

GOP backer of Feazell resigns post

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The public relations director for the McLennan County Republican Party has resigned to avoid a "conflict of interest" between serving as a party officer and supporting District Attorney Vic Feazell, said Republican Party chairman Craig Reid. Feazell, a Democrat, is the target of several investigations.

Reid said Mike Cloer's longtime friendship with Feazell "transcends party loyalty." Reid said he understands the moral basis behind Cloer's decision and believes Cloer made a "wise choice" since he plans to actively support Feazell.

"He's (Cloe) putting friendship over party loyalty," Reid said. "He understands the ramifications."

According to Reid, Cloer plans to form a bipartisan coalition of local citizens to advocate support for law enforcement agencies, including the district attorney's office.

Efforts by the *Tribune-Herald* to contact Cloer were unsuccessful Thursday.

Feazell's performance in office has been the subject of a series of newscasts by a Dallas television station and he reportedly is being investigated by state and federal law enforcement agencies.

Reid said Cloer submitted his resignation in mid-June, but the announcement was not publicized until his replacement was found. Jack Smith, account executive with Ray Hicks, Inc., a local advertising agency, has been appointed to serve as interim public relations director.

Party officials tried to talk Cloer out of resigning, Reid said. Although Cloer no longer wants to hold office, he has indicated he wants to remain a Republican, said Reid.

Reid expressed concern over Cloer's political loyalty had he chosen to remain a party officer and continue supporting Feazell. Reid said party officials are seeking Republican candidates to challenge Feazell in the next election.

"Mike would be right at the heart of any strategy we would form in defeating Vic," said Reid.

Reid said officials previously had difficulty finding anyone who would consider challenging Feazell. "That has changed dramatically," he said. "We're trying to keep our ear very closely to the ground."

And if unethical behavior is discovered in the

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GOP seeks challenger for Feazell

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district attorney's office, the county Republican Party is obligated to field a candidate, Reid said. "We have a moral obligation to go in there with a broom and make a clean sweep of things."

Had Cloer remained a party officer, the public could infer that Cloer's stance is compatible with the county Republican Party, Reid said.

"His views are not the views, are not the opinions of the Republican Party of McLennan County," he said. "The things Mike is advocating are his alone."

Reid said he still "has some problem" with Cloer openly supporting Feazell while retaining his membership in the Republican Party. He said Cloer's support for Feazell should not interfere with the party "as long as he's doing it as a private citizen."

Cloer's open support for Feazell could threaten his chances if he ever wants to run for office on the Republican ticket, Reid said. "I think this really damages his political credibility in running in the Republican primary," he said.

Smith, who assumed duties as public relations director this week, said he is serving an interim position until he sees how effectively he and the party will work together.