



DIRTY TRICKS 04.16.16 11:15 PM ET



BETSY WOODRUFF

# Ted Cruz's Coup Against Right-Wing Matriarch Phyllis Schlafly

When Phyllis Schlafly endorsed Donald Trump, the wheels started to come off her right-wing empire and allies blame the trouble on Ted Cruz.

One of the right-wing's most prominent empires is reeling—and its president says it's Ted Cruz's fault.

Eagle Forum, a conglomerate of conservative groups which anti-feminist icon Phyllis Schlafly started in 1972, has been rocked by inner turmoil over the last week that has pit family members against each other.

And the group's head, Ed Martin, says Cruz's campaign is using its much-discussed "dirty tricks" to sow conflict in the organization as revenge for Schlafly's endorsement of Donald Trump.

Schlafly, one of conservatives' most prominent and visible leaders, played a key role in blocking the passage of an Equal Rights Amendment, and her group claims 80,000 members.

Martin said the Cruz team set its sights on Eagle Forum when Schlafly endorsed the Texan's opponent. And he said Cruz supporters in the organization leaked private emails to the campaign, and that Cruz's campaign manager, Jeff Roe, confronted him about statements in the leaked emails.

Board member Cathie Adams confirmed to The Daily Beast that she passed on emails to the Cruz campaign that criticized the candidate.

"There was an email that was forwarded to me that was very critical of Ted and Heidi Cruz, and being a strong supporter, of course I did give that to a person in the campaign," she said, adding that Schlafly herself did not write that email.

Adams didn't say who wrote the email or what specifically it said about Cruz.

- 1 **Cruz Coup Against**  
BETSY WOODRUFF
- 2
- 3 **Ohio Town Turns o**  
JUSTIN GLAWE
- 4
- 5 **Who Won the Apri**  
THE DAILY BEAST
- 6 **Who Let Prince Hz**  
TOM SYKES
- 7
- 8 **A GOP Money Mav**  
M.L. NESTEL



“It was a very ugly email,” she said. “And I really want to drop it at that, and I don’t want to be fingering the person who wrote it.”

Martin said the email leak was a massive breach of trust.

“Jeff Roe has a reputation for dirty tricks that he likes to encourage,” Martin said. “A plus B plus C makes you start thinking — it adds up to this.”

“I know Phyllis is convinced that some of these people are motivated by that,” he added.

Since the first Republican nominating contest, the Cruz campaign has faced allegations that its staff uses underhanded and shady tactics to pull off wins. Cruz himself apologized to then-candidate Ben Carson for an email that went to Cruz supporters the day of the Iowa caucuses suggesting Carson was about to pull out of the race. And Trump regularly criticizes Cruz’s personal integrity, leading rally crowds in chants of “Lyin’ Ted! Lyin’ Ted!”

Not everyone blames Cruz, of course. Adams and other board members—allied against Martin—adamantly dispute that 2016 politicking had anything to do with recent tensions. Nevertheless, the rift shows just how tense this election cycle has become for the Schlaflys, one of the conservative movement’s founding families—and just how fast seemingly unassailable organizations can descend into chaos.

### GET THE BEAST IN YOUR INBOX!

SUBSCRIBE

By clicking "Subscribe," you agree to have read the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)

Sources tell The Daily Beast that disputes between Eagle Forum’s board and Martin have simmered for months. They came to a head April 11, when board members for Eagle Forum’s 501(c)(4)—a limited-membership organization that exists to push

Eagle Forum’s message on political issues—called for a previously unplanned meeting via conference call. And it was tense.

On the call, the board passed resolutions to fire Martin as president of that particular organization and to take control of its bank account, which Martin said holds \$4 million. When that happened, Schlafly dissented, registering her support for Martin. Martin’s leadership of a separate Eagle Forum group went unchallenged.

Martin and Schlafly both back Trump, while the board members who moved to can Martin support Cruz.

Martin’s sudden firing threw Eagle Forum into chaos, with the anti-Martin board members and Schlafly herself issuing separate statements with contradictory explanations of what went down. It seems likely that more fights will come as Eagle Forum’s board and leadership struggle for power.

For some, these fights are personal. One board member who voted to depose Martin, Anne Cori, is Schlafly’s daughter.

Cori endorsed Ted Cruz in January. Fellow board members Cathie Adams, Eunie Smith, Rosina Kovar, and Carolyn McLarty have all endorsed the Texas senator as well.

Cori declined to tell The Daily Beast why the board moved to fire Martin.

“That’s a confidential personnel matter,” she said.

Adams, however, was more open about the board’s move.

She hinted that the organization had faced trouble since Martin became its president on Jan. 31, 2015, noting that Bott Radio Network, which consists of 102 Christian talk radio stations, stopped airing the group's radio show several weeks ago.

"I think that that's very indicative of trouble," Adams said.

Martin said the network stopped airing Eagle Forum's program because Schlafly endorsed Trump.

"We did the show on Bott for decades and on the Friday afternoon a few hours after Phyllis endorsed Trump, Bott emailed to say they would no longer carry the show," Martin said. "I spoke to Dick Bott that afternoon and he said it was based on Trump."

Rich Bott, the network's president and CEO, said they didn't pull the plug because of Trump.

"That's not true, and Ed knows it," he said.

"The reason for the decision was after 30 years the program had pretty much come to an end," he added, saying the network had spent months discussing the program's end.

Adams and Cori both insisted that the Trump/Cruz conflict had nothing to do with Eagle Forum's internal struggles.

"That's laughable," Adams said. "The Cruz campaign has nothing to do with any of this. This is all about the board making a decision to dismiss Ed Martin, and he is obviously groping for responses."

Cori said the same thing.

"I think he's trying to spin a conspiracy theory that has no validity," she said.

Martin said the real conspiring was between the Cruz campaign and its backers at Eagle Forum.

"They were private emails that Anne admitted were improperly forwarded to Cathie who thought it wise to give to Cruz," he said, citing what he views as evidence that Cruz backers in the organization were more loyal to the Texan than to Schlafly. "Roe then texted/emailed trying to get Eagle Forum to hold different views. That's now how we do things."

Martin said those Cruz backers also gave the campaign contact information for its state leaders, which the campaign used to try to pressure elderly Eagle Forum members into endorsing Cruz.

He said one member got a call from someone working for Cruz who said, "I heard you're going to endorse Ted Cruz. Eagle Forum's for Ted Cruz. What's your date of birth?"

Adams confirmed that Cruz supporters at Eagle Forum gave members' contact information to the campaign. She added that she didn't think there was anything inappropriate about that.

"Public information was given to the Cruz campaign in order to verify those endorsements or not," she said. "No one was pressured. It was only a verification. That's it."

After contacting Eagle Forum members, the Cruz team rolled out a press release headlined, "CRUZ FOR PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES ENDORSEMENT FROM EAGLE FORUM ACTIVISTS."

Martin said the release angered some at Eagle Forum, as it suggested the organization as a whole had coalesced behind Cruz. And it wasn't his only source of anger with the Cruz Crew.

"It's a very simple question for Jeff Roe: Why does he think it's appropriate to have private emails of Phyllis's and then call me?" Martin said.

Roe did not respond to a voicemail asking about that phone call, and the Cruz campaign did not respond to a request for comment on this story. Schlafly didn't respond to multiple requests for comment from The Daily Beast. But in [an interview with \*World Net Daily\*](#), she indicated that she thinks the group's troubles are political payback.

"This is a complete takeover attempt," she told the site.

## PROMOTED STORIES



**Before You Join A Meal Kit Delivery Service, Read This**

HELLOFRESH



**Sens. Rubio and Kirk: If Iran wants access to the dollar it must clean up...**

FOX NEWS OPINION



**43 Eerie Facts About the Civil War That Will Leave You Speechless**

BREAKVILLE



**How Much Money Do You Really Get from a Reverse Mortgage?**

NEWRETIREMENT BLOG

Recommended by