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## **Bentivolio Files \$100M Suit Against Rocky**

Republican congressional candidate Kerry BENTIVOLIO filed a \$100 million defamation lawsuit Monday against an 11th District primary opponent, alleging the rival told people his military record is “fraudulent and fake.”

Bentivolio, who hopes to succeed U.S. Rep. David TROTT (R-Birmingham) for the seat he held in 2013 and 2014, alleges Rocky RACZKOWSKI told “multiple third parties” that he didn’t earn his military medals and awards, and lied about those he did earn.

To support his claims, Bentivolio’s court filings include an affidavit from a Republican political activist and a political blogger who claim Raczkowski told them Bentivolio’s military record and service are “a lie” and “made up.”

“Enough is enough!” Bentivolio wrote to supporters in an email sent this morning. “I have been told by more than 20 persons, (many, understandably do not want to get involved), he has said what is described in the lawsuit. The affidavits are a sample of the false and misleading assertions I have endured from this opponent for more than six years when he worked for my former ‘write-in’ opponent and when he worked for our present congressman.”

“It’s a joke and a half,” Raczkowski told MIRS when contacted for comment. “. . . It’s antics by his legal counsel . . . and it’s, again in my opinion, behavior of someone, who obviously should not be running for office.”

Bentivolio and Raczkowski are among six Republicans, six Democrats, and one Libertarian who filed to run to succeed Trott, who decided not to seek a third term.

According to the lawsuit filed Monday in Oakland County Circuit Court, Bentivolio enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1968 and served in Vietnam from 1970 to 1971 as an infantry rifleman. After a break in service, he joined the Army National Guard as a reservist and served for more than 20 years. He retired as a sergeant first class after a neck injury in 2008.

Bentivolio said he received 27 awards and medals, including the Vietnam Campaign Medal with two Bronze Stars, for his service in Vietnam and Iraq.

“They called me crazy,” he wrote. “If passing three bills in Congress, rated 2nd most Transparent, scoring 100% for cutting government waste and receiving an average 93% conservative voting record rating and awarded two constituent awards is crazy I will accept the

title however reluctantly. As a Vietnam veteran that, too, is something we have long endured and are well acquainted.”

Rackowski, who served more than 26 years in the military and retired as a lieutenant colonel in the Army, said he doesn't question Bentivolio's service or the number of awards and medals he received because anyone with the Milford man's service could earn such accolades.

However, Rackowski said he did question Bentivolio's claim that he earned a Silver Star, a comment Bentivolio allegedly made in a June 2014 meeting in which Rackowski was deciding whether to endorse Bentivolio's campaign for Congress.

Following the more than two-hour meeting, Rackowski said, he was unable to verify all of Bentivolio's claims and as a result, he endorsed Trott.

Rackowski confirmed he recorded the meeting, but he declined to share the recording without first consulting with his attorney. He declined to name his attorney.

But, Rackowski did say that it was “thoroughly disgusting” that Bentivolio had a retired command sergeant dressed in his military uniform serve him the lawsuit at a political event on Monday in Novi because it's “against military regulations.”

Bentivolio alleges Rackowski's reaction to being served was to declare “war” on him, but Rackowski denied that allegation.

“To be at a political event in uniform, to have Mr. Bentivolio entice him to come up to me, at a political event in military uniform, is unheard of,” Rackowski said, noting it breaks military protocol and directives.

About the retired command sergeant major who served him, Rackowski said: “I took a picture with him serving me and I said, ‘Thank you,’ and I shook his hand and I told him that, ‘When this is all finished I hope to earn his support’.”

Rackowski, who served enlisted and commissioned in infantry, declined to say if he posed for the photo as a way to successfully argue that Bentivolio violated military protocol. He said he won't accept an “individual that plays fast and loose with the military or the military rules.”

“The photo,” he explained, “was proof that I was served; I accepted service.”

Rackowski suspects Bentivolio's attack is because he is leading in the polls. If elected, Rackowski hopes to work on addressing requirements that “political candidates and campaigns” deal “legitimately with the people they ... hope to represent.”

In addition to Bentivolio and Rackowski, Republicans seeking Trott's seat are: Kristine BONDS, Lena EPSTEIN, Sen. Mike KOWALL, and Rep. Clint KESTO. The Democrats are Suneel GUPTA, Dan HABERMAN, Fayrouz SAAD, Nancy SKINNER, Haley STEVENS, and Rep. Tim GREIMEL. One Libertarian, Leonard SCHWARTZ, also wants the seat.