



PRESS RELEASE

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Kalamazoo County Republican Committee (KGOP)
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Kalamazoo, Michigan

On the February 13, 2023 the Kalamazoo County Republican Committee ("KGOP") replaced several statutory members on its executive committee who resigned. Some delegates, including Sabrina Pritchett-Evans and Kim Harris, claimed this was "illegal" and created ensuing chaos at the February 17, 2023 4th District Caucus by voting with Ottawa County to disenfranchise Kalamazoo County delegates when they set aside Rule 9 only as to Kalamazoo County. The facts are more thoroughly explained in the KGOP [motion for summary disposition](#) .¹

Following the 4th District Caucus, the KGOP executive committee (1) removed these disruptive members from the executive committee who acted against party interests, and (2) removed 17 delegates who acted against party interests. It is the KGOP's position that as a private political organization, it enjoys the First Amendment right of free association and has autonomy to make its own decisions and control its membership.

Rather than keep the conflict internal, two of the removed executive committee members and delegates (Sabrina Pritchett-Evans and Kim Harris) sued the KGOP (with funding and support by the 4th District leadership and current MIGOP leadership) claiming that all actions taken by the KGOP were illegal.

Late yesterday afternoon, the Kalamazoo County Circuit Court [released its decision](#) ² in the case of *Sabrina Pritchett-Evans & Kimberly Harris v KGOP & Kelly Sackett*. That decision results in the comprehensive exoneration of the KGOP. None of the actions taken by the KGOP were illegal. As we predicted and expected, this **LANDMARK** ruling affirms the authority of the local party executive committee and leadership to (1) fill vacant executive committee positions as necessary, (2) remove members of the executive committee, and (3) remove delegates. Delegates are internal party positions and serve at the pleasure of local party executive committees. The expert testimony of [David Dishaw](#) ³ was referenced numerous times in the Court's decision. Notably, the court agreed with KGOP that it does not have jurisdiction over internal party matters, emphasizing the autonomy of county parties. "There is no question that the experience and expertise of Mr. Dishaw was vastly superior to that of Mr. Studebaker." *Opinion*, at 8.

Adhering to the First Amendment principles of free association, the court dismissed Couns 1-3 in the case on constitutional grounds:

- Count 1: Violation of MCL 168.599, MIGOP Bylaws, and KGOP Bylaws: **DISMISSED**

"Courts have continued to determine that this issue falls under the political questions doctrine . . . it is clear that this case does not provide a basis for judicial intervention." *Opinion*, at 19.

¹ https://kgop.org/?page_id=1235

² https://kgop.org/?page_id=1730

³ https://kgop.org/?page_id=1750



- Count 2: Violation of Michigan Constitution, Article 1 §2 Equal Protection: **DISMISSED**

"Here we have a political party, a private entity, that was performing its intraparty private actions. To claim constitutional relief, the entity that Plaintiffs claim relief from must be a State actor or entity performing State actions. Defendants in this case are not State actors." *Opinion*, at 21-22.

- Count 3: Breach of fiduciary duty: **DISMISSED**

"The right of an organization to select its own leader is fundamental to a political party. . . . The body of the KGOP selected Defendant Sackett to be its Chair and now Plaintiffs disagree with some of her actions and state that they are entitled to monetary relief, among other types of relief. This count is an intraparty dispute. . . . Taking into account the political questions doctrine, it is clear that this Court does not have the jurisdiction to hear this count." *Opinion* 23-24.

This decision, brought about by the plaintiffs who decided to go to court, has resulted in substantial clarity and overhaul to the Michigan delegate system as who have known it. Given the current state of the Michigan Republican Party at all levels, this ruling holds significant importance. It is now clear, as Republican leadership in Kalamazoo County have known for some time, that county parties possess the authority to structure and govern themselves (without interference from district or state committees) including the removal of executive committee members and delegates who do not align with the objectives or platform of the Republican Party. County parties are autonomous. We are no longer held hostage by people whose purpose is disrupting, creating chaos and drama, and deploying a "burn it down" mentality. The decision heralds a new era where focus can be on local elections and will help prepare the KGOP and other county parties for 2024.

Matthew DePerno, lead attorney for the KGOP, commented on the ruling stating, "Today's verdict reshapes the landscape of the Michigan Republican Party, affirming the autonomy of county parties. The First Amendment, political expression, and internal management have been upheld, securing a victory for those advocating for a more effective Republican Party in Michigan. I call on MIGOP to convene a meeting immediately of all 83 counties to figure out a path forward, with Kalamazoo taking the lead."

KGOP Chair Kelly Sackett added, "This triumph resonates with every county party striving to build strength, unify, and secure victories in elections. Our singular focus remains on winning and fundraising. With this outcome, we can concentrate on upcoming local elections and gear up for 2024. A united effort is essential to achieve victory once again."

KGOP also notes that its lead attorney Mr. DePerno attempted resolution with plaintiffs' attorney and MIGOP attorneys multiple times prior to the court's decision in order to find a compromise that benefit all interested parties and to improve the delegate system overall. His efforts were rejected.

Regarding Count 4, we expect that claim to be dismissed shortly. It is time we start fighting Democrats.

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