Colbert Super PAC creates campaign confusion

By Ryan Kamphuis
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It seems that few look at the potential Republican candidates for President with any level of seriousness. In a field of candidates so right wing and extreme that Ron Paul has become the voice of reason, most seem to look at the Republican primaries as a grotesque circus, with everything from revelations that a "family values" candidate wanted an open relationship with his wife in one ring, to a candidate who's last name means something that shouldn't be printed in a newspaper in another (if you really want to know, Google 'Santorum.' I warned you).

To outside observers, it looked like the whole race couldn't get anymore screwed up and humorous. But then Stephen Colbert stepped in.

For those who don't know, Stephen Colbert is the massively popular conservative mock-pundit who tells us the news, with an extreme amount of spin, every night from his TV show on Comedy Central. Shortly after the Supreme Court ruled that corporations were seen as individuals in regards to campaign donations, Colbert set up a so-called 'Super Political Action Committee' to accept donations. Many donated to Colbert's super PAC, cleverly called, "Americans for a better tomorrow, tomorrow," but few knew exactly what they were donating to. Until now.

Starting weeks ago, before the Iowa caucuses, Colbert's super PAC began running ads generally mocking all of the candidates and the Supreme Court's decision that allowed corporations to donate such large amounts

of money to super PACs. One of the more controversial ads actually asked voters to not vote for Rick Perry by incorrectly writing-in 'Rick Parry' during the caucus. Throughout all of this, Colbert was enlightening audiences about the wonders of his super PAC, going so far as calling it a, "campaign finance glory hole," where, "you stick your money in the hole, the other person accepts your donation, and because it's happening anonymously, no one feels dirty!"

Colbert's antics came to a head this past week in South Carolina. In a surprise announcement, Colbert said that he would be taking part in the Republican South Carolina primaries, attempting to become the, "President of the United States of South Carolina." After announcing his candidacy, Colbert then proclaimed that he was stepping down as the head of his super PAC, and that Jon Stewart would sign on as the head of the super PAC, renaming it the "Definitely Not Coordinating With Stephen Colbert Super PAC." The solid waste then hit the fan. Colbert campaigned daily, and even held a rally on January 20th with Hermain Cain, asking voters to vote for him by voting for Cain, who had already dropped out of the race.

Throughout all of this, people have been confused by the blurring of the politics-entertainment line that Colbert's super PAC and campaign represent. Anyone looking at Colbert's actions can agree that they are crazy and asinine, but I think that this is the whole point of Colbert's actions. Because, no matter how crazy his actions are, every single thing that Colbert has done is 100% legal. These are all things that are not only allowed, but commonplace in the current political system.

And this is something that should make us angry. Candidates can run super PACs, collecting billions of dollars of donations from corporations, only to transfer leadership of the super PAC to a lackey, who then funnels all that money into ads supporting said candidate.

Colbert himself best put the whole thing into perspective when addressing claims that his entire campaign was a joke, "If they are calling being allowed to form a Super PAC, and collecting unlimited and untraceable amounts of money from individuals, unions, and corporations and spending that money on political ads and for personal enrichment, and then surrendering that Super PAC to one of my closest friends while I explore a run for office, if that is a joke, then they are saying that our entire campaign finance system is a joke."

As humorous as Colbert's antics may be, and despite the fact that many claim that it is all an immature distraction, Colbert's actions are highlighting to the masses how screwed up our current political system is. People have been warning us of this for years, but now that Colbert has picked up the issue and decided to bring in his signature brand of satire, the masses may be paying attention. And I hope they are.

The loopholes and corrupt culture of campaign finance are being brought into the open and addressed by the mainstream media for one of the first times I can ever remember thanks to Colbert, and if there was ever a time where the masses might begin to support legitimate campaign finance reform, it's now. So here's hoping Colbert continues to screw up and bumble throughout the Republican primary season. His antics may be our only hope for a political system free of money-related antics.

Image courtesey of latimes.com

Come for the classes, stay for the campus

By Dan Zweig
TECHNEWS WRITER

IIT has certainly changed since it was founded over a hundred years ago, even if most of its principles have stayed the same.

Most recently, the university has been striving to better serve its students and improve their collegiate experience; I personally cannot imagine what the school was like before the administration began this shift and if any of the students were happy.

These days, it is very appealing to be a student on campus, and as such, more students are now living on campus. A decade ago, the school established itself as a commuter-oriented campus where most students lived off campus and came to IIT only for classes before returning

home (in fact, the campus is still considered a commuter campus by Collegeboard and other college ranking organizations). Now, however, I believe the majority of students live on campus, or strive to spend more time on campus, as the Student Activities Fund (SAF), Office of Campus Life (OCL), and other organizations around campus schedule events and activites that convince students to spend more time living and interacting where they study.

The problem I see currently is that the mentality is still that IIT is a commuter campus and that over the weekends students return home to their families. Some students who live just close enough to make it home over the weekend choose to do this because they believe all other students leave campus as well. The Bog closes over the weekend; most student organizations refrain from holding events over

the weekend, and because of this mentality, even the students who are on campus remain in their rooms and largely out of sight.

I do not blame The Bog or student organizations for this situation. In fact, I think that (for the most part) if they opened or held events during the weekend, students would not come because of the existing commuter or "stay in your room" mentality. This idea, which has become engrained over the past century within the minds of IIT students, needs to be altered, and students must realize that others stay on campus all weekend and that for a good portion of students, IIT is home for 9 months of the year.

The administration has begun the change of improving our campus and our community—now the students have to make the same effort to remain on campus, become involved, and make IIT a better place.