**Speaker Glen Casada and his resignation tactics**

By Debra Wines

I’ve been reading up on Mr. Casada’s “escapades” since becoming the Tennessee House Speaker and I have to admit I am not surprised by them, but I am a bit amazed that our state government doesn’t have any official procedure, in place, to remove a legislator from office. I won’t rehash the majority of scandals that have hit local and national news because most of them are already well documented in several media formats. That being said, there are some things that may have been “glossed over” a bit.

On May 21, 2019, Glen Casada sent an email to Republican members of the House notifying them he would resign due to their “no confidence” vote from the majority of the Republicans. He also told them he would not determine the date of his resignation until he returned from his already planned European vacation on June 3rd. On June 4th, Mr. Casada announced he would submit his official resignation from the position of Speaker of the Tennessee House to be effective on August 2, 2019 at 8 a.m.

According to several reports, in the local papers and news stations, Mr. Casada’s chosen date coincides with his 60th birthday and that would give a large boost to his retirement income. I will be perfectly honest here, since I heard that, I’ve been researching to find what retirement income Mr. Casada may be referring to, because I haven’t been able to locate any information. It wouldn’t impact his Social Security benefits. Mr. Casada has been a member of the Tennessee General Assembly since 2001, so he has served close to twenty years. According to information I did find about Tennessee legislators receiving any retirement benefits, it is a bit confusing. One site says*: “Those elected before 7/1/99 may have service covered as a regular state employee but must have 5 years of* regular *service to do so. Legislators elected after 1990 are not eligible for* *retirement benefits for legislative service.”* A PDF report of the State Legislative Benefits for all 50 states shows Tennessee legislators have the option to participate in an unnamed retirement program. The requirements for regular retirement are reaching the age of 55 with 4 years of service. The “employee’s” contribution is 5.43%. The Benefit formula is $70 per month x years of service, with a cap of $1,375 a month. If he is eligible for any of this, I can’t see how it would make a big difference to his retirement.

I do get the impression, after reading and researching a lot of documentation, that there might be something else up Glen Casada’s sleeve. It is my opinion, delaying his resignation until August, he may still be hoping he has a chance to persuade members of his Caucus to hold another confidence vote and he can save his position. I believe he was rather surprised that the majority of the Republican caucus cast votes indicating they had no confidence in his ability to lead as House Speaker. His initial response to the results of the vote was his refusal to resign. He expressed confidence that he would be able to work hard enough to regain his fellow members’ confidence in him again. I think Mr. Casada is either rather naïve or oblivious to the current situation he is in and the amount of “bad” feelings many Tennessee voters and legislators have towards him.

Glen Casada hasn’t been a shining figure of “truth, justice and the American Way” for several years. It seems the things that drove him to lust after the position of Speaker of the House, has exposed his “flaws” not only to his constituents but the public at large. Not everyone sees corruption in politics as something to get overly excited about, but even a majority of people who assume there will always be a bit of “quid pro quo” in our government dealings, do have some limits on how far it should go. They also have been starting to question the fact that some of our elected leaders are showing that they don’t care what the voters think, and they seem proud to let their corrupt behavior see the light of day. Their attitude is “so what are you going to do about it?”

I think one of Mr. Casada’s mistakes was letting it all hang out in a very short period of time and when his constituents and members of his own party thought he was going too far, too fast. He was getting reckless and on one hand he was telling those who were not happy with him or his behavior, he didn’t care. Mr. Casada took his power and abused it, very publicly. His power trip didn’t just annoy and anger Democrats in the House, it became obvious, he was not scoring points with members of his own party. I am sure no one was thrilled to have the FBI suddenly investigating how the passage of vouchers was moved through the Tennessee House. Arm twisting and strongly worded suggestions to get the votes is one thing, but Mr. Casada went too far and legislators complained, along with the voters. The key to bringing the attention of the FBI, was complaints from the legislators. Speaker Casada’s kind of “persuasion” was unacceptable and it seems that it bordered on the possibility of being illegal.

Mr. Casada is pushing Governor Lee to hold a special session of the legislature to choose a new Speaker. It really isn’t necessary, there is a Speaker Pro Tempore who can do the job until the next meeting of the General Assembly when a new election can take place. Does Glen Casada plan on trying to save his job if there is a special session called? Guess we just have to sit back and see what happens or we can contact our legislators and tell them we feel very strongly about Glen Casada never holding Speaker of the House position again.