

Jackson ruffles feathers Candidate employs aquatic fowl to spur Manchin debate Election 2004 Governor's race

Charleston Daily Mail (West Virginia)

March 26, 2004, Friday

Copyright 2004 Charleston Newspapers

Section: News; Pg. P1A

Length: 468 words

Byline: JOSH HAFENBRACK DAILY MAIL CAPITOL REPORTER

Body

The relationship between Democratic gubernatorial rivals Lloyd Jackson and Joe Manchin is starting to show quacks.

Jackson's campaign has begun dressing up staffers in a duck costume to stand at busy intersections and in front of campaign events. The duck holds up a sign that says, "Joe Manchin, don't duck debates."

The duck made its debut Wednesday night at a debate at West Virginia University between Jackson and Democrats Jim Lees and Lacy Wright. Manchin didn't attend.

On Thursday, the duck was briefly in Charleston during lunch hour, waving to drivers at the South Side Bridge, before making a trip to Parkersburg.

Jackson's strategist, Larry LaCorte, said the campaign rents the duck costume from an online company for about \$ 80 a week. The duck will make appearances in every region of the state over the next few weeks, he said.

"We have various volunteers and supporters traveling throughout the state, and they're going to wear this outfit and hold the sign," LaCorte said. "The whole purpose is to get Joe Manchin to agree to debate Lloyd Jackson and Jim Lees in every major media market. The voters deserve to see these candidates debate."

Manchin's campaign isn't amused.

"His duck is a red herring," said Manchin spokeswoman Lara Ramsburg.

Manchin is not avoiding debates, Ramsburg said.

"We've done debates, and we're accepting debates on a case-by-case basis," she said. "We're not accepting partisan debates proposed by candidates in a desperate attempt to draw attention to their faltering campaigns."

Jackson proposed doing one debate with Manchin and Lees in each of the state's six largest regions. Manchin declined, citing a busy schedule.

Lees said Jackson's yellow-feathered friend is all in fun.

"I saw the duck up close and personal," he said. "I thought it was funny."

In West Virginia politics, the duck is a piece of political gimmickry perhaps unmatched since the 1982 Senate race between Robert Byrd and Cleve Benedict.

Jackson ruffles feathers Candidate employs aquatic fowl to spur Manchin debate Election 2004 Governor's race

That year, a national conservative group orchestrated an attack on Byrd that included dressing up volunteers in white sheets, a reference to Byrd's association with the Ku Klux Klan as a youth. At one campaign stop, a Benedict campaign worker tried to give Byrd a KKK hood.

Benedict's controversial stunts backfired. He was trounced in the election and later apologized for the antics.

Jackson's duck is more lighthearted. LaCorte, the strategist, said it's a humorous way to draw attention to a serious campaign issue.

"It's a way to get attention," he said. "I'm going to send the duck down to Teays Valley at the interchange, that kind of thing, and let people know that Joe Manchin is ducking debates."

Writer Josh Hafenbrack can be reached at 348-4810 or by e-mail at jhafenbrack@dailymail.com.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (89%); POLITICAL PARTIES (78%); POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS (78%); POLITICAL DEBATES (78%); POLITICS (78%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (73%); PLATFORMS & ISSUES (73%); GOVERNORS (73%); CONSERVATISM (66%)

Company: BYRD'S ASSOCIATION (57%); BYRD'S ASSOCIATION (57%)

Person: JOE MANCHIN (90%); ROBERT BYRD (79%)

Geographic: CHARLESTON, WV, USA (79%); WEST VIRGINIA, USA (92%)

Load-Date: March 26, 2004