

September 29, 2016

Undefeated

It's over . . . but it's not.

A conscientious Show-Me state activist has won his case, but . . .

A year ago, the unethical Missouri Ethics Commission fined Ron Calzone \$1,000 for not paying a silly \$10 fee. To register as a lobbyist. They also ordered him to stop talking to legislators until he complied.

Citizen Calzone didn't register.

He didn't pay.

And he didn't shut up.

On principle.

Instead, he contacted the Freedom Center of Missouri and the Center for Competitive Politics, a national outfit that defends our rights to participate in our supposedly participatory and representative democratic republic.

On Monday, a judge ruled in Ron's favor, tossing out the "ethics complaint" against him. On a technicality, actually.

Winning is better than losing. But even if someone bothers to try again against Calzone, filing the suit properly*, Calzone would win.

You see, we have rights . . . including the freedom to talk to those pretending to represent us. It is not at all certain that government has any constitutional authority to regulate paid lobbyists.

But Ron is not a paid lobbyist. He volunteers for Missouri First, a citizen group.

So why did the speech police's long arm reach out to grab him?

He's effective.

More than a forthright advocate for what he believes, he has proven smart enough to find ways to allow fellow freedom-lovers to weigh in on bills they favor or oppose.

This has endeared him neither to legislators nor the lobbying "community" — professionals paid handsomely to lose to Calzone's grassroots network. They will strike back. You can count on it.

But as long as there are citizens like him, the people will not be defeated.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.



* The charges weren't filed by a "natural person," as the law requires, but by the attorney for the Missouri Society of Governmental Consultants, the state lobbyist guild.