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July 16, 2010

Charlie Thurston
President, Comcast Spotlight
1114 Avenue of the Americas, 21st Fl.
New York, NY 10036

Dear Mr. Thurston,

We are very disappointed by Comcast's decision to continue airing the false, misleading, and deceptive advertisement by the Emergency Committee for Israel (ECI) regarding Joe Sestak's record on Israel, and we urge you to reconsider your decision. Ms. Susan Kailis, political specialist for Comcast Spotlight, had indicated over the phone to our campaign that the ad would only air twice more - seeming to imply that it is therefore not worth your taking action - but we have heard now that it will be aired beyond this weekend. We hope Comcast will now do the right thing and prevent Pennsylvanians from being exposed to the false, fear-mongering message of ECI's ad. As stated in our initial complaint, you have a duty "to protect the public from false, misleading or deceptive advertising." For Comcast to stand behind this ad and its ridiculous accusations is highly unfortunate.

I will briefly reiterate the three objections previously raised and bring up a final point: First, Congressman Sestak did not "raise money for an anti-Israel organization the FBI called a 'front group for Hamas.'" In fact, Congressman Sestak criticized members of the organization in question for failing to sufficiently speak out against terrorism and specifically Hamas and Hezbollah. Further, at the time he spoke to the group, it had not been called a "front group for Hamas" by anyone at the FBI, and no charges had ever been brought against it for any alleged connections to terrorism. Congressman Sestak

spoke during a portion of the event that was specifically not for fundraising.

To characterize this as having "raised money" is highly misleading, and is tantamount to suggesting that he raised money for Hamas. This suggestion is highly offensive. By any reasonable standard, this portion of the ad is misleading, even leaving aside the fact that the "front group for Hamas" phrase came from a single FBI Special Agent testifying a single time two years ago, and not from "the FBI" as an organization, as the ad declares.

Second, with regards to the letter on Gaza, we still take strong exception to the false accusation that Congressman Sestak "signed a letter accusing Israel of 'collective punishment' for blockading Hamas in Gaza." Indeed, he did sign a letter which included the phrase "collective punishment," but he did not accuse Israel of employing it, as demonstrated in the letter itself, and described in our initial request to Comcast. In fact, Congressman Sestak supports a blockade in order to protect civilians in Israel. It is disingenuous at best for ECI and others to repeat now, in their defense of the ad, that it "relies on Congressman Sestak's own words," when in actuality it relies on just two words - "collective punishment" - taken completely out of context. This kind of deceptive advertising does a disservice to the people of Pennsylvania and to our entire electoral process.

Finally, the advertisement implies that Congressman Sestak does not believe Israel is an ally to the United States. This is patently false. Congressman Sestak has on countless occasions declared that Israel is a vital ally to the United States, and has also signed multiple bi-partisan letters affirming U.S. support for Israel. The ad's focus on a single letter he did not sign is misleading and deceptive. (He even sent a different letter on the same date as the one mentioned in the ad. It likewise affirmed U.S. support for Israel, but also focused on the need for a two-state solution and the importance of a U.S. role in facilitating negotiations.)

Congressman Sestak's record on Israel is clear. He has quite literally stood with Israel on many occasions, willing to put his life on the line to do so. Joe Sestak is a man who gave 31 years of his life serving our country in uniform, including time as Director of the Navy's anti-terrorism unit and participation in many joint operations with the Israeli military. To imply – as this ad so clearly does – that he is supportive of terrorism goes beyond the realm of legitimate "political debate" and into the realm of character defamation. Joe Sestak obviously believes that Israel is an ally of the United States, and he has signed his name to such a declaration numerous times and proven time and again with his service in the Navy and his voting record in Congress that he stands with Israel, both literally and figuratively. To claim that he supports terrorism is simply outrageous.

We hope you will reconsider your decision and act in the best interests of your viewers, keeping in mind their right to be protected from false, misleading, or deceptive advertising.

Thank you for your consideration.

All the best,

Jared G. Solomon
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