

# PUBLIC OPINION

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## Halvorson staffer fired for 'unethical conduct'

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A key adviser to Art Halvorson's campaign for Congress has lost his job after allegedly falsifying nominating petitions.

The petitions verified by David Haas, a rising conservative political consultant, bring into question about 40 signatures among Halvorson's more than 3,000. Halvorson still has more than the 1,000 signatures required for his name to appear on the GOP primary ballot.

Halvorson, a businessman and retired Coast Guard captain, is trying for a second time to unseat Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Everett. Pennsylvania's 9th Congressional District includes Franklin County. The primary election is April 26.

Haas had been forging a career as a political consultant. He joined Halvorson's campaign in September as "senior political consultant."

"It a great disappointment," Halvorson said. "We did not expect this, but we're not going to tolerate this. We're going to do things in the right way. It's unacceptable behavior. We don't know where else that might show up. We don't want to put ourselves at risk."

Petitions signed by Haas had the names of people who had moved from the area or died, according to a [review by the Herald Standard](#) of Uniontown. Signatures of people purporting to sign the petitions also did not match their voter registration cards.

"The evidence appears to be pretty clear," Halvorson said.

The Dauphin County District Attorney's office is deciding whether the Dauphin County DA or Blair County DA will investigate, according to Dauphin County Assistant DA Fran Chardo. Investigators will decide whether prosecution would be in the public interest, whether the irregularities were purposeful or accidental.

Lying about getting signatures and their accuracy is a criminal act, according to Chardo. The petition of signatures is a sworn affidavit from the person collecting them. Making a false statement can be perjury under the Election Code.

A candidate would not be held responsible unless he or she was found to be complicit, he said.

Neither Shuster nor Halvorson challenged the validity of each other's petitions with the state Bureau of Elections.

Andy Post, Shuster's campaign chairman, said, "We examined the petitions. What we were looking for: Are there 2,000 signatures we can throw out? There was no way we were going to get him thrown off the ballot.

"I don't know who called the DA. I assume Harrisburg has its circles."

Haas previously had served as a regional coordinator with Heritage Action, a youth director for the Sam Rohrer for Senate campaign and an analyst with the Yankee Institute for Public Policy in Hartford, Connecticut.

The Halvorson campaign's financial disclosure notes a \$1,600 "campaign manager fee" to Haas in December.

The questionable petitions are dated after Jan. 21, when Halvorson's campaign announced two appointments:

- Joe Sterns, a 17-year political operative who previously managed Sen. Pat Toomey's central Pennsylvania office, would immediately head daily operations.
- Greg Scandlen, a former Cato Institute policy analyst, was named communications director and head of research.

Halvorson and his staff this week referred to Haas as a "campaign staffer."

"We can't figure out what led this individual to take the course he did," Halvorson said. "It's difficult to fathom what would have driven him to do this."

Post said that the "extremely troubling and serious act ... demonstrates a complete lack of integrity Halvorson so loudly claims to practice." The act was not a mistake, but a "deliberate and intentional violation."

"To those voters who are now discovering they had their rights and trust violated, the 'no big deal' attitude from Halvorson is a page right out of the Hillary Clinton cover-up playbook," Post said. "Part of running for office is accountability and with this deceitful act, the buck stops with Mr. Halvorson, who should apologize to the voters and accept accountability for his actions."

Halvorson said his staff has taken action and is moving on.

"We're not going to let this distract us," he said.

This is the official statement on Tuesday from Halvorson Campaign spokesman Joe Sterns:

"The candidate and campaign committee were just informed of a very serious allegation regarding the behavior of a campaign staffer who circulated a small number of nominating petitions on our behalf. The circumstances suggest wholly unprofessional and unethical conduct by this individual.

"We have terminated his employment with the campaign, effective immediately, and severed all ties. We do not tolerate dishonest behavior, regardless of intent.

"Fortunately the issue pertained to the validity of only 40 voter signatures out of more than 3,000 — three times the required number to obtain ballot status."

This is the official statement from Shuster spokesman Andy Post:

"The decision by Art Halvorson's campaign to break the law by illegally forging signatures of 50 or more people, including one deceased person and others no longer living in the state, is an extremely troubling and serious act that demonstrates a complete lack of integrity Halvorson so loudly claims to practice. He attacks Congressman Shuster several times a day with false and slanderous information, but clearly needs to be more focused on his own campaign, which is now under investigation by law enforcement.

"This was not simply a mistake by someone affiliated with the campaign, but a deliberate and intentional violation by Halvorson's senior campaign consultant. In their attempt to downplay breaking the law, Halvorson's campaign put out a statement saying, 'Fortunately, the issue pertained to the validity of only 40 voter signatures.'

"To those voters who are now discovering they had their rights and trust violated, the "no big deal" attitude from Halvorson is a page right out of the Hillary Clinton cover-up playbook. Part of running for office is accountability and with this deceitful act, the buck stops with Mr. Halvorson, who should apologize to the voters and accept accountability for his actions."