



Washtenaw County Democratic Party

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PRESS RELEASE

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The Washtenaw County Democratic Party provides the following background information on 52nd District Republican State Representative candidate Mark Ouimet, based on research conducted by party member and local attorney Thomas F. Wieder. (Additional documentation, beyond sources cited below, can be obtained from Mr. Wieder at wiedert@aol.com.)

Ouimet Ethical Problems Bigger, More Numerous Than Per Diems

A college degree not received, a professional position not held, a civic project not led.

Mark Ouimet's ethical problems are broader and deeper than bilking Washtenaw County taxpayers out of thousands of dollars for unearned meeting fees and mileage reimbursements. Nearly every aspect of the slickly-packaged "nice guy" image he presents is riddled with exaggerations and misrepresentations of who he is and what he's done.

Ouimet's Academic Credentials

Ouimet describes his higher education as: “A graduate of Northwood University, Mark earned his BBA and a Masters from LaSalle University.” (Campaign brochures and websites.)

Ouimet did receive a bachelor’s degree, although it was from the then-unaccredited Northwood Institute, which became accredited after Ouimet’s time there and later changed its name to Northwood University.

It is the master’s degree that is the problem. The only LaSalle University that could be located is LaSalle University, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was founded in 1863 and has over 7,000 students. LaSalle has no record of Ouimet receiving a degree from that school, or ever enrolling there. LaSalle reported that it was “unable to locate a degree or enrollment record for the subject of your verification request.” (Report from LaSalle through www.studentclearinghouse.org, a national service for student degree and enrollment verification.)

Ouimet’s Banking Career

On his campaign website and personal Facebook page, Ouimet’s banking career is described as follows: “Beginning his professional career as a bank teller, Mark rose among the ranks to eventually serve as President and Chairman of the Board, a position he held until 1997.” This description leaves the impression that Ouimet started as a bank teller and became President of the same bank, which would be a very compelling story.

A different description, however, is found on his campaign Facebook page: “Beginning his professional career as a bank teller, Mark rose among the ranks of a series of banking institutions to eventually serve as President and Chairman of the Board, a position he held until 1997.” In fact, Ouimet moved from one Ann Arbor bank to another, a total of four, in his 25-year banking career, a somewhat unusual path in the conservative banking world. Apparently, he, or his political advisors, found the first story

more appealing, but they forgot to change the Facebook page that contained the other, truer one.

Ouimet has further stretched the truth about his banking career, to the point of breaking. For example, during a candidate debate in one of his previous campaigns, here is how Ouimet described his banking career:

“When I completed my education, my four-year degree, I started out in banking and did that for, essentially, 25 years. And then, I started out as a teller and had the opportunity to move through the organization to President of Great Lakes Bancorp. From there, I went on to be the Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer of Northwood University to.”

DVD of 2006 Candidate Debate, at approximately 1:55 – 2:20.

There are several problems with this version. By talking about moving “through the organization” from teller to president, Ouimet is claiming that he started at Great Lakes and stayed there his whole career, which didn’t happen. But most important, Ouimet was never President of Great Lakes Bancorp. And he didn’t go from Great Lakes Bancorp directly to Northwood.

Ouimet at University Bank

In 1995, Ouimet was a Vice President, of which there were many, at Great Lakes Bancorp. He left there to become President, CEO and Chairman of the Board of University Bank, a bank new to Ann Arbor. In an official filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), University Bank described Ouimet as having had a variety of positions at Great Lakes Bancorp, “including most recently Senior Vice President for Corporate and Community Affairs and First Vice President for Retail Banking.” There’s certainly no mention of his having been President.

It is not surprising that Ouimet would prefer to be thought of as a former President of Great Lakes Bancorp, rather than University Bank. Great Lakes Bancorp was the second largest savings institution in Michigan, with assets of over \$3 billion. University Bank had assets of about \$50 million.

More importantly, Ouimet's his tenure at University Bank was brief, unsuccessful and the apparent end of his banking career. Ouimet was given a five-year contract, from December 1995 until December 2000, but he was gone by the end of 1997.

While Ouimet was President of University Bank, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation ("FDIC") found that the bank had not done sufficient loaning to low and moderate income individuals in the Ann Arbor area to meet the standards of the Community Reinvestment Act. Also, "substantive violations" of Equal Credit Opportunity and Fair Housing laws and regulations were found in loans denied and originated by the bank's wholly owned subsidiary.

During his first year at the helm of the bank, 1996, the bank lost twice as much money as the year before, and continued to lose money the next year.

By the end of 1997, Ouimet was ousted from University Bank, receiving severance pay of about \$200,000, paid in 1997 and 1998. In discussing Ouimet's tenure there, the history of University Bank on its website (www.university-bank.com/AboutUs.html) says: "A new management team was recruited and the bank opened in Ann Arbor in early 1996. After the initial management team was replaced, Stephen Lange Ranzini took over the direct day-to-day management of the bank in late 1997."

Claiming Credit Where It Isn't Due

Claiming a college degree he doesn't appear to have, and a bank presidency he never held, aren't the only instances of Ouimet misrepresenting who he is and what he's done.

Several years ago, citizens in the Village of Dexter started an effort to save and preserve a historic local mansion, Gordon Hall, that the University of Michigan owned and was going to sell, possibly to be torn down and the land developed. Through a concerted effort of local citizens, the money was raised to purchase the property, to

restore it and to make it a community facility. Three Dexter men – Paul Cousins, Paul Bishop and Gil Campbell – led the successful effort. For their work, the three men were named The Ann Arbor News's “Citizens of the Year” in 2006. That same year, Ouimet publicly declared himself “one of the lead people in the preservation of Gordon Hall.” (DVD of Chelsea Candidate Debate, at approximately 4:00-4:15) Asked what role Ouimet actually had in that effort, Paul Cousins, now a Dexter Village Trustee, stated: “None that I know of.” Subsequently, Cousins talked to virtually everyone else who was seriously involved in the project, and none was aware of any role by Ouimet.

Ouimet at Northwood University

Ouimet said that he went from Great Lakes Bancorp to being Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer at Northwood University. His biographical material, on both Facebook pages and his campaign website, states that he served as “Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer from 1997-2002.” As already noted, Ouimet’s unsuccessful, and unmentioned, tenure at University Bank came between Great Lakes and Northwood.

Apparently, Ouimet didn’t serve as Chancellor at Northwood for the full five or six years he claims in his bio. According to the Midland Daily News, reporting on Ouimet’s departure from Northwood in May, 2002, Ouimet was not appointed Chancellor until August 1999, having served before that as Vice President for Administration.

Ouimet says that, at Northwood, he was a “key fundraiser” and “led the university through its critical accreditation process.” (Campaign website.) This is an odd claim, since, although Northwood wasn’t accredited when Ouimet was a student there, it became accredited a number of years before Ouimet served as Chancellor.

When Ouimet left Northwood in 2002, the President and CEO of Northwood, David Fry, said Ouimet “was responsible for a substantial amount of Northwood’s physical growth and goal-setting method” and described him as a “business manager.”

He said nothing about Ouimet being a “key fundraiser” or working on accreditation. (Midland Daily News, May 22, 2002)

It’s unclear why Ouimet left Northwood in 2002. It wasn’t to take another job, since the only regular employment that Ouimet claims to have had since then has been his part-time County Commissioner position, beginning in 2005.

The Midland Daily News wrote the following about Ouimet’s departure:

“Ouimet recently announced to his staff his resignation as chancellor and chief operating officer, said Char Rosin, public relations director at Northwood. ‘He just said he would be pursuing other venues and that was about it,’ Rosin said. ‘He just said he had some new interests.’ Ouimet, who could not be reached for comment, did not specify what those interests were, Rosin said.

A week later, the News reported that Ouimet’s Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer positions would be eliminated in a new organizational structure. “[Northwood President David] Fry would not comment on the specifics of why Ouimet resigned, but said his judgment was that Ouimet was not unhappy with his job. ‘It’s his business so he asked me not to comment on it,’ Fry said. Ouimet was unavailable for comment.”

Ouimet After Northwood

Although Ouimet runs as self-described “businessman,” he completely omits from the description of his professional and business activities a business that he has been involved with since leaving Northwood. Later that same year, Ouimet started Ouimet Group, LLC. On the corporate filings for the LLC, Ouimet variously describes himself as “owner,” “managing partner,” “manager,” “general partner” and “officer.” The company owns several million dollars of U-M campus area and other Ann Arbor rental properties. It is still active. Perhaps, “landlord” is an occupational title that Ouimet wants to avoid.

Ouimet – Career Politician

If there's one thing that's clear about Ouimet, it's that he wants to be elected to public office. He has run for a variety of offices a total of seven times covering a period of over two decades. (Ann Arbor City Council - 1988, 1990; State Rep.-1992, County Commissioner 2004, 2006, 2008; State Rep. – 2010.)

In 1992, Ouimet ran, unsuccessfully, for the 52nd District State Representative seat, the same office he is running for now. He was just completing two terms on the Ann Arbor City Council. Unfortunately for Ouimet, he lived with his kids in the heavily-Democratic 53rd District. No problem. His girlfriend at the time had an apartment across the city in the more Republican-friendly 52nd District. Just two days before the deadline to do so, Ouimet switched his voter registration to his girlfriend's apartment, had his name put on her lease and claimed to have moved there. Meanwhile, his girlfriend came to live in his house with his kids. ("Ouimet Shifts to Friendlier District," The Ann Arbor News, May 13, 1992.)

Ouimet is spending a lot of his own (and others') money to try to win this race. Before the August primary, in which he had no opposition, Ouimet had already contributed over \$78,000 to his campaign. That amount sounds small compared to the \$6 million that Rick Snyder had given his gubernatorial campaign by that time, but if a candidate were running for statewide office and had spent at the same rate per resident, it would total over \$8.5 million statewide.

A Resume, But no Record

Ouimet has held public office for nearly ten years and has served on numerous boards and committees, and he certainly isn't shy about taking credit for things, but what has he actually accomplished for his constituents or the community?

Of his four years on Ann Arbor City Council, he says nothing – not a single initiative or proposal he championed, not a single problem he solved.

Nearing the end of six years on the County Commission, he cites exactly one “accomplishment,” “...working in a bipartisan manner to balance a \$30 million county budget deficit without raising taxes.” (Ouimet campaign brochure.) What, exactly, did Ouimet do? Like the other ten County Commissioners, he participated in budget discussions and voted for a revised version of the budget prepared by the County Administrator. As for “balancing the budget” “without raising taxes” – the budget has to be balanced, by law, and the County is already collecting the maximum amount of tax it is allowed to levy.

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