

Glassman says no deal on chairman's vote delay

By: Jeremy Duda January 21, 2011



Rodney Glassman
(File Photo)

Despite a plea from his biggest endorser for a delay, Rodney Glassman said he would move ahead with his campaign for Democratic Party chairman, and accused Andrei Cherny and incumbent Chairman Don Bivens of making “backroom deals” to keep him from winning the race.

The election of a chairman is scheduled to take place Saturday at the state committee meeting at the Wyndham Phoenix.

Glassman said Cherny doesn't have the votes to win and accused him and Bivens of delaying the vote so Cherny could round up support. He said he never agreed to delay the vote and disagreed with a suggestion that he and Cherny put the vote off for a month.

“I was not a party to this. I made it perfectly clear when I heard about it that I'd be running on Saturday, that (a delay) was disrespectful to all the people who were participating in the process. It's just another insider backroom deal,” Glassman told the Arizona Capitol Times on Friday. “This is just the latest tactic for Bivens and Cherny to maintain control, like they've been doing for the past two cycles.”

Cherny said he and Glassman agreed to the delay at the request of U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords' staffers, who thought it would be inappropriate for the party to have the election so soon after the shooting rampage that killed six, gravely wounded Giffords and injured 12 others. But after Glassman announced that he would continue the race, Cherny said he will do so as well.



On Thursday, former Attorney General Terry Goddard, a Cherny supporter, and U.S. Rep. Raul Grijalva, a Glassman supporter, sent an e-mail to all 548 Democratic state committeemen asking them to delay the vote by re-electing the party's current slate of officers, who would resign so a new election could be held a month later.

"All sides had agreed to the request, which originally came from the Giffords' staff," Cherny said. "The state party would not have been sending out e-mails if all sides had not agreed to it."

Glassman said he hadn't spoken with Giffords' staff about delaying the vote, and that he told Grijalva that he wouldn't agree to the deal.

"I made it perfectly clear when I was asked by Congressman Grijalva. And I urged him not to sign it because it was disrespectful to the people who were coming from across the state and that we needed to have the election on Saturday," said Glassman, a former Grijalva staffer.

Grijalva said he did not speak with Glassman about the delay before Grijalva put his name on the letter. He said his staff was contacted by Rodd McLeod, Giffords' former campaign manager, who asked Grijalva to join Goddard in urging the delay. He said he hoped the party's state committeemen would grant his and Goddard's request to delay the vote, despite Cherny's and Glassman's ongoing campaigns.

"This is a time when you can't be petulant. You have to understand there's a greater issue at stake, and the issue is unity, and the issue is trying to be civil with each other. That was the reason I signed the letter with Terry, and that's the reason I continue to support a delay." Grijalva said. "If Rodney sees this another way, that's his prerogative."

McLeod said he spoke with Grijalva's staff about the delay, and that the congressman's staff spoke to Glassman. He said he doesn't know whether Glassman agreed to the delay, but said he never raised any objections to it.

"We just thought it was a good suggestion. If Rodney thought otherwise, he never let us know. He was on an e-mail too. He could've just said, 'I don't think it's a good idea.' But he didn't do that," McLeod said. "If Rodney had replied that he did not agree, that would have been the end of it."



Grijalva said Glassman's decision would not affect his endorsement, but he thought it was shortsighted of Cherny and Glassman to continue campaigning. He said there was no "backroom deal," as Glassman alleged.

"I already gave the endorsement. I'm just disappointed that Rodney doesn't see the bigger picture," he said. "There's no conspiracy here. I signed a letter that Terry and I agreed to. ... We thought it was an important courtesy, a civil thing to do."

Thursday afternoon, Arizona Democratic Party Executive Director Luis Heredia sent a draft copy of Goddard and Grijalva's e-mail letter to Cherny, Glassman, party officials and staffers for Grijalva and Giffords. In his response, Cherny thanked everyone for their efforts and said he agreed that a delay would be best for the party.

About 15 minutes after Cherny's email, Glassman forwarded the e-mail chain to District 12 Democratic Chairman Jeffery Rich, a state committeeman who's supporting his candidacy, with the subject line, "FYI – Look at what Bivens and Cherney (sic) are planning next."

In response, Rich issued a statement accusing party leadership of trying to "circumvent the Democratic process by delaying, cajoling, and manipulating our state officer election." The subject line read, "Another backroom deal courtesy of Don Bivens and your Arizona Democratic Party."

"I was so shocked that I shared the insider dealing e-mail with a number of my supporters in disbelief," Glassman said.

Glassman argues that Cherny is ineligible to be chairman because he is not an elected state committeeman. The Maricopa Democratic Party appointed Cherny to be a state committeeman, but Glassman said he is still not eligible under the party's bylaws. A legal opinion drafted by the party's counsel, however, said Cherny was eligible to serve.

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