

Fiction or Fact

by Robert Mason Jr., Rappahannock Record, 24 September 2009



 E-MAIL
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Editor

The great debate in District 99 this campaign season is not between the two candidates seeking election to the Virginia House of Delegates, incumbent Democrat Del. Albert C. Pollard Jr. and the challenger, Republican Catherine T. Crabill.

The debate is whether the candidates will debate.

In a September 3 letter to Pollard, Crabill outlined a proposal to debate. In an undated letter, postmarked September 4, Pollard “respectfully” declined.

In a press release dated September 15, Crabill’s campaign manager, Bill Kling, chastises Pollard for rejecting the proposal.

Crabill suggested a series of six debates across the district involving high school government students.

“These debates would let voters know firsthand where you and I stand on important issues affecting them and their families,” Crabill wrote. “At the same time, these debates would give high school students, by sponsoring and participating in them, an excellent learning experience about the political process.”

In the packet to Pollard, she included letters to each of the school superintendents in the district’s six counties urging them to allow the debates to take place in the schools with student participation. In each debate, a panel of students selected and monitored by a government teacher would ask questions of the candidates, states the letter.

“There is no downside to this proposal,” Crabill wrote. “Involvement of young people in the political process is essential for the future well-being of our representative democracy and its government institutions locally as well as in our Commonwealth and nation.

“I urge you to accept this opportunity and join me in requesting these debates.”

However, Pollard refused to join Crabill for a single debate.

After referencing several controversial statements made by Crabill, Pollard noted, “You have adopted a campaign of confrontation over civility and opted for allegations over facts. Given these circumstances, I respectfully decline your request.”

Pollard wrote that in the past he has welcomed “reasoned and civil discussion.”

He noted that Crabill’s campaign has lost a considerable amount of credibility. “Indeed, you have been repudiated by all three statewide Republican candidates and Congressman Rob Wittman refuses to endorse your campaign,” wrote Pollard.

Among her allegations, he noted Crabill has stated on her campaign website that the federal government is responsible for blowing up the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City and murdering 168 adults and children.

He also noted, according to the High Country News in 1995, Crabill has written that she believes the United States "Secretary of the Treasury holds all the power of the executive branch and answers to the globalist elite."

Pollard recalled that Crabill called Senator John McCain "a smirking angry bully" in a Letter to the Editor in the April 3, 2008, Rappahannock Record.

He also noted that Crabill, at a July 15 TEA Party in Heathsville, said, "We have the chance to fight this battle at the ballot box before we have to resort to the bullet box."

"Finally," wrote Pollard, "you asserted in the Northern Neck News (September 2, 2009) that I urged partisans to attend Congressman Wittman's Town Hall Meeting when, in fact, I have done no such thing."

If that's all Pollard can come up with, it's time to schedule the debates. He's sounding more like a politician.

"Pollard, with a history of faring poorly in debates with opponents in past campaigns, declined the challenge out of hand," wrote Kling.

"Avoidance of campaign debates rather than openly discussing issues of concern to voters doesn't speak well of his character as a public servant," Kling stated.

He noted Pollard "presents an ugly example of artful political dodging" by refusing to debate, relying instead on "mudslinging and character assassination" while depriving students of "a valuable learning experience about the political process."

I don't see what Pollard's got to lose. If they hold a debate and Crabill puts her foot in her mouth, it looks like he'd have everything to gain.

The students know the difference between fiction and fact. They'll recognize propaganda for what it is worth.