

Politics that's just plain sickening

Democrats give us a preview of the slime they'll deliver as fall election approaches

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While the Democrats and the media keep moaning over the "nasty" Supreme Court election (you know, the one they lost) this month, we're beginning to see some of the tactics these same Democrats will be using in Wisconsin legislative races this fall. They will make the "nasty" court race look like a tea party. Just ask Alberta Darling. She's under fire for surviving cancer.

The Republican state senator represents a district that includes Germantown, Menomonee Falls, southern Mequon, Brown Deer and the north shore Milwaukee County suburbs. The Democrats think she can be beaten and are running Assemblyman Sheldon Wasserman against her. Darling has no doubt been preparing to defend every controversial vote she's made in the Senate but probably never dreamed she'd have to justify her health. She was diagnosed with breast cancer seven years ago.

(REALITY CHECK: Imagine if this was all reversed and the Republicans were beating up on a Democratic woman who fought back from breast cancer.)

The smear started with a small item a few weeks ago in Milwaukee Magazine. It quoted an unnamed source as saying Darling was in poor health and wouldn't be able to put much effort into her race. Shortly after, a number of Democrats began talking rather openly about Darling's health, including Senate Majority Leader Russ Decker. Democratic leaders met with big Capitol lobbyists and repeated the lie and the Senate Democratic Committee even sent out a flier saying Darling is in poor health and won't be campaigning much.

After this repugnant sliming was revealed on my radio show, Darling's opponent, Wasserman, denied he had anything to do with it. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, in a story written by longtime capital hack Steve Walters, quoted both Wasserman and Senate leader Decker as saying they had nothing to do with the bogus rumor. What Walters didn't report was that the Democratic flier that included the big lie was distributed by Decker's staff and certainly had been seen by Wasserman.

Who started all of this? While it didn't carry her byline, the original Milwaukee Magazine item came from Senior Editor Mary Van de Kamp Nohl. She won't say who her source is, nor will Editor Bruce Murphy. Since the source was lying, it's hard to see why Murphy (a conscientious journalist) and Nohl (a reckless error-plagued poison pen artist) would continue to conceal the source's identity.

It is nonetheless rather breathtaking that Democrats are stooping this low. For the record, Darling is in great shape. She's a workout fiend and is always at the gym doing spinning, Pilates or some other workout that would likely kill Russ Decker. But if the Democrats in the Senate want to focus on the health of senators, I'm sure I could come up with a lot of material on Roger Breske or Bob Jauch. I could, for example, report on the Democratic senator known to get drunk every night at the decrepit Inn On The Park or the one whose body odor is the subject of constant capital jokes. Suffice to say Alberta Darling is in better health than most of them.

The bottom line is that Darling and the other legislative Republicans running this fall are in for a huge onslaught from the Democratic sleaze machine. I hope none of them has diabetes.