



AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

September 22, 2004

Dear legislator,

I write to share with you my recent experience with the Columbia newspaper The State, which has mounted a misinformation campaign against the Taxpayer Protection Pledge, a written commitment to “oppose and vote against any and all efforts to increase taxes.”

For weeks the paper editorialized against the pledge and harshly criticized those candidates and incumbents who decided to make this important commitment to their constituents. Charges were that these candidates and incumbents were acting irresponsibly in following a “radical Washington” group, whose goal was to “virtually abolish government” – a total misrepresentation not only of the organization, but also the pledge itself.

Disagreement lies in the nature of political discourse, and everybody should be entitled to their own personal opinion, but the attacks mounted by The State were by no means fair and balanced.

We tried to clarify the misrepresentations in several letters to the editors, but The State continued its campaign. Last week, Grover Norquist and I traveled to Columbia, and sat down with the editorial board of the newspaper. In our conversation, we explained that the pledge is not a commitment to an outside group, but to the taxpayers of South Carolina. It is a statement of principle that one believes the government should not place higher burdens on hardworking families and businesses in order to fund ever-higher spending.

Shortly after our meeting, the State again editorialized against the pledge. While the editorial written by Brad Warthen is partially factually incorrect (it was not the Virginia speaker of the House who was unseated in the primary because he raised taxes, but the Speaker of the Nebraska legislature Curt Bromm), it once more openly derides both Americans for Tax Reform and the Taxpayer Protection Pledge.

The criticism coming from The State's editorial board rings hollow, and even ridiculous, when a member of the same editorial board which claims that candidates who sign

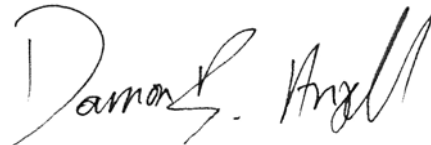
pledges lose their independence in their decision-making, has openly endorsed a different pledge:

On April 29, 2004, associate editor Nina Brook encouraged legislators to sign the “Pledge of Defined Support of PreK-12 Public Education,” a pledge to guarantee full funding of free PreK-12 public education under all circumstances, thus giving a blank check to the school bureaucracy. The editorial reads: “Any lawmaker who means it when he or she vows to support public education should have no problem signing this pledge.” If the editorial board was serious about its rejection of any kind of pledges, it would have attacked legislators who signed the pro-spending pledge.

This contradiction reveals the true motives behind The State’s dishonest campaign against the Taxpayer Protection Pledge. It is not a principled opposition to all pledges. It is a liberal bias towards the growth of government. The State’s argumentation beats the drum of big spenders, and follows the fallacy of more funding equals better service in all spheres, a fallacy that has repeatedly been proven wrong. By bashing the Taxpayer Protection Pledge, they pursue a hidden agenda: Turning South Carolinians against the fiscally sound policies of Governor Mark Sanford, Speaker David Wilkins, and the Republican majority in the House and the Senate, which have helped bring South Carolina back on the right track.

Please find attached a copy of Ms. Brook’s editorial. I have also enclosed a copy of the Taxpayer Protection Pledge. If you haven’t signed it yet, I urge you to consider doing it now. The taxpayers of your state deserve elected officials who stand up for their interests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Damon B. Ansell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Damon B. Ansell
(Chief of Staff)