As reported by Tom Moran of the Star Ledger Editorial Board, who was in the room at the time, "I can hardly believe what I just witnessed ...they were quiet during the testimony, so it seemed to me like a massive overreaction to eject them ... What exactly Altman did to provoke this rough treatment was unclear."

It is clear enough to us. What Altman did was dare to represent the interests of Camden and all NJ residents in opposition to the interests of an unelected power broker who carries around politicians in his pocket, like so many nickels and dimes. Smith was just doing what his boss wanted him to do. We #StandwithSue, and we will not be silenced by Bob the Bully. We know that New Jersey residents will not tolerate being ruled by politicians who are bought and bossed. Together, we will #TakeBackNJ."