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Hawaii News

Anti-Caldwell group withholds spending report

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Charles Djou:

The challenger's spending totaled \$957,969

A political action committee that sought to defeat Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell's re-election bid is accruing daily fines because it has not filed a campaign financing report.

Reports that were filed by other committees showed:

>> A group formed to support Caldwell's re-election spent nearly \$1 million toward its effort.

>> Caldwell's campaign spent more than \$3.6 million, nearly four times more than challenger Charles Djou.

Save Our City LLC, a super PAC, owed \$550 as of Friday for failing to file its report. Filing was required by Dec. 8 of all noncandidate committees as well as candidate organizations active in state or county elections, said Tony Baldomero, state Campaign Spending Commission associate director.

Failing to submit a report results in a fine of \$50 for each of the first seven days and \$200 a day after that, Baldomero said.

Save Our City's organizational report lists Honolulu businesswoman Sarah Houghtailing as its sole officer, but the group's November financing report shows more than two-thirds of its \$274,595 in funding came from local businessman and prominent Democratic fundraiser Dennis Mitsunaga, his companies and his associates.

Lois Mitsunaga, Dennis Mitsunaga's daughter and spokeswoman for Save Our City, said in an email that the person responsible for the reports fell ill but that Houghtailing would be filing the report today.

If the committee makes files its report today, it would owe the Campaign Spending Commission \$950 in fines.

Save Our City's TV and radio ads criticized Caldwell's job performance, including his handling of the \$8 billion rail project.

In October, Save Our City was fined \$150 for violating a state law requiring PAC advertising to say clearly and prominently that it was done without the approval or authority of any candidate.

A December report by pro-Caldwell super PAC Workers for a Better Hawaii showed the committee spent \$966,015 on its effort to help re-elect the mayor.

The group gets its funding from a handful of local union organizations, including the Hawaii Regional Council of Carpenters (\$500,000), Hawaii Government Employees Association (\$208,000), Hawaii State AFL-CIO (\$150,000), AFSCME (\$100,000) and Operating Engineers Local No. 3 (\$25,000).

The super PAC spent its money on electronic and print advertising extolling Caldwell's virtues and criticizing Djou, a former U.S. representative, and his positions on various issues.

A super PAC can collect and spend unlimited amounts of money as long as there is no communication between the committee and candidates.

During the 2012 mayoral campaign, the Hawaii Regional Council of Carpenters was the key financial backer of the Pacific Resource Partnership, which created a super PAC that waged a \$3.6 million advertising campaign against former Gov. Ben Cayetano's mayoral bid.

Cayetano, incidentally, was one of three individuals who each contributed \$5,000 to Save Our City in the closing days of this year's campaign.

Both Caldwell and Djou have said they disapprove of super PACs and their attempts to influence the election.

Meanwhile the Caldwell for Mayor campaign's December report showed it spent \$3,653,514 through the campaign to get its candidate re-elected, almost four times the amount expended by Djou's own campaign organization, Djou for Mayor. The Caldwell campaign spent \$272,979 from Oct. 25 to Nov. 8. Among the campaign's receipts were two \$50,000 loans that Caldwell made himself to the committee.

In contrast, Djou for Mayor reported that it spent \$957,969 in its unsuccessful campaign to unseat Caldwell. The Djou campaign spent \$109,718 during the last two weeks of the campaign.

During the 2012 mayoral campaign, Caldwell's campaign spent \$1,095,526.

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