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From the desk of Sandra Berg

April 20, 2010

Dear fellow Republican delegates:

This is a letter I wish I did not have to write. However, my sense of duty as a state convention delegate and my family's personal story compel me to do so.

It is an admittedly tough letter about an undeniably tough subject.

On Father's Day, 2009, my husband Brian and son Eric were struck by a drunk driver. Brian and Eric were very badly injured. They were hospitalized in serious condition at Regions Hospital in Saint Paul for an extended time.

It was the most traumatic experience in our family's life. Watching two people you love go through life shattering suffering and pain is almost more than a wife and mother can take.

It's been ten months since the crash. My husband is still suffering and faces the possibility of having his leg amputated. My son has not returned to work. His recovery is slow, but it is our hope that it will be complete.

Just a few days ago, I attended the sentencing hearing for the drunk driver who has caused our family so much pain. The hearing was postponed leaving our family to go through the entire process a second time. Our family's ordeal continues.

Every day we hear or read news stories about drunk driving. The *Star Tribune* just concluded a series of articles entitled "Smashed: The toll of drunk driving in Minnesota." It argues that DWI enforcement in Minnesota is pretty good compared with other states, but that our state's penalties are woefully inadequate to protect lives and discourage offenders from hurting others:

It hurts every time I think how one irresponsible man has deprived us of the ordinary joys one hopes for in life. This needs to stop. Elected officials are much more aware of the devastation drunk driving causes, but there is still more progress to be made.

Our choice for the next Republican endorsee for governor is an extremely serious matter.

It is important that we delegates are aware of important, relevant facts before the Republican state convention. To hold these facts back and instead allow the Democrats, the *Star Tribune* or other news media to air out the facts in a general election campaign would be a supreme disservice to our party.

The fact is one of the major candidates asking for our endorsement for governor has been arrested for drunk driving. Twice.

At the request of Sandra Berg, Paid for by Seifert for Governor, PO Box 4242, St. Paul, MN 55104

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This was briefly reported early last year before the governor's race started. I found it on a Google search. But the candidate hasn't discussed it in the course of his campaign.

However, this issue could have come up just two weeks ago, on April 9, at a candidate debate sponsored by the Eighth District Republican Committee in Cambridge. At that debate, both Marty Seifert and Tom Emmer were asked a question about whether there were any skeletons in their closets:

"Is there anything that we should be concerned about in considering your candidacy that could be an 'October surprise' for you as a candidate?"

Marty Seifert answered at length that his life was an open book.

Tom Emmer responded with a joke:

"No, I can't think of anything...unless someone is going to tell me that Jacquie [his wife] is expecting. That would be the only October surprise that would be a big surprise."

As a Chisago county delegate to the state convention, I was shocked to learn that Tom Emmer was not entirely forthcoming at that forum and that he has not disclosed important information about his past as a candidate for our endorsement.

Here are the unfortunate facts:

- Tom Emmer was convicted of a "DWI-related" charge in 1981.
- Ten years later, Tom Emmer was convicted of careless driving in a plea bargain in which two DWI charges were dropped.

[Source: "Sponsor of DWI change has 2-ticket DWI record," *StarTribune*, March 29, 2009.]

We all know that good people make mistakes, and that Tom Emmer's arrests were made some time ago. But to the Democrats, the liberal news media and left-wing bloggers who create and then spread "news" for widespread circulation, that won't matter.

And how can fellow Republicans take Tom Emmer at his word when he says "I can't think of anything" after being asked if he carries any personal baggage as a candidate.

Tom Emmer's silence on this issue certainly looks like he doesn't think Republican activists care. I care...and so will Minnesota voters. In this year of seething voter anger at the political establishment, voters will care more than ever.

Unfortunately, there is more to the story.

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Since he became a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives five years ago, Tom Emmer has worked to lighten Minnesota's drunk driving laws -- the same laws which some experts say are too lax.

- Rep. Tom Emmer was the chief author of HF 1305 in 2009. The bill eliminated pre-trial administrative sanctions against drunk drivers. In other words, a charged drunk driver could not have his license suspended and his vehicle plates couldn't be impounded. An arrested drunk driver could continue to drink and drive until his court date weeks or months after his offense.
- Also last year, Rep. Tom Emmer authored an amendment to the omnibus public safety bill, HF 1301, on the House floor to classify drunk driving records after ten years as private data. He didn't want employers, for example, to know about job applicants' past DWI histories. [House Journal, p. 3102]

I won't question Tom Emmer's motives in sponsoring these pieces of legislation. As an elected representative of his district, he is within his rights to author bills on any subject he likes. As a lawyer, he also undoubtedly has strongly held views on the state's civil and criminal laws.

But I think it is completely legitimate for us delegates to question his judgment as a politician and public figure.

Was it wise for multiple offender Tom Emmer to sponsor these bills as a legislator?

Frankly, his recent legislative actions suggest a potential political blind-spot and lack of self-awareness which is dangerous in the candidate for the state's highest office, and upon which the Democrats and left-leaning media will pounce.

Worst of all, his legislating to substantially soften DWI penalties appears self-serving to the average person.

Tom Emmer is no longer just one member in the 201-member Minnesota Legislature. He is running for governor. He is asking for the Republican Party's endorsement and nomination. If endorsed, he will be a statewide media figure overnight.

Many party activists find Tom Emmer to be a good guy, a passionate speaker, a sincere conservative. But I respectfully suggest that Tom Emmer is also a flawed gubernatorial candidate.

Years ago, he made mistakes...as many of us do. But recently, even when specifically asked, he hasn't trusted us delegates enough to be up front about these mistakes and explain how he would overcome the stigma of a multiple drunk driving record while running for governor. He also used his role as a lawmaker to attempt to weaken the kinds of laws he has previously broken and to cover up the fact he had broken them.

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And he doesn't think this is a problem?

Just imagine the field day the liberal news media, the Democrats, and the Independence party candidate will have with this issue in the fall.

The Republican candidate this summer and fall should be painting a vision for the future prosperity of Minnesota and our restored freedoms; proposing serious solutions to our current problems; and chastising the DFL agenda of more government and higher taxes.

It would be a horrible shame if our candidate, instead, was on the defensive about his judgment and self-dealing, not to mention his past record or arrests and convictions.

Even more, at the very time when our state and our country need our party the most, it would be a tragedy if a flawed nominee damaged the rest of our ticket.

I'm sorry to deliver such a tough message. But we cannot make a sound judgment without knowing all the facts, and as a longtime Republican activist, this is information that I believe important for you to know.

Sincerely,



Sandra Berg
Delegate, Chisago County

PS: I know this letter is long, but I hope you understand how important this subject is to me as a wife and mother, whose family has to live this every day.