

January 15, 1998

Re: IO-98-07

On January 8, 1998, your name appeared in an article in The Capital, as the county executive's "spokesman." You were quoted as saying, in reference to the opponent's campaign, that, "he is 'ready to match his list of accomplishments against ***'. *** predicted the two will 'have a very good race'".

I have no way of knowing if this article quoted you accurately or completely, but in case it did, the Commission has directed me to advise you of possible ethics problems that may arise if you make any public statements on behalf of the county executive's campaign. The Public Ethics Law, §3-104(a) provides that, "An employee may not use the prestige, title, or authority of the employee's office or position for the employee's private gain or the gain of another". If you speak on behalf of the county executive as "spokesman", you are using your official position as the Public Information Officer for Anne Arundel County. It may be impossible to speak publicly for the county executive's campaign even as a private person. It would be difficult at best, for the public to separate your comments as a private person, or as a campaign worker, from your official comments. Therefore, in almost any situation where you speak about the county executive's campaign to the press, you may be violating §3-104 of the Ethics Law.

If you have any questions about the ethics law and its impact on campaign activity, please call me any time.

Sincerely,

Betsy K. Dawson
Executive Director