



## NEWS RELEASE

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### PRESS RELEASE

William H. Eldridge, Chairman of the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, and an early proponent of curbs on deliberately false advertising, said today that he is delighted that "untruthful and unseemly political advertising" appears to have fallen into disfavor with the public.

According to Eldridge, the results of the recent legislative election "testify to the fact that the pendulum has swung against the use of scurrilous advertising in campaigns and that the public is more and more rejecting those candidates who resort to these negative tactics."

"I believe that the public has spoken out loudly and clearly during the recent election about where it stands on the issue of deliberately false political ads and about dirty campaigning," said Eldridge.

Eldridge and the Commission had been among the first in New Jersey to criticize dirty campaigning and to call for the regulation of deliberately false political advertising. The Commission late last year actually conducted a series of public hearings designed to highlight the issue.

"I am proud of the fact that the Commission held hearings on this issue and has been at the forefront of the drive to bring greater civility to campaigns for public office," said Eldridge. "I do believe that the Commission's efforts in this area raised the consciousness of the public to this

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issue and to the dangers posed to democracy by this pit bull mentality in campaigning."

Commissioner David Linett said that he has been "concerned about the negative tone of recent campaigns and delighted to have been a participant in the 1994 Commission hearings that explored the impact of negative campaigning."

Commissioner Owen V. McNany added that it is his "hope that the public hearings of the Commission did indeed have an impact on the overall tone of the recent campaign."

During last year's Commission hearings, Eldridge suggested that the public had "grown increasingly disgusted with negative campaigns" and that "voters are becoming more and more intolerant of campaigns that engage in deliberately false advertising."

"By all accounts," said Eldridge, "those words were proven true in this recent election. The Commission is a very proactive board, one that consistently makes contributions to the elections process in this state."

Eldridge said that "while it is important to consider First Amendment ramifications when treating this issue, nevertheless, it must be addressed because the bitter tone of many recent campaigns is a plague on the political process which threatens the viability of our democratic way of life."

During the past year at least three bills have been introduced that would effectively regulate deliberately false political advertising.

"The Commission is pleased that we have been listening to the citizens' concerns and that we have been part of the solution to this problem," concluded Eldridge.

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