

TODAY'S NEWS

Party Fundraiser, OTC Leaders Make Off With Caucus Elections

Robbers

Since February 2022, OTC Leader, Tommy Merickel, has joined other OTC Leaders (including his wife and son) in robbing many OTC members of the opportunity to participate in party meetings and conventions. The thefts include:

- * Before the 2022 OTC BPOU Convention, Merickel personally advocated for the election of 2 OTC Leaders who were ineligible to serve because they were not elected at caucus per the OTC Constitution. Both were elected and served.
- * Merickel made a motion at the January 2023 BPOU leadership meeting to suspend duly-elected delegates/alternates without due process or proper notice. As a result, 33 delegates/alternates were barred from the 2023 OTC BPOU Convention and stripped of all rights to vote or observe while unelected delegates were allowed to vote. If the 33 had been properly seated per the OTC Constitution, Merickel's proposed changes to the OTC Constitution and Bylaws, would almost certainly have failed.

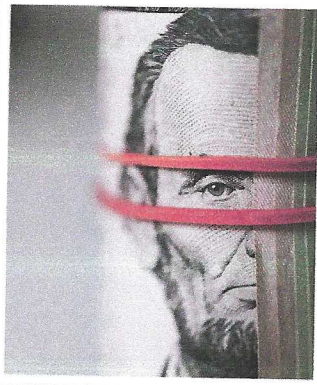


Cops and Robbers - Part II

Otter Tail County (OTC) Vice Chair Tommy Merickel had a problem. It was April 2022. One month before, at the annual OTC BPOU Convention, a grassroots delegate had risen to dispute the credentials committee report, identifying three OTC precincts where delegates or alternates had been added after caucus elections were complete. At the time, State Statute, party rules, and the OTC Constitution stated that delegates/alternates to BPOU Conventions must be elected "at caucus." Party rules made no allowances for people to be added after caucus.

In response to the challenge, Merickel rose to address the assembly, suggesting that the three additions were the result of "proxy votes." But the assurance didn't hold water with experienced political minds. Something felt off.

Grassroots members reiterated their concerns at the March 2022 monthly OTC BPOU meeting. After a heated discussion between concerned members and OTC Leaders, Merickel and his son, Harry, agreed to review the three precincts with one grassroots member and MNGOP, the State Party organization.



Cops

Since 2022, Tommy Merickel and other OTC Leaders have played dual roles as cops and robbers, enforcing rules that favor their positions while ignoring others that do not.

- * At the 2023 OTC BPOU Convention, Merickel chaired the committee that brought sweeping constitutional changes and new bylaws to OTC's governing documents. The bylaws have since been amended by OTC Leaders to include strict requirements for party participation and a pledge requiring party members to support all endorsed candidates or face possible disciplinary measures.
- * Assisted by Merickel, OTC Leaders barred grassroots members from a June 2022 BPOU meeting because they supported an unendorsed conservative instead of GOP-endorsed candidate Jordan Rasmusson who added delegates after caucus. At the same time, Merickel remained silent while Merickel-friendly lobbying groups fought to defeat GOP endorsed candidates.

The Merickels held a meeting with MNGOP but failed to include the grassroots member as agreed upon. Instead, Tommy Merickel shared the outcome during an online OTC leadership meeting, suggesting that volunteer mistakes had contributed to unelected delegates/alternates being added after caucus. First proxy votes, now volunteer mistakes?

At the close of this meeting, a grassroots member shared that he and other members had continued compiling photographs of original caucus documents and comparing them to MNGOP's record of OTC's caucus election results. The comparison had identified many more unelected delegates/alternates in seven additional precincts. Documentation for 63 other OTC precincts wasn't available to the grassroots and OTC Leaders refused to provide it. Had even more unelected people been added in those precincts? How many "mistakes" had been made?

Members hoped OTC Leaders would quickly correct the "mistakes" before the April 2022 endorsing convention where State Rep. Jordan Rasmusson was facing off against latecomer Nathan Miller for the party's endorsement. Allowing unelected delegates to vote in the endorsement could taint the process. In the interest of a fair contest, grassroots members requested a full review of all 92 OTC precincts and confirmation that all participating delegates/alternates had been properly elected at caucus per the party's rules. OTC Leaders refused.

As members arrived at the district endorsing convention in April 2022, it became clear that OTC Leaders had no plans to fix the "volunteer mistakes." Instead, attendees were greeted with a formal letter from MNGOP's attorney, Reid LeBeau, informing delegates that OTC Leaders were allowed to add delegates after caucus, even though party rules made no such provision. First proxy votes, then volunteer mistakes, then a formal letter of justification. Why the changing story?

During the endorsing convention, a handful of unelected delegates/alternates were removed during a challenge to the credentials report. Since then, OTC Leaders, including State Senator Jordan Rasmusson, have asserted that the caucus concerns were fully resolved during this convention. This is far from the truth. To date, 63 of OTC's 92 precincts have never been independently reviewed for accuracy, and no one knows how many unelected delegates may have voted in the endorsing process.

It has since been established that Rasmusson worked with OTC Leaders after the 2022 caucus to add unelected delegates believed to favor his endorsement. Did Merickel know this early on and try to cover it up by pointing to proxy votes and volunteer mistakes? Why have party leaders acknowledged what Rasmusson did but refused to make it right? Is it because Merickel is a major fundraiser while Rasmusson is viewed as a rising star whose luster would be tarnished by accountability?