

Press Release

On Wednesday, October 7, Jeff Wiita who is a Certified Public Accountant and seeking the Republican Party endorsement for State Auditor, met with Secretary of State Mark Ritchie and the Director of Elections to discuss State election laws. State election laws currently do not allow candidates to include their professional credentials after their names on election ballots. Jeff believes that the State Auditor, Attorney General, and County Attorney should be allowed to list their credentials on the election ballot.

State election laws allow candidates to use their legal name or the name that they are known as. That is why James Janos was able to use the name Jesse Ventura when he ran for governor. Jeff believes that the State Auditor, Attorney General, and County Attorney are professional office holders and not policy-making office holders. Professional office holders require professional credentials in order to perform the duties of the office. The State Auditor's Office is an extension of his profession, and his profession requires an active CPA license in order to opine on a set of financial statements. As he sees it, his professional name includes the initials CPA, and he wants his professional name included on the election ballot.

Mark said that the Secretary of State's Office does not give legal opinions and that Jeff would have to go to Attorney General Lori Swanson for a legal opinion on election laws. The Director of Elections cited Minnesota State Statute 204B.35, subdivision 2, which says "The name of a candidate shall not appear on a ballot in any way that gives the candidate an advantage over an opponent, including words descriptive of the candidate's occupation, qualifications, principles, or opinions, except as otherwise provided by law." There are no exceptions provided by law to allow the candidates for State Auditor, Attorney General, and County Attorney to list their qualifications.

Jeff said, "Not having a CPA as State Auditor is like not having an attorney as Attorney General. The general public expects the Attorney General to be an attorney. An Attorney General who is not an attorney would not be able to pass the bar in court and argue a case for the State. That is why we expect the Attorney General to have passed the Bar Exam so that he or she can pass the bar in court and do his or her job. In the world of auditing, auditing standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States require an individual to be a CPA before he or she can opine on a financial report. Past State Auditors have circumvented this problem by hiring a deputy who is a CPA and having the deputy co-sign the audit reports. That means that the elected official needs the permission of the deputy to sign the audit reports, and the deputy is at the 'Beck and Call' of the elected official. To me, that is a serious internal control weakness. As a CPA, I do not need the signature of a deputy in order to issue an audit report."

There has never been a Minnesota State Auditor who has been a Certified Public Accountant. Jeff Wiita, CPA is the only announced candidate seeking the Republican endorsement who is a CPA.

Prepared and paid for by Jeff Wiita, CPA for State Auditor

