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Posted on Fri, Mar. 5, 2010

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Clout: Where's Williams' campaign money coming from?

By Chris Brennan and Catherine Lucey Philadelphia Daily News

STATE SEN. **Anthony Hardy Williams**, like everyone running for governor, must file his first 2010 campaign-finance report one month from tomorrow.

PhillyClout expects a lot of political interest in that report, and not just because Williams was a late entry into the race in January, just before the other candidates filed reports showing how much money they raised in 2009.

Williams says he has already raised close to \$2 million, much of it from people interested in "school choice." That's a political euphemism for using tax money to help students escape failing public schools.

We hear that the deep pockets behind Williams are the guys who run Susquehanna International Group (SIG), an options- and securities-trading firm in Bala Cynwyd.

Here's why that makes sense: **Jeff Yass**, of SIG, is a board member of the Cato Institute, and **Arthur Dantchik**, of SIG, is a board member of the Institute for Justice. Both are conservative libertarian groups that promote school choice.

Yass and Dantchik were too busy this week to respond to questions about Williams, according to a company spokesman.

Williams this week wouldn't confirm or deny that Yass and Dantchik were backing his campaign. He declined to be specific, he said, because he didn't want those details to impact his ability to raise campaign cash from other sources.

"Obviously the level of support I've received makes me a serious candidate," Williams said. "But I'm not going to be obligated to anyone. I'm not going to be obligated to the Cato Institute and I'm not going to be obligated to the Institute for Justice."

Another Blackwell in the 190th

The challenge to unseat state Rep. **Vanessa Lowry Brown** in the state House's 190th District, which covers West Philadelphia and Fairmount Park, is shaping up to be a real family feud.

PhillyClout told you last week that **Sharif Street**, son of former Mayor **John Street**, is running in the primary election with the support of Councilwoman **Jannie Blackwell**. That's awkward since **Tommy Blackwell**, the Councilwoman's stepson, who lost the seat to Brown after he was knocked off the 2008 ballot in a petition challenge, is also running.

Now, here comes Tommy's sister, **Audrey Blackwell Watson**, as an addition to the race. We've been having a tough time tracking her down. Her husband called last week to say she is running, but he declined to give us her phone number. Audrey: If you're out there, give us a call.

Here's what Tommy Blackwell said last week when asked if his sister would run: "We're talking. I guarantee you that there will not be two Blackwells in this race."

Here's his take this week: "We're still talking. There's still time."

Nominating petitions for a spot on the ballot are due Tuesday.

To dredge or not to dredge

N.J. Gov. **Chris Christie** held a news conference at a Revolutionary War-era fort this week to decry a dredging project, and we half-expected U.S. Sen. **Arlen Specter** to row across the Delaware in a sneak attack.

Specter has been pushing for the dredging of the Delaware River to improve shipping in the Philadelphia-Camden port for nearly three decades. The work, long delayed by political fights with New Jersey and Delaware and court challenges by environmental groups, got under way on Monday. Christie's administration went to court that day to file yet another challenge.

The dredging is excellent political timing for Specter, who could use the support of the unions who love the project's potential to create thousands of jobs.

"I say good government is always good politics," Specter told us when we noted the timing.

But there's a political play here for Christie, too. While rolling back some environmental rules in his state, Christie stood on the riverbank Monday to complain that the project makes New Jersey "bear the environmental burden for a project that doesn't make economic sense."

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That's a reference to the Army Corps of Engineers' plans to dump the dredged material on federal property in New Jersey until it dries out. Specter is pushing for federal money to truck the dried material into Pennsylvania, where it could fill abandoned coal mines in Hazleton.

Christie supports efforts to deepen the entry to the ports of North Jersey and New York.

Christie spokesman **Michael Drewniak** denied that the governor was trying to help North Jersey ports by fighting a project that will help Philadelphia's ports. He defended Christie's stance on the North Jersey project, saying that it will help "massive ports" shared by New Jersey and New York.

"You don't take on a project or support a project in a bistate waterway when there's nothing in it for you except taking the dredge spoils," Drewniak said.

Quotable:

"I think they'll screw it up in New York, long enough for Philadelphia to get a good head start. I'm almost certain they'll screw it up."

- Casino developer **Steve Wynn**, who in November dropped out of the bidding to open a casino at Aqueduct racetrack in Queens, N.Y., and now wants to take over a stalled casino project in South Philly.

Staff writer John M. Baer contributed to this report.

Have tips or suggestions? Call Chris Brennan at 215-854-5973 or e-mail

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Check out the Clout blog at:

www.phillyclout.com.

Have a news tip? Gossip? Suggestion? Call Chris Brennan at 215-854-5973 or Catherine Lucey at 215-854-4712. Or e-mail phillyclout@phillynews.com.

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FJGJR

Posted 04:39 AM, 03/05/2010

They aren't going to rest, until Sharif finds a pol job. That's about all he is qualified to do (nothing). He rented a home in Fairmount to run, then moved out when he lost. Like Father like son.

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John Law

Posted 09:03 AM, 03/05/2010

Why is Corbett being allowed to use the job he's repeatedly failed at to get the job he's not qualified for? It looks like this "Bonus Gate" affair and the pace of its prosecution are being timed to help get Corbett free press for his election bid for Governor. We're paying for him and his staff to run for Governor...and then if he fails, he's still drawing a pay check, etc as a lame State's Attorney General! Why are we and our legislature letting him to get away with that? What about the Parole Board Corruption he's been told about, with evidence, for years now? What about the "Rendell Murders"? What about his repeated betrayal of public trust? Corbett was repeatedly told, in writing, with evidence, about Parole Board Corruption to include inappropriate... quit possibly criminal... and repeated sexual contacts between State Parole Agents and Offenders and their families! To include a District Director, who has a child now from an Offender's wife while hubby was on his caseload! Also shaking down Parolees for money, selling urine passes, pocketing supervision fees, routine misuse of State Vehicles to the tune of many thousands of tax dollars. Who investigates the Attorney General? Who does he answer to... by his own repeated lack of action... it's not the good, decent families of Pennsylvania! Why isn't the U.S. Attorney General (Eric Holder) investigating Tom (CORRUPT) Corbett?!

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