

NEWS RELEASE

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South Carolina's "Enron Democratic Primary"?

On October 3, the *Charlotte Observer* reported that the South Carolina Democratic Party is going to sell itself as a billboard for corporate advertising.

According to the *Observer*, "S.C. Democratic Party Chairman Joe Erwin says he plans to seek corporate sponsorships to help raise \$500,000 to hold the Feb. 3 primary, which the state party has to pay for. If a corporation wants to give a little extra to slap its name on a ballot or a media backdrop -- or pretty much anything -- he'll consider it. It's a takeoff on the way ballparks sell ads on scoreboards or seatbacks."

Following is Commercial Alert's letter to Mr. Erwin.

Dear Mr. Erwin:

The *Charlotte Observer* reported that you want to sell space for corporate names and logos on election materials for the South Carolina Democratic Party.

This is a landmark in political candor. For years critics have accused the major political parties of selling themselves to corporate donors. Now, finally, you are going to fess up, publicly and in indisputable fashion.

Former Democratic fund-raiser Johnny Chung once observed that "the White House is like a subway -- you have to put in coins to open the gates." Perhaps you should invite Mr. Chung to give your party's keynote address.

Maybe you are thinking too small. Why not sell naming rights to the entire primary? For example, you might call it the "Enron Democratic Primary." Perhaps McDonald's would pay to have Ronald McDonald on the ballot -- as a joke of course.

And why stop there? You could offer naming rights for the each of your congressional seats too. For example, why not rename Rep. John Spratt's fifth CD after Larry Flynt? Or Madonna? Or Howard Stern? Or Preparation H?

Maybe you should offer to put a corporate logo on the South Carolina flag -- for a price.

Party officials can do their part as well. There's a lot of empty space on the typical suit jacket, for example. Why not sell some of yours to corporate sponsors? If NASCAR racing drivers can

do it, why not politicians? Say, \$500 for each corporate logo. That way you could become a walking exemplar of your own political fundraising ideas.

Better still, why not enable the corporations to buy the nomination straight out, without all this primary election rigmarole. It's a great way to save all the money that you would spend on media buys.

Good luck.

Gary Ruskin
Executive Director
Commercial Alert

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Commercial Alert is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to keep the commercial culture within its proper sphere, and to prevent it from exploiting children and subverting the higher values of family, community, environmental integrity and democracy.

Commercial Alert has more than 2000 members, representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For more information, visit our website at <http://www.commercialalert.org>.