



THE PLAIN DEALER

Brown learns he can't serve as Kerry elector, steps down

Friday, October 29, 2004

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Washington- Lorain Democratic Rep. Sherrod Brown on Thursday agreed to step down as a presidential elector for John Kerry after discovering the U.S. Constitution bars federal officeholders from the largely ceremonial role.

The Ohio Democratic Party held an event in July where it selected 20 party members, including Brown, Parma Mayor Dean DiPiero and congressional candidate Capri Cafaro to officially designate Ohio's 20 electoral votes for Kerry should he win the state.

Brown spokeswoman Joanna Kuebler said the party and Brown were unaware of the constitutional ban when he was selected. After the congressman learned he was ineligible, he sent Ohio Democratic Party Chairman Denny White a brief letter asking to be replaced.

"It was an oversight," Kuebler said. Ohio Democratic Party spokesman Dan Trevas did not return phone calls seeking comment.

Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell will not take issue with Brown's substitution, spokesman Carlo LoParo said.

He said Cafaro would qualify as an elector even if she wins a congressional seat because the Dec. 13 meeting where electors officially designate the state's ballots would occur before she'd be sworn into office.

Although Cafaro moved to Hunting Valley to run for Congress in the 14th District, her elector registration information lists an address outside the district, in Hubbard in Trumbull County. Cafaro campaign spokesman Vic Rubenstein said the candidate listed the Hubbard address because she became a Kerry elector before she found her current residence.

A polling company executive who drew public notice to Brown's ineligibility by sending an item to the Hotline political newsletter said Sen. Fritz Hollings of South Carolina and U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek of Florida are also improperly registered as Democratic electors.

Joe Lenski, an election trivia buff who is vice president of New Jersey-based Edison Media Research, said Pennsylvania Democrats made a similar mistake by designating U.S. Rep. John Murtha as an Al Gore elector in the 2000 election. They replaced him without problems.

In 2000, an Ohio Republican Party elector was too ill to attend the ceremony that dedicated the state's electoral votes to George W. Bush, so Ohio GOP Chairman Bob Bennett acted as a substitute.

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