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## Paul Rolly: Politicos forget own 'character'

By Paul Rolly  
Tribune Columnist  
Salt Lake Tribune

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A booklet handed out as campaign material by legislative candidate LaVar Christensen at the Salt Lake County Republican Convention earlier this month was paid for by the state Office of Education, raising concerns about the use of taxpayer-funded services.

"Civic & Character Education in Utah," a 32-page pamphlet that was printed by the Office of Education at the request of Christensen and Sen. Margaret Dayton, R-Orem, was available for people to take at Christensen's booth at the convention and was being handed out by the candidate's volunteers near the booth.

It is an essay Christensen wrote for the University of Utah's Hinckley Institute of Politics' annual journal in 2006, invoking philosophies of the United States' Founding Fathers and other historical figures to argue for a values-based curriculum in public education.

It has a slick cover with a picture of schoolchildren on the front and "Utah State Office of Education" on the back.

At the time he wrote the essay, Christensen was a state legislator representing House District 48, the seat he hopes to reclaim this year, and was one of three elected officials who wrote essays for the 2006 Hinckley journal.

State Schools Superintendent Patti Harrington says Christensen and Dayton pressed her office to pay for the printing of thousands of copies to be distributed to schoolteachers throughout the state. Christensen earlier asked the Commission on Civic & Character Education, which was created by legislation he sponsored, to pay for the printing, but the commission turned him down.

"His [Christensen's] claimed use was for the schoolchildren of Utah," said Harrington. "Any use of the pamphlet other than that is inconsistent with his request."

The last page of the pamphlet contains a profile and picture of Christensen. It also touts legislation he sponsored to promote a character-based education system.

Christensen did not return my phone calls Thursday.

Balancing the budget? The School Trust Lands Division of the State Office of Education has run out of money with still a month to go before the end of the fiscal year.

Division Director Margaret Bird, who unsuccessfully ran for the state House of Representatives this year, was prepared to lay off the entire staff, including herself, for a month until the next fiscal year's budget kicks in July 1, but Schools Superintendent Patti Harrington shook loose about \$150,000 in mineral lease money slated for next year's budget to keep the office going.

That means, of course, there will be less money to spend next year, so the office is expected to cinch up the belt a little tighter.

Leave it to Beaver: A trip to California last week revealed the highest gas prices the entire way were at the gas stations in Beaver.

All of the stations there near the freeway were selling regular unleaded for \$4.19, about 30 cents higher than stations in Fillmore or Cedar City.

But that's just for travelers. The townsfolk get a break.

Getting off the freeway and driving into town revealed that the service stations a little off the beaten path in Beaver were selling regular unleaded for \$3.93.

[proolly@sltrib.com](mailto:proolly@sltrib.com)

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