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Government

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Officials: Krikorian made 'false statements'

By Jon Craig • jrcraig@enquirer.com • August 13, 2009

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COLUMBUS - U.S. Rep. Jean Schmidt's Armenian-American opponent made false statements during the 2008 campaign about contributions she received from Turkish political action committees, a unanimous three-member panel of the Ohio Elections Commission ruled today.

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David Krikorian, an independent candidate now running as a Democrat, also claimed the Republican congresswoman denied the mass killings of Armenians during World War I constituted genocide. Schmidt's attorney withdrew an elections complaint about that claim, as well as complaints about three other statements.

The full seven-member elections commission will hear evidence Sept. 3. Such hearings can result in written reprimands, fines and, in rare cases, prosecution.

Donald C. Brey, Schmidt's Columbus attorney, argued, "It would be illegal, it would be a crime, for her to take money from a foreign government. . . It's a false statement."

Brey denied Krikorian's claim that Schmidt's campaign received \$30,000 in "blood money" from Turkish PACs and Turkish people.

"We actually wanted them to find probable cause," Krikorian said afterward, complaining he's been unable to get Schmidt to discuss the Turkish contributions during the campaign. "Jean Schmidt brought these frivolous charges against me. She's afraid of facing me in an election. She's not used to people speaking the truth."

Christopher P. Finney, Krikorian's Cincinnati attorney, told the election panel that the Turkish government has poured campaign money into the U.S. government so it does not recognize the Armenian genocide of the early 1900s. "We're actually disappointed we won't have a hearing on her being a genocide denier," Finney said.

The debate spilled out into the commission

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lobby after the hearing: Krikorian attempted to argue facts of the case with Brey. "You can't bring charges and drop them," Krikorian said.

"Actually you can," Brey replied, saying an honorable man, if he tells a lie, would ultimately apologize.

"I don't understand why he doesn't say he misspoke," Brey told the Enquirer.

Eventually, Finney got pulled into the verbal fray: "I'm the one who convicted her of making a false statement," Finney said of an earlier campaign complaint against Schmidt. The Ohio Elections Commission doesn't convict people, Brey countered. Both attorneys dared the other to file new grievances.

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