

Turks and Caicos governor fires election candidate from representative body

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Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands (Monday 28th, May 2012) - Using an obscure and never before enforced section of the interim constitution enacted by Britain when imposing direct rule on the Turks and Caicos Islands in 2009, Governor Ric Todd has fired a member of the so-called Consultative Forum, a representative body established by the same interim constitution, on the grounds of a declared interest in running for political office when democratic elections are resumed in the TCI.

“I can confirm that the Governor in his discretionary power has terminated my role on the Consultative Forum. I was not invited to resign nor was I told of any concerns as it relates to a week ago newspaper article that featured me and announced my application to run in the upcoming general elections,” Sharlene Cartwright Robinson said.

Some ten days ago, Todd reminded members of the Consultative Forum and the Advisory Council, another advisory body established by the interim constitution, who are planning to stand for elected office that they could not remain members of those representative bodies.

Although UK Ministers have not yet decided whether elections will or will not take place in 2012, the interim administration said it is taking all possible measures to ensure that the country is ready should they be called.

“Being a member of either the Council or Forum comes with very high expectations of appropriate transparent behaviour,” Todd said.

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“Members were selected for their skills as well as to represent the community. But membership does not constitute a political office, nor should it. Indeed, it is important that no one in either the Council or Forum should use their position as a platform to promote their own political ambition.

“Accordingly, I have written to the members of the Council and the Forum to remind them that any member of the Council or Forum who expresses an intention to run for election must stand down,” Todd added.

“Any member of the Council or Forum who makes such an expression and does not resign from office, will be removed in line with Schedule 2, paragraphs 1(4) and (5), and paragraphs 9(6) and (7) of The Turks and Caicos Islands Constitution (Interim Amendment) Order 2009,” he warned.

The apparent reason for Robinson’s dismissal has been her recent public announcement that she is interested in representing the People’s Democratic Movement (PDM) with an “at large” candidacy.

Robinson has been a long term member of the PDM and was in fact the party’s national chairman when appointed to the Forum in 2009 by then Governor Gordon Wetherell.

According to Robinson, the governor’s letter to her simply speculates that she could in future use the Forum’s platform as a means to promote herself.

“It is important to know that the rules did not speak specifically to political office or roles or to aspirant political candidates. He said that he sought to give effect to the intent of the rules,” she said in a press statement.

Robinson went on to point out that, unlike the present governor, she participated in drafting the relevant rules.

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“It is important to say that when I was asked to serve in the [Consultative Forum] I was the national chairman of the PDM party and had a greater responsibility in advancing my party. When asked to make suggestions as to the composition of the [Consultative Forum], many persons suggested that there should be a representative from each of the major political parties, and myself along with another colleague assumed that this was the role in which we sat as every other recommended area was represented,” she said.

“My announcing the submission of an application to a political party that can very well refuse to accept me, in my book pales in comparison with the high political office I held at the time of my appointment,” Robinson said.

“Governor Wetherell in his discretion appointed me and now Governor Todd in his discretion removed me due to my aspiring to an elected office that is a ways off and for which I have not been considered. This is an example of wide discretionary powers without guidelines and knowledge on both sides. It is entirely a matter for him and we see that discretion changes from one governor to another,” she added.

Meanwhile, in an apparent attempt to avoid a similar fate, Karen Delancey, a former elected minister in the Progressive National Party (PNP) administration has resigned from the Forum.

Rev. Courtney Misick, another member of the Forum, has publically announced his interest in running as an independent once the election is called. Sources have also reported that Forum member John Phillips and Advisory Council member Doreen Quelch Misick have similarly expressed an interest in running once the election is called.

Courtney Misick used his Tuesday evening call in show on local television to discuss Todd’s recent edict.

Misick reminded viewers that he was also a member of the PDM when he was appointed to the Forum by Governor Wetherell.

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“I am serving the public by representing the people as a native born member of the Forum... if the governor wants me gone that is not a problem but until he takes me out I will continue to serve. I do not need to travel to Grand Turk (where the Forum meets) to be disrespected,” Misick said.