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Eric Estevez

Friday, September 5, 2014

Candidate for state representative in Hudson/Pelham claimed to live in Mass. in recent paperwork

By TELEGRAPH STAFF

PELHAM – In a business filing with the Massachusetts Secretary of State last year, a candidate for state representative in Pelham, N.H. claimed he lived in Wakefield, Mass.

In election paperwork filed with the New Hampshire Secretary of State, the same candidate, Eric Estevez, said he has lived in Pelham for the past two years and is therefore eligible to run for elected office in the state.

The discrepancy isn't enough to remove him from the ballot from Tuesday's primary election, according to New Hampshire election officials.

Estevez, who is running to represent Pelham and Hudson, listed his residential address as 115 Parker Road in Wakefield, Mass. when he started a consulting firm in the Bay State in early 2013. His business, Estevez and Partners, LTD., has the same address, according to records filed with the Massachusetts secretary of state's office in February 2013.

Under New Hampshire law, candidates for state representative must be domiciled in New Hampshire for at least two years in order to be eligible to run for office. They also must be registered to vote in the community they wish to represent. Candidates must sign a sworn affidavit attesting to their eligibility to be on the ballot.

During an interview last week, Estevez defended his eligibility for office, saying that, while his business is headquartered in Massachusetts, he has lived in Pelham since 2011, when he moved back to a family home after attending graduate school.

"That's actually my business address," he said of the Parker Road property in Wakefield, "so I live in Pelham, and that's where I live. Pelham. That's where I grew up."

Estevez is a "New Hampshire native," and attended public schools in Pelham before leaving the state to attend Barry University in Miami, Florida, where he earned a bachelor's degree in political science, according to his profile on the website democracy.com, a social platform

for political candidates. He then earned a graduate degree from Northeastern University in Massachusetts.

Estevez has campaigned for office in both New Hampshire and Massachusetts in the past. He ran unsuccessfully for a state representative seat in Pelham in 2006 before waging a campaign to represent Wakefield and Melrose, Mass., in the Massachusetts General Court in 2010.

Estevez listed the same Wakefield address of 115 Parker Road as his residency when he ran for office in Massachusetts. He also used the Parker Road address when he registered to vote in Wakefield, according to records available at the Wakefield town clerk's office. Estevez cast ballots in the town between 2008 and 2011, and filled out a census in 2012 indicating he resided in Wakefield, according to Wakefield's town clerk.

Estevez maintains an active voter registration in Wakefield, although it was set to expire sometime after the November election due to inactivity for a period of at least two years, the town clerk said.

During an interview with The Telegraph, Estevez said he lived in Wakefield while studying for his graduate degree and he since moved back to Pelham. He initially said the move came sometime in 2010, then revised the time frame to late 2011. Estevez said he could not recall the exact date.

"I grew up in Pelham and I lived in Massachusetts when I was attending graduate school, but I've lived in Pelham since I graduated from the graduate school program," he said.

Estevez is now one of 15 Republicans vying for party nominations in Hillsborough County District 37 in New Hampshire. He listed a PO Box in Pelham when he registered to be on the ballot. A financial disclosure form indicates that Estevez is employed as a teacher at Endicott College in Beverly, Mass.

Estevez said he currently resides at a family home on Saint Margarets Drive in Pelham. Pelham's town clerk confirmed that Estevez is registered to vote in the town and his name appears on the voter checklist, which is available for public inspection.

New Hampshire's residency requirement for candidates hinges on whether a candidate has established a domicile in the state – a broad term that is distinct from being a New Hampshire resident. For voting purposes, domicile is defined as "that one place where a person, more than any other place, has established a physical presence and manifests an intent to maintain a single continuous presence for domestic, social, and civil purposes relevant to participating in democratic self-government."

New Hampshire Secretary of State Bill Gardner said judging whether someone has met the threshold of being domiciled in the state can be complicated without a full hearing on the issue. For instance, residents who live out of state and attend college in New Hampshire can declare a domicile in New Hampshire for voting purposes.

Once someone establishes a domicile in New Hampshire, leaving the state doesn't necessarily terminate that affiliation, Gardner said.

"You can track down all kinds of different records and you can draw a conclusion from the records, but sometimes, there's something that you missed, and you make a determination that was based on the information that you had, but it was not all the information, so the only way that you can get all the information is from the person who you're looking at," Gardner said.

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