

IN MY OPINION**Caroline Porter****The Marc Wong affair**

The politics of elections is a game we play in order to recruit good candidates from both political parties and then work to get them elected. As unpleasant as the process seems sometimes, the game is important and necessary in our democracy and we are lucky we have the freedom to choose our elected officials and work for the candidates of our choice.

What has happened to Marc Wong, the Knox County Clerk who has reportedly confessed to the charges of forgery and theft this last week, is a human tragedy and certainly surpasses partisanship. I suppose it might be tempting for Democrats to gloat over his misfortune, but Wong's predicament is life altering. I may be a political activist, but first and foremost, a mother, grandmother, aunt, sister, daughter and wife. The sadness and shock of Marc's family can be imagined and shared by all of us.

I met Marc for the first time last Railroad Days and he seemed pleasant and sincere. We talked about how important it is that individuals, especially young people, be involved in politics, no matter with which political party.

The several times I visited the County Clerk's office on business, he was friendly and helpful. The office, where I worked for several years, appeared to be humming along efficiently and apparently he was well-liked by those who worked with him.

Marc had high aspirations for himself. He was a Knox College graduate and effective legislative aide for State Representative Donald Moffitt, who was the victim of his criminal activity. Wong made clear to many that he wanted to run for higher political office and make

government service his career. That career is ended. One can not run for public office once a convicted felon.

The question is: why did he do it? What would make a seemingly successful, intelligent and nice person steal money from people who trusted him implicitly? What this event tells us is that we often don't know what is going on in people's lives. We assume that well-dressed, well-educated, poised men and women with good jobs have no problems or worries, when in fact, there may be a cog missing somewhere, or a problem of such magnitude that it obliterates good sense and morality.

I would think that dealing with the motive for this crime is of the utmost importance for Marc.

So frankly, I'm concerned about his continuing to work in the county clerk's office. That office not only collects fees for various services, but is the office where income and receipts of all departments are brought for the issuing of receipts for the clerk, treasurer and departments before the funds are physically carried to the treasurer's office. The county clerk's office also takes in large amounts of cash paid for payment of late property taxes by property owners and tax buyers. It's pretty fertile ground for embezzlement, even though there are checks and balances.

Truly, it is a sad day for politics and public service when such a tragic, personal event occurs.

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