

## Schmidt's name put on article not her writing

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An editorial published recently in newspapers under Rep. Jean Schmidt's name was almost identical to one released by another Ohio congresswoman in July.

Schmidt's challenger in the 2nd Congressional District, Democrat Victoria Wulsin, is calling it "plagiarism."

Schmidt's chief of staff said it was written by the House Republican Caucus, who told all of its members to distribute it to newspapers throughout the country under their own names.

The flap began with a "guest column" on the subject of the prescription drug plan for seniors, under Schmidt's byline, that ran earlier this month in the Community Press and two other publications. In the blogosphere, people began noticing that it was almost identical to a column put out by Rep. Deborah Pryce, R-Columbus, a few months ago.

"When high school students plagiarize, they get an F," a news release from Wulsin said. "When college students plagiarize, they get expelled. And when reporters plagiarize, they lose their job. So why do we hold our congresswoman to a lower standard?"

There were about 600 words in the editorial submitted by Pryce. Fewer than 50 words were added or changed in the first six paragraphs of the editorial published under Schmidt's name. Three full paragraphs were copied with no changes. Schmidt's editorial contained an additional paragraph with her contact information.

Two newspaper editors said Monday that they were led to believe the article was written by Schmidt or her staff.

"I would have assumed that it was her thoughts. The e-mail just said, 'Jean Schmidt's weekly column,'" said Jennifer Cooper, editor of The Pike County News-Watchman, a twice-weekly paper in Waverly, Ohio, which published the editorial Aug. 27.

Susan McHugh, editorial director for the Community Press weekly newspapers in Clermont County, said several papers in the publishing group ran the article last week and were inundated with letters from readers accusing Schmidt of plagiarism.

"I don't think it was plagiarism the way it's being painted by some of our letter writers, but if I write something and my name is on it, those are my words, and I would expect that from elected officials or someone running for office," McHugh said.

Barry Bennett, Schmidt's chief of staff, said the column was one written by the staff of the House Republican Caucus. "They want us to put them out under our member's name," Bennett said. "That's what they are for."

Geoff Embler, spokesman for the House Republican Conference, said the sample editorials are there for all lawmakers to use however they wish. But Embler could not name any other lawmaker who has produced an editorial that was almost identical to the samples provided.

Schmidt routinely sends op-ed columns to newspapers in her district, but Bennett said those are usually written by a staff member.

This time, he said, the staff member was on maternity leave, so the Schmidt campaign decided to use the piece put out by the House Republican Caucus.

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