

STATEMENT OF TONY MESSENGER, POST-DISPATCH EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

At 9:41 today, while I was speaking to middle school students from Rockwood schools at a career day at Kemp Auto Museum in Chesterfield, state Auditor Tom Schweich left me a voice mail on my cell phone. It was to invite a Post-Dispatch reporter to his house at 2:30 today for a news conference that was to include only the Post-Dispatch and the Associated Press. He asked me to call him back when I could.

I texted him back at 11:14 when I was finished at the career day. I did not get a response.

This is the text of the voicemail: *Tony, this is Tom Schweich calling. You can have a reporter here at my house at 71XX Wydown* at 2:30. I'm willing to speak to the Post-Dispatch and AP only on this matter. I will give a brief prepared statement, which we will videotape, and then I will answer questions from your reporter. This is only for you two and I hope you will not make it known that I am doing this. Give me a call and let me know if you will have somebody here at 2:30. To me this is more of a religion story than a politics story, but it's your choice on who the reporter is. Thanks, bye.*

Over the past couple of days, beginning Tuesday morning, I had shared a couple of off the record phone calls and texts with Mr. Schweich about what he planned to discuss with reporters on Thursday. Because he has died, and because the nature of those discussions may be relevant to his state of mind in his final days, after discussing the ethics of disclosure with my colleagues and boss, I am disclosing the nature of our previously off the record conversations. Mr. Schweich made it clear he intended all of the information he discussed with me to be public eventually. The discussions were not recorded and I didn't take notes.

On Tuesday morning we talked for about half an hour as he shared a situation with me that he said was causing him significant angst and asked for my confidence and advice. Mr. Schweich said that over the past few months he had heard from campaign donors that while political consultant John Hancock was doing work for gubernatorial candidate Catherine Hanaway, he would mention in passing that Mr. Schweich was Jewish. Mr. Schweich, who says he is an Episcopalian, said he believed the mentions of his faith heritage were intended to harm him politically in a gubernatorial primary in which many Republican voters are evangelical Christians. He said his grandfather was Jewish, and that he was very proud of his connection to the Jewish faith. He said his grandfather taught him to never allow any anti-Semitism go unpunished, no matter how slight. Mr. Schweich said he had a donor who would confirm Mr. Hancock's comments on the record. He said he had an email from another donor mentioning the conversations.

He said that he had confronted Mr. Hancock about the comments and that he admitted that on one occasion he mentioned to a donor that he believed Mr. Schweich to be Jewish. Mr. Schweich told me that Mr. Hancock told Trish Vincent, (an employee of Mr. Schweich's) that he mentioned his Jewish background on a number of occasions.

Mr. Schweich told me he had sought to have Sen. Roy Blunt intervene in the matter, but that Mr. Blunt didn't return his phone calls. He said he had lunch with Andy Blunt to discuss it also. Mr. Schweich believed that Mr. Hancock should resign as chairman of the Missouri Republican Party.

He asked me if I thought the information was newsworthy. I told him that yes, I thought it was, if he could verify it. Mr. Schweich said he was so mad about the situation that he intended to hold a news conference on the situation that day in Jefferson City.

I suggested to him, reminding him of our own history when he once held a news conference in his office the day we published an editorial that angered him, that perhaps he might slow down, and let the anger subside. I also suggest he call the Anti-Defamation League in St. Louis and seek counsel.

Mr. Schweich told me he would do that, and decided to hold off on a news conference. But he told me he wouldn't let it go and that he would likely hold a news conference later in the week in St. Louis.

He called again on Wednesday to tell me that he believed there was a chance that Mr. Hancock would resign, and he was holding off on his news conference to see if that was going to happen. He also told me he had talked to somebody in the St. Louis office of the ADL, and they told him that they would likely issue a statement of some sort to the press after his news conference.

His next call was Thursday morning at 9:41 when he left me the voice mail about the planned 2:30 news conference.

***EDITOR'S NOTE:** *This statement was edited to delete the exact address of Schweich's home.*