



**BOARD of
COMMISSIONERS**
of the County of Vanderburgh

CHERYL MUSGRAVE
President, District 3

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Cheryl Musgrave's Statement on the Misuse of Taxpayer Funds for Political Activities

Evansville, IN- (March 5, 2024) - In a resolute stance against the misuse of taxpayer funds for political activities, Cheryl Musgrave, President of the Vanderburgh County Board of Commissioners, declares: "I will not vote to use taxpayer funds to pay for political activities. I have been asked to support giving tax dollars to big corporations to fund their political activities. I won't do it. It is wrong in every way to allow tax dollars to be spent on political candidates for public office or non-partisan candidates such as school board or judicial candidates. It is wrong to allow direct or indirect use of taxpayer funded staff and equipment to be used for political candidates or purposes."

The annual Evansville Regional Economic Partnership ("E-REP") service agreement is an action item on the County Commission Tuesday, March 5, 2024, agenda.

In a time when transparency and accountability are paramount, it is crucial to uphold the integrity of public funds and ensure that they are not diverted towards partisan interests. The trust placed in elected officials to act in the best interests of the public must be honored and using taxpayer money for political purposes undermines this trust.

Musgrave firmly believes that taxpayer funds should be allocated towards essential public services, infrastructure, and programs that benefit the community as a whole, rather than being channeled into political activities that serve the interests of a select few.

As a staunch advocate for fiscal responsibility and ethical governance, Musgrave stands firm in her commitment to uphold the principles of fairness and accountability in the allocation of taxpayer funds. By refusing to support the use of public money for political activities, Musgrave reaffirms her dedication to serving the public interest above all else.

Background:

The Commissioners have annually supported E-REP with \$300,000 taxpayer dollars to be used to support economic development efforts. This year, the Commissioners have been presented with two different versions of the annual agreement with E-REP.

The first version, supported by Commissioner Cheryl Musgrave, prohibits E-REP from engaging in any partisan or non-partisan political activity as follows: "E-REP further agrees that there shall be no partisan or non-partisan political activity whether performed by E-REP or anyone acting on behalf of E-REP while receiving and utilizing taxpayer funds."

A second version, proposed by E-REP, enables certain partisan and non-partisan political activity as follows: "...via its separate affiliated registered JPAC entity to recruit and endorse candidates for State and Local Offices, but not candidates for County Board of Commissioners, County Council, Mayors or City or Town Fiscal bodies."

E-REP was created by merging the Evansville Chamber, the Growth Alliance for Greater Evansville, and the Economic Development Coalition. Assurances were given that the Chamber's Political Action Committee known as J-PAC would be disbanded and no further activity of this type would take place in the new organization. The organizers embodied this promise in the E-REP By-Laws, which state:

Section 5.6 Endorsement and Politics. No individual or agency of this Corporation shall be permitted to use the Corporation in such a way as may be construed to give endorsement to any private or corporate enterprise or promotion for profit. The name or influence of the Corporation shall not be used directly or indirectly in support of any person who is a candidate for political office.

By-Laws can be changed at any time by the E-REP Board of Directors; by placing the prohibition in the Vanderburgh County Board of Commissioner's Service Agreement, taxpayer funds are protected from misuse through political activities.

For media inquiries or further statements, please contact Cheryl Musgrave at 812-430-8891.

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