

Nevada cracking down on campaign ads

By Anjeanette Damon, Las Vegas Sun

Skip Daly chuckled the first time he saw the website erected last year to anonymously attack his credibility during the Democratic assemblyman's campaign.

"It was just so over the top, of course, no one would believe it," Daly said.

TheUnionBoss.com was filled with ugly clichés about burying bodies in the desert and sending jobs to brothers-in-law.

It was an attempt to mock Daly, who as secretary-treasurer of the Laborers Union in Northern Nevada is an actual union boss.

Daly didn't laugh for long.

"I sat back and said, 'You know, this really isn't very funny. And it's not true,'" he said. "But it was a shadow group. I didn't have anybody I could confront. And that's not fair."

Daly filed a complaint with the Secretary of State's office but quickly found there was little that could be done to discover the identity of who had funded and created the website, which is still up .

"That just dumbfounds me," Daly said.

As Nevada heads into another election year, an onslaught of such third-party campaign ads – many of them paid for by anonymous donors – are sure to come, particularly in the presidential and U.S. Senate races as federal third-party groups ratchet up fundraising in the wake of court decisions loosening campaign finance restrictions.

But on a state level, Secretary of State Ross Miller has been fighting anonymous third-party groups – taking some to court, investigating complaints made to his office and successfully pursuing legislation that will make it easier to compel such groups to disclose where they get their money and how they spend it.

Thanks to a bill sponsored by Daly, the Legislature gave Miller limited subpoena power to obtain documents from Internet hosts and the post office to help determine who's behind the anonymous groups.

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