

PA Gubernatorial candidate Scott Wagner repudiates Rev. Hyung Jin Sean Moon

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PA Gubernatorial candidate Scott Wagner

Scott Wagner's campaign is sharply denouncing a controversial pastor who gave the invocation at his meet-and-greet campaign event in Pike County this past weekend.

A spokesman for the Pennsylvania Republican gubernatorial nominee, who was criticized by a Democratic PAC for appearing at a Sunday afternoon event with Newfoundland pastor Hyung Jin Sean Moon, said the pastor did not seek permission from the candidate or the host committee to give the invocation.

"Scott does not support Hyung Jin Sean Moon or his beliefs," spokesman Andrew Romeo said, adding that Mr. Wagner did not want to let Mr. Moon's "unsanctioned appearance" prevent him from speaking at the event.

Though he "politely gave his remarks" to those gathered, Mr. Wagner did not speak with Mr. Moon and even left the event early, the spokesman said, "to display that he does not want to be associated with Mr. Moon in any way."

But the venue that hosted the event, Tommy Gun Warehouse in Greeley, is owned by Mr. Moon's brother, Justin Moon, the CEO of Kahr Firearms Group.

"I was the organizer of the event, and I invited [Hyung Jin Sean Moon] to give the invocation," Justin Moon said in a statement.

The pastor's brother added that the Wagner campaign knew the event was being held at the venue, so "it would be natural to assume" the pastor would attend.

Mr. Moon, the leader of Sanctuary Church in Newfoundland, has been labeled an "anti-LGBT cult leader" by the Southern Poverty Law Center, which monitors hate groups.

In audio of the event recorded by the American Bridge PAC, Mr. Moon can be heard giving the invocation, in which he offers a prayer to "future governor Scott Wagner." Mr. Wagner starts his speech soon after.

The event was hosted by the Pike County Republican Committee, and billed as a meet-and-greet with the candidate at Tommy Gun Warehouse in a post on the committee's Twitter account.

The chair of the county committee, Chris Decker, said neither the committee nor the Wagner campaign knew Mr. Moon would give the invocation, and that it "caught me a bit by surprise." He said the committee reached out to owners of the Tommy Gun Warehouse to host the event because political events had been held there before, but didn't know the owner's brother was a controversial figure.

While the Wagner campaign claimed Mr. Moon didn't seek permission from the party to give the invocation, an unidentified voice in the audio recording can be heard inviting Mr. Moon to "come up here and give his invocation, and get God's blessing for the event." That voice belongs to the pastor's brother and owner of the store, Justin Moon, Mr. Decker said.

Mr. Decker said the Wagner campaign was "clearly caught off guard by it and panicked."

"I honestly didn't understand why at the time," Mr. Decker said, adding that he learned afterward who Mr. Moon was.

The American Bridge PAC, which released the audio, aims to support Democratic candidates by monitoring what Republicans say. In a statement, its spokesman criticized Mr. Wagner for "propping up an extremist cult leader."

"If there was ever any doubt about who Wagner stands with and how wrong his vision is for Pennsylvania, they were erased by this event," American Bridge spokesperson Zach Hudson said. "There is no excuse for Wagner's behavior."

Mr. Wagner is running to unseat Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf in the November elections.

Mr. Wolf's spokeswoman, Beth Melena, criticized Mr. Wagner for appearing alongside the pastor.

"Instead of focusing on making sure our schools are safe and properly funded, Scott Wagner is campaigning with a cult leader who holds AR-15 blessing ceremonies and thinks public schools are indoctrinating children into the 'homosexual agenda,'" Ms. Melena said. "This shows how out of touch he is with Pennsylvania families."

This is not the first time Mr. Moon's name has come up in the Pennsylvania governor's race. Paul Mango, then running for the Republican nomination, was criticized for appearing on Mr. Moon's YouTube show in January.

At the time, Mr. Wagner's campaign accused Mr. Mango of being willing to say anything to become governor -- and in a statement to [The Morning Call](#), Mr. Romeo said Mr. Wagner would be "willing to stand up to folks he disagrees with regardless of political consequences."

