



10TV Exclusive: Kasich Pulled Plug On Debate With FitzGerald During Prep



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COLUMBUS, Ohio - Sources close to John Kasich's reelection campaign tell 10TV that the governor was preparing for a debate with challenger Ed FitzGerald last Friday when he decided to call it off after news broke that FitzGerald had failed to disclose traffic violations while filling out a form for a seat on the Lakewood city council 15 years ago.

The Northeast Ohio Media Group was first to report that FitzGerald had answered "none" to any traffic violations - on the very same day he was due in court to answer to a citation for expired license plates.

Sources say after the article was read to him Kasich asked his campaign staff "who is this guy?" and after a short discussion he decided to pull the plug on any debates.

Kasich's spokeswoman Connie Wehrkamp confirmed to 10TV that Kasich had been in debate prep last Friday. She also revealed that Kasich had been preparing for debates in mock sessions for the past four months.

It's been 30 years in Ohio since voters did not have the ability to watch and listen to a gubernatorial debate.

Democratic strategists were quick to condemn Kasich's decision.

"I worked for a guy who won election to the Senate four times," said Dale Butland from Innovation Ohio. "In one of those elections, he won all 88 Ohio counties, and in another one, he won by a million votes. And he always debated his opponents because he respected the voters too much to do otherwise. John Kasich needs a little more John Glenn in him."

Brian Rothenberg from ProgressOhio said Kasich is not debating because he's concerned about a potential gaffe that could turn voters away.

"Voters deserve debates," said Rothenberg. "You disrespect voters and democracy when you let polls and political strategy take away a voters right to see candidates regardless of party or affiliation stand side by side."

But Republican strategists say it's FitzGerald's gaffes – and a decision to return his campaign money to the state party – that made a debate unlikely.

"Friday's story on FitzGerald's falsification of his Lakewood City Council application was the final straw of a firestorm for a fibbing guy who failed to run his campaign properly," said Republican strategist Terry Casey. "How do you earn or merit a place at the statewide debate table when you have wrecked your campaign clown car multiple times?"

The news about his city council application followed an admission by FitzGerald earlier this summer that he had driven without a permanent Ohio drivers' license for a decade.

He was also forced to hold a press conference after reports surfaced that he had been questioned by police when found with a woman who was not his wife in a parked car at 4:30 in the morning.

Wehrkamp says the Kasich campaign is now considering other alternatives to debates which could include additional editorial board meetings with newspapers and television appearances.

Original Article:

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