



Questionable political fundraising? Roger on that

Hedgecock and KFMB hit with unfairness charge in DeMaio race

By Matt Potter

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Is one of San Diego's wealthiest women — whose family foundation backs nonprofits linked to the billionaire Koch brothers — abusing her lucrative radio and TV broadcasting licenses to muzzle an electoral opponent of Republican congressional hopeful Carl DeMaio?

So contend backers of Black Mountain Ranch resident Kirk Jorgensen, another Republican vying with DeMaio and Democratic incumbent Scott Peters for the 52nd District seat covering Coronado, La Jolla, Rancho Bernardo, and Poway.

An ex-Marine Corps officer, Jorgensen was trained by the Central Intelligence Agency at “the Farm,” according to his campaign bio, and served with the Defense Intelligence Agency in the Balkans, hunting down war criminals and those accused of genocide.

Now, his supporters say, he may be up against something almost as daunting: a virtual wall of silence against his campaign erected by San Diego’s KFMB, the TV and radio broadcasting complex owned and run by Elisabeth Kimmel.

Elisabeth Kimmel

Kimmel is an heir of the late August C. Meyer, Sr., a lawyer and onetime chairman of the Bank of Illinois, who founded Midwest Television, Inc., in 1952. Based in Champaign, Illinois, the firm bought up a string of broadcast operations in Illinois as well as its San Diego goldmine, KFMB TV and AM and FM radio stations, which it purchased in 1964.

According to a profile posted online this February by the Harvard Business School Club of San Diego, Kimmel is the current owner and president of Midwest Television. She went to work for the company in 1993 as general counsel and “became third generation owner in 2007.”

The write-up goes on to say Kimmel “received a BA in History with Distinction and Departmental Honors, Phi Beta Kappa, from Stanford, where she currently serves on the Task Force for Undergraduate Education. She graduated cum laude from Harvard Law School.”

The immediate target of the Jorgensen backers' wrath is a familiar front man for political hijinks: [fallen San Diego mayor Roger Hedgecock, the radio talk-show host](#) who found a job at KFMB's AM station at the end of 2011 after departing Clear Channel Communications–owned KOGO.

Hedgecock is a longtime friend and political beneficiary of *U-T San Diego* publisher Douglas Manchester, for whom Hedgecock currently works doing online video commentary and occasional op-eds.

Like Kimmel — who with husband Gregory Kimmel gave DeMaio \$2000 during his 2012 failed run for mayor — Manchester is a DeMaio backer, and Hedgecock has long been the ex-councilman's media cheerleader-in-chief.

Enter Jorgensen's campaign, which sent Hedgecock an email last year asking to set up an introduction. Replied Hedgecock, according to an email produced by Jorgensen's representative: "I am supporting Carl."

Hedgecock's role in the DeMaio campaign has resulted in at least one unfairness allegation sent to the Federal Communications Commission and KFMB's so-called public file, an official register of alleged station misdeeds reviewed by the FCC at license-renewal time. Under the law, candidate advertising must be paid for or otherwise booked and declared as a contribution made by station ownership.

"I would like to have a complaint put [into] KFMB's Public File. I would like to complain about Roger Hedgecock and the blatant campaigning he is doing for Carl DeMaio. I think this clearly violates the journalistic and ethical standards KFMB holds," says an email sent by Brian Kyd to the KFMB public file furnished by the station after a request made under federal law.

Also beyond the pale for a broadcasting operation that uses the public airwaves for free, DeMaio opponents argue, has been Hedgecock's fundraising activity on behalf of the former city councilman using the station's address.

"I have a favor to ask. I have committed to get five contributions for Carl DeMaio's event this Thursday evening," says an email sent by Hedgecock to addresses on a Republican fundraising list last September. "I'm hoping you can attend, but at the least, can you agree to contribute to make the event a success? Here's the link — please write 'Roger' in the event code."

Another email appeal said, "once in a while a candidate for Congress comes along that really impresses me — so much so that I personally contribute to them.

"I want to introduce you to one such leader: CARL DEMAIO. Mark my words — you will be hearing a lot more about Carl DeMaio in the coming months and years. Think Ted Cruz and Rand Paul."

At the bottom of the email was the radio show's name and KFMB's address: "The Roger Hedgecock Show | c/o KFMB Radio | 7677 Engineer Road."

When asked by phone about the charges KFMB was attempting to muzzle DeMaio's electoral opponents, improperly raising campaign funds for the San Diego Republican, and otherwise abusing the privileges granted to it by Midwest's federal licenses to broadcast, vice president and general manager at KFMB radio Gina Landau abruptly terminated the call.

Kimmel did not return repeated phone calls. Her assistant said that KFMB TV vice president and general manager Pat Nevin would respond to the charges regarding Hedgecock's pro-DeMaio activities and KFMB's alleged boycott of the Jorgensen campaign, but a promised call from him did not materialize.

Like Manchester, whose paper has hired three veterans of news and opinion websites identified by the *Columbia Journalism Review* [as funded by Charles and David Koch](#), and has "partnered" on a series of opinion pieces with the Koch-linked Franklin Center for Government and Public Integrity, Kimmel's family foundation has supported two charities with close connections to the Wichita-based billionaires.

According to its most recent IRS filing, dated September 25, 2013, the Meyer Charitable Foundation, for which Kimmel is listed as assistant secretary and her husband Gregory vice president, gave \$159,000 to the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, described on its website as "a nonprofit organization connecting a global network of more than 400 free-market organizations in over 80 countries to the ideas and resources needed to advance the cause of liberty."

Board members listed include George Pearson, who "worked for nearly three decades for the Koch family as manager of various Koch Foundations and for Koch Industries in various corporate positions including Director of Public Affairs. Mr. Pearson has served as an officer or director of various non-profit organizations, including the Institute for Humane Studies, the Cato Institute, and the Kansas Policy Institute."