

# Attack on Ellison recalls 'Red Scare'

By Charles Hallman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

MINNEAPOLIS (NNPA) - With less than a month to go before the November 7 general election, the Fifth District congressional race, notable from the outset for its emphasis on personal attacks over issues, appears to be getting nastier still.

In recent weeks, 100,000 voters received a pamphlet from Republican candidate Alan Fine that accuses DFL candidate Keith Ellison of having ties with the Council for American-Islamic Relations, based in Washington, D.C. The pamphlet states: "Congressional candidate Keith Ellison has accepted thousands of dollars from the leaders of CAIR — a group that Democrats say has deep ties to terrorism."

Also included in Fine's mailing are quotes from Democratic U.S. Senators Charles Schumer of New York and Richard Durbin of Illinois, both of whom in 2003 accused the group of being connected with terrorists. However, the CAIR website offers many more quotes from elected officials, both Republicans and Democrats, praising the organization.

Fine also states that CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad was a guest speaker at an Ellison fundraiser. The alleged Awad-Ellison connection is featured on a website, [www.anti-cair-net.org](http://www.anti-cair-net.org), claiming that CAIR "is a clear and present danger to our Constitution and our way of life."

"I am a mainstream alter-



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native to Keith Ellison, [whose] current and past associations should concern any voter in the Fifth District," wrote Fine in an October 5 press release attached to the mailing.

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When asked if Fine or anyone else connected with

his campaign ever talked to Awad or other CAIR officials, Fine campaign consultant Chris Tiedeman said they had not, but he nonetheless defended the use of the Schumer and Durbin quotes. "We were merely getting it from two Democrat senators," Tiedeman said.

The *Spokesman-Recorder* tried contacting Awad but was told he was unavailable for comment.

CAIR is "a very successful advocacy group," and no evidence has been shown otherwise, said CAIR National Communications Director Ibrahim Hooper, who called Fine "a desperate candidate" who is using anti-Muslim bias "to promote his own political agenda."

The organization began documenting anti-Muslim

incidents following the 1995 attack on the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Since the attacks of 9/11, the group has been very active tracking the number of American Muslim civil rights complaints.

According to a recent CAIR report, 1,972 complaints of anti-Muslim harassment, violence, and discriminatory treatment were processed in 2005, almost 30 percent more than in 2004. Among the sample cases highlighted in the report:

- A Muslim seventh-grader at a private school in New York was beaten by another student (May 23, 2005). A similar attack was made on a 53-year-old Muslim father of four by a gang of teenagers in the Staten Island area. He later died of his injuries.

- A Hillsborough (Fla.) county commissioner ruled that the Muslim holiday of Ramadan should not be recognized on the school calendar; the commissioner reportedly said that those who do not like "American" holidays should find another place to live (November 3, 2005).

- Two Muslim men in Chicago were stopped by lo-

cal police, harassed, and arrested without being given any reason why. The arresting officers allegedly used excessive force after they were handcuffed and called them "Bin Laden" and "terrorists" (June 7, 2005).

During the calendar year 2005, more than one-quarter of discrimination cases reported to CAIR originated in the workplace, such as:

- A 28-year-old single mother who is Muslim and who worked at a donut shop in Wilmington, Del., was told not to report to work wearing her religiously mandated headscarf, or hijab (February 6, 2005).

- A Muslim former employee sued Miller Company for wrongful dismissal after his supervisor asked him if he sympathized with the 9/11 attackers (January 16, 2005).

The CAIR report also said that there have been 153 anti-Muslim hate crime complaints reported in 2005, up from 141 in 2004 (an 8.6 percent increase). Nine states and the District of Columbia accounted for almost 79 percent of all civil rights complaints in 2005, with California (19 percent) and Illinois (13 percent) as the two lead-

*(See Ellison, Page 19)*

## In tighter race, Steele reaffirms individuality

By James Wright  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

BALTIMORE (NNPA) - Now that he is free from the reins of his job, Republican candidate for U.S. Senate from Maryland, former Lt. Governor Michael Steele, is ready to set a course independent of party affiliation and other constraints.

"I am my own person, I have my own views. And over the course of the next 10 months, more than enough Marylanders will hear from me directly about what I think, what I feel, what I believe and why, and judge for themselves whether this is the kind of person they want to go to Washington and argue on behalf of their issues," Steele vowed in an interview with the *AFRO* last December.

Steele has been criticized for his unwillingness to speak out in opposition to decisions made by Gov. Robert Ehrlich, as in the matter of the death penalty. But Steele said he is no longer beholden to Ehrlich and is now ready to stand up for issues that may be anathema to the GOP.

For example, Steele said he supports voting rights for residents of the District of Columbia in the U.S. House and Senate during a recent interview.

"I believe that the District has the right to representation in both houses of Congress," Steele said.

"It is about empowering the people of the District. I think the argument that it adds Democrats to the Congress is meaningless. I think the people of Washington deserve representation."

Steele, born and reared in the Washington, D.C., is taking a position contrary to the national Republican Party. President Bush has said that he does not support D.C. statehood. And leaders of the national GOP have consistently opposed D.C. statehood, with Republican Rep. Dana Rohrabacher from California calling for retrocession, meaning that the city would become part of Maryland and vote with that state. Steele, a resident of Prince George's County in Maryland, said he

supports the concept of the District becoming a state but does not think it's realistic in the near future.

The GOP has been insensitive to issues affecting the Black community and Steele sees it as his duty to educate them, he said in another interview. Steele said he supports affirmative action, a favorite whipping boy of Republicans, although he believes it has been changed into or redefined as a race-based policy.

If elected senator, Steele said he would join the traditionally Democratic Congressional Black Caucus. "I would absolutely join the CBC," he said. "I think the organization needs the input of someone who has a different perspective. There are things I would agree with them on and some things where we would disagree."

"I see it as an important opportunity."

Steele said as a senator he will work with his colleagues, the private sector, and institutions, such as libraries, to help Blacks, particularly young people, to become more educated in terms of using digital technology. "This is something that we have to work on," he said. "When you buy a computer one day, the next day that computer is obsolete."

"Things are changing so fast with the technology these days. I think it is important for young people to have computers at school, in recreation centers and in the home."

Steele said that Black colleges would be a priority.

"I reject the notion that Black colleges are out of style," he said. "We still need these institutions. As lieutenant governor, I made sure that, in terms of Black colleges, that the dollars are identified and delivered."

Steele continued, "Black colleges are doing their jobs so well that non-minorities are looking to them for education purposes. We need to invest in the infrastructure of these institutions but also the programs. Black colleges must have endowed chairs, top scholars and scientists so that the best students will attend them."

James Wright writes for *Afro Newspapers*.

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