

Georgia business launches a sudden campaign aimed at the state Capitol

This winter, the state Capitol erupted in a sudden and unexpected fight over a set of “religious liberty” bills that were interpreted as a hostile reaction to the ground that gay marriage has gained through the courts.

Tea party supporters sought protection for the Christian wedding photographer who, out of conscience, refuses to snap pictures of a same-sex couple exchanging vows.

But Georgia’s corporate giants saw something else: Legislation that would open their businesses to boycotts and lawsuits, trapping them in unwanted disputes perhaps generated by their own workers – the UPS driver who won’t deliver a package to a gay bar, or the flight attendant who won’t pour coffee for a honey-mooning lesbian couple.

Led by Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines, business heavyweights quickly announced their opposition to the bills. Which were summarily withdrawn or buried, to howls of frustration from the GOP’s right flank.

“When it came to protecting one of the reasons this nation was formed, [GOP leaders] caved to pressure from corporate lobbyists and the left,” a fuming Julianne Thompson of Atlanta Tea Party Patriots said at the time. She pointed specifically to the “Hobby Lobby” portion of the Affordable Care Act that requires employers to include coverage for contraception in health insurance packages.

Thompson vowed that the “religious liberty” movement would return next year. And Georgia business leaders apparently believed her.

The biggest secret of this election season has been the sudden formation of a statewide, independent campaign to oust some of the most extreme – participants would say anti-business – members of the Legislature. And lend support to those viewed as more friendly. Financial data has only become available in the last few days.

Formed shortly after the Legislature adjourned in March, and still barely a month old, the Georgia Coalition for Job Creation has already raised north of \$350,000.

Massive checks have been written: Nearly \$100,000 from Georgia Chamber of Commerce entities, \$50,000 each from Coca Cola, Delta, Georgia Power, AT&T, and \$25,000 from Newell Rubbermaid, Home Depot and SunTrust.

(More at the link below)

Posted: 9:00 am Saturday, May 17th, 2014

<http://politics.blog.ajc.com/2014/05/17/georgia-business-launches-a-sudden-campaign-aimed-at-the-state-capitol/>