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Founder Turmoil at the Conservative Nonprofit Eagle Forum: Who's in Charge Here?

By RUTH MCCAMBRIDGE | 1 min ago



Phyllis Schlafly, Founder, Eagle Forum / Mark Taylor (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/n3tel/>)

April 19, 2016; Missouri Times (<http://themissouritimes.com/28712/schlafly-seeks-to-reassert-control-over-eagle-forum/>)

Founder troubles can plague all kinds of nonprofits. Founders often become founders because they have a combination of charisma and will, and the result can be both highly attractive and highly distressing.

Conservative campaigner Phyllis Schlafly claims she is still at the helm of the Eagle Forum, which she founded in 1972 to successfully oppose the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). The group has more recently been active against marriage equality, abortion, gun control, and tax increases. But six of 11 of the board members (now dubbed the “Gang of Six”) claim she is out.

Schlafly says she objects to the validity of their decisions to oust her and the president Ed Martin. Making the whole scene more excruciating is the fact that Anne Cori, Schlafly's daughter, is one of the six board members (rogue, according to Schlafly and Martin) taking the action.

Schlafly has been trying to get her daughter and the other five rogues to resign, as can be noted in the letter below:



PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY
FOUNDER

EAGLE FORUM

Leading The Pro-Family Movement Since 1972

EDUCATION CENTER: 7800 BONHOMME AVE., ST. LOUIS, MO 63105, (314) 721-1213, fax: (314) 721-3373

CAPITOL HILL OFFICE: 316 PENNSYLVANIA AVE., S.E., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003, (202) 544-0353, fax: (202) 547-6996

OPERATIONS CENTER: P.O. BOX 618, ALTON, IL 62002, (618) 462-5415, fax: (618) 462-8909, eagle@eagleforum.org

April 10, 2016

Dear Eunie, Shirley, Cathie, Rosina, Carolyn, and Anne,

I write this letter with a heavy heart.

For over a week now, I have tried to understand what you are doing and what you intend. Some of you have delayed returning my calls while others have not responded at all.

Over the past few days, I have heard different versions of what you intend with the special board meeting tomorrow. First, it was a question about how we have operated and Eunie said she thought we needed outsiders at Eagle Forum. Next, a reporter told us Cathie is saying this is about planning the future. Finally, this morning Eunie said that this is about my judgment on personnel. I don't know what is the true plan but I believe it is an attack on me and my work.

I have fond memories of our work together and our friendships. I will cherish those.

At this time, I ask you to resign immediately from the Board, so that I may continue with Eagle Forum's important work.

Faithfully,

The imbroglio has been blamed on Schlafly's endorsement of Donald Trump for president in January after high-ranking staff had already voiced support for Ted Cruz. Some believe the 91-year-old was manipulated into making the endorsement, a suggestion some call highly disrespectful.

Gawker reports:

Schlafly's decision prompted Cathie Adams, a veteran Eagle Forum member and onetime chair of the Texas GOP, to claim that Trump had capitalized on Schlafly's old age to earn her support.

"At 91, it is just totally unfair to impose upon someone who has such a beautiful legacy," Adams said to the *Dallas Morning News*. "I think this was very much a manipulation. When you're 91 and you're not out with the grass roots all the time, it is very much taking advantage of someone."

Schlafly is reluctant to categorize Adams's remark as a personal insult. "We have quite a number of our members who are for Cruz. There's no question about that," she told *Gawker*. "When they did that, I didn't say anything. I didn't criticize them. I didn't say they couldn't do it. I said we have free speech, you can do whatever you want."

The "rogue board members" deny that the issue at hand is the endorsement of Trump; rather, they claim it's Martin's style of management that is in question, and that he is acting as Schlafly's mouthpiece in order to seize control of the group.

Schlafly made a video to explain her position in which she asserts that the Eagle Forum is still a "terribly important player in the whole political scene."

"So we're cooking, and I hope you're with me all the way," Schlafly said.

As a trip down memory lane, here are some quotations from the woman in question:

- "The atomic bomb is a marvelous gift that was given to our country by a wise God."
- "Non-criminal sexual harassment on the job is not a problem for the virtuous woman except in the rarest of cases."
- "Men should stop treating feminists like ladies, and instead treat them like the men they say they want to be."
- "ERA means abortion funding, means homosexual privileges, means whatever else."

—Ruth McCambridge

