

Candidates under fire for alleged violations

By CHRIS JONES
Monitor Staff

The NABJ has cited 17 of 19 candidates on today's ballot for violating campaign regulations.

The violations detailed in a list provided Thursday evening by elections committee chair, Sharon Stevens, were supposed to be published on the NABJ's Web site or any other means through which the majority of the membership can be reached.

Stevens released the list after several requests by the Monitor staff to election officials.

The list of 17 violators includes two of the three presidential candidates: Mike Woolfolk and Cheryl Smith.

Smith said all candidates were informed of the regulations.

However, some candidates complained that the regulations were not made clear and that the committee continued to make addition to the rules without issuing proper notification.

Steven insisted candidates were notified.

"Candidates all received a list of rules for elections and they were made clear," she said adding, "All the candidates received notice of their violations."

The violations include: failing to file spending disclosures on time; using the NABJ logo; cam-

paing on Internet Listservs and exceeding the word limit allowed for Web site biographies.

Stevens also said the candidates received another list of regulations just for the convention informing them of campaign restrictions for the Hyatt Hotel after initial rules were set.

"They weren't fair and the rules and regulation weren't clearly stated," said Student Representative candidate Caleb Wilkerson. He was cited for six violations - the most of all the 2003 candidates. Later Thursday, Michelle Johnson, Online Project coordinator, asked Wilkerson to leave the NABJ student Online Project for failing to report for an assignment.

One of the violations Wilkerson was cited for, along with presidential candidate Cheryl Smith, was usage of NABJ logo. But after a review of the printed rules and regulations, Stevens admitted that use of the NABJ was not listed.

"It a common-sense issue. You can't just go and use anyone logo without permission," Stevens said.

Candidates reacted angrily to the charges.

"That's not true. I have not received any notice of that," said Cheryl Smith, Region VII director and a candidate for president. "I have not received any type of anything from anybody."

Smith refused to comment to specific charges other than to the misuse of the NABJ's logo, which she said she immediately removed.

In other election-related news, several members and past officers of NABJ issued a statement criticizing Condace Pressley's comments on the election and its candidates.

In an interview that was placed on the NABJ Web site, Pressley was quoted as saying, "Certainly president of NABJ is not a birthright and I don't know why he [Herbert Lowe] wants to be

president other than he believes he should be president. He does not bring the skill set that's necessary to be president."

Reacting to this and other comments, several NABJ members, including past officers, said in their statement, "We...are supporting different candidates to become NABJ's next president. However, we stand together in support of protecting the integrity of the office and the organization...Comments about the ongoing presidential campaign, which were published on NABJ Online for the nation to

see, were beneath the standards that we've always tried to uphold and that the membership expects us to uphold."

Some of those that participated in Thursday's press conference were Rochelle Riley, past president of the Dallas-Fort Worth Association of Black Communicators; Will Sutton, past president of NABJ; Sheila Brooks, former NABJ secretary; and Roy Johnson, founding member of the NABJ sports task force.

//Staff writers Regine Labossiere, Camille Spencer, Meredith S. Davis contributed to

The candidates and the violations

Smith, Cheryl
-Use of NABJ logo

Wilkerson, Caleb
-Unauthorized use of NABJ logo on campaign Web site
-Sent e-mail to student NABJ Listserv announcing candidacy and soliciting dialog with all the candidates but omitted one candidate's e-mail address
-Sent platform to student Listserv
-Created a Listserv and obtained some of the e-mail addresses through student Listserv
-Listed campaign Web Site address in e-mail signature of messages sent to list

-Plagiarized from another candidate's Web site

The following candidates did not file spending disclosure for the May 26 deadline:
Dina Anderson
Ashley Clark
Jerry McCormick
Bryan Monroe
Cheryl Smith
Caleb Wilkerson
Christy Poindexter
Stephanie Jones
Melanie Burney
Ernie Suggs

The following candidates did not file spending disclosure for the

July 16 deadline:

Dina Anderson
Ashley Clark
Jerry McCormick
Bryan Monroe
Barbara Ciara
Gregory Lee
Lauren Bayne Anderson
Caleb Wilkerson
Christy Poindexter
Stephanie Jones
Melanie Burney
Ernie Suggs

Exceeded Web Site bio word limit

Bryan Monroe
Barbara Ciara
Gregory Lee

Candidates debate issues at forum

comments directly.

When asked how she would be able to handle her workload if elected, Smith said her schedule isn't a concern.

"I am a single mother and I do have custody of my sister's four children, but I'm not doing anything that you out there aren't doing yourself," said Smith, editor in chief of the Dallas Weekly.

Smith said she wants to maintain

NABJ's financial stability and diversify its revenue sources.

This is Lowe's second run for the presidency. He said he favors streamlining the NABJ Board. On Friday's ballot are proposals to slim the 19-member board to 11, 13 or 14 members.

About 100 people attended the candidates' forum, and attendees said it helped seal their voting decisions.

Stephanie Maxwell, an anchor reporter for WAGT-TV in Augusta, Ga., said she "was undecided in some offices, but this helped. I think a lot of people in the organization asked what everyone wanted to know - [finances] and also how to get students in the business. NABJ is more than just a resume builder."

Some said listening to candidates express their opinions on

various issues enabled them to understand what's affecting the organization as whole.

Steve Crump, a reporter for WBTV in Charlotte, N.C., said, the forum "gives a very good slice of life as it relates to what the organization is about. What the candidates say preaches to the masses. The concepts are timely, like going about ways to raise funds."

"Being from Wisconsin,

it's difficult to keep a handle on what's happening nationally and regionally," said Valeria Davis-Humphrey, a reporter for the Wisconsin State Journal. "I strongly believe in the Democratic process. I have to vote, it's my organization."