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## THE BUZZ

From the staff of the Tampa Bay Times

### Dem rivals for AG reach consensus on Bondi bashing



Michael Van Sickler, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

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In the Florida Attorney General race, Democrats still must choose between **George Sheldon** and **Perry Thurston** in the Aug. 26 primary.

But nevermind that contest. For now at least, both candidates are focusing on the opponent who awaits -- Attorney General **Pam Bondi**.

On Tuesday, Thurston, who is the outgoing Minority Leader in the FLorida House as a representative from Fort Lauderdale, launched a new website: Bondi's Bungles.

The website mocks Bondi throughout, sporting a tagline: "Yeah, I said that," against a black-and-white photo of Bondi. Highlights include her stances against gay marriage, voting rights for felons, the Affordable Care Act, a proposed ballot initiative to legalize medical marijuana, and a memorable trip to the University of Florida.

The website classifies each one as a "bungle" and will add more in the coming weeks, said **Zachary Meunier**, Thurston's campaign manager.

"We're releasing Bondibungles.com to hold Pam Bondi accountable for every mess she has made in Tallahassee the last four years," Meunier said.

The website encourages visitors to share the "bungles" on Facebook and Twitter as well submit their own nominations.

At times, it gets personal. It calls out Bondi's defense of Florida's gay marriage ban as hypocritical because of her two divorces. It highlights her comments about her dad getting her an internship and juxtaposes that against the tight job market for current college graduates.

"Bet Floridians wished Pam Bondi's dad got them all jobs, too."

That's a clumsy attack line, considering Bondi's dad died last year.

Meanwhile, Sheldon, who served as secretary for the Florida Department of Children and Families under Gov. **Charlie Crist** periodically sends out blast emails to reporters bashing Bondi.

On June 28, he sent out an email that declared she was "on the wrong side of history" because of her intervention on two cases challenging Florida's ban gay marriage.

"No state's ban on gay marriage has been upheld," the email states. "Not one. But Pam Bondi is popping up everywhere to defend Florida's ban."

The email touts Sheldon's record on voting against the state's ban on gay adoption when he was a Tampa state representative in the Florida House in 1977. The email then provides a link to his campaign and requests contributions of \$25.

He and Thurston will need it. Both lag far behind Bondi in campaign contributions. And she doesn't have to worry about an opponent in the primary. Sheldon has raised \$263,000, but already spent all but \$10,000 of that. Thurston has raised \$152,000 and already spent \$100,000.

Bondi? Aside from her own campaign account, which has raised \$1.4 million (and spent only \$75,000), Bondi has two committees raising funds for a combined \$1.7 million (and spent only \$126,000).

So Bondi has yet to start spending money on media buys that the general public will actually see

But for now, she has the luxury to ignore their comments, at least until they settle who will challenge her.

Asked to respond to the new website, Bondi's campaign manager, **Pablo Diaz** issued classic boilerplate tailor-made for an incumbent with large financial advantage:

*"While it's clear that some are already playing politics, Attorney General Bondi is only focused on her job of fighting on behalf of Floridians through her initiatives to make Florida a zero tolerance state on human trafficking; her work to shutdown illegal pill mills and ban synthetic drugs, and her work to provide consumer relief and protection against fraud."*

Note that Diaz's statement doesn't bother to name either of the Democrats vying for her job. But it also wheels away from the issues that Thurston and Sheldon keep raising in hopes to swing moderates -- gay marriage, medical marijuana, Obamacare, and voting rights.



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