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Mulvaney vows not to take money from millionaire

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Mick Mulvaney didn't support Sen. John McCain in the S.C. presidential primary, but he can sure sympathize with what McCain is going through on the campaign trail these days.

Just as national Democrats seek to tie McCain to President Bush, local Democrats are moving aggressively to link Republican Mulvaney with New York City millionaire Howard Rich, a noted proponent of school vouchers.

Mulvaney says he won't take money from Rich in his bid for state Senate -- unlike two years ago when he accepted at least \$7,000 in Rich donations while running for the House.

Still, Democratic candidate Mandy Powers Norrell wants to make Rich a central figure in the race. She told supporters in an e-mail this week that Rich has given money to Mulvaney and others "in an attempt to privatize our education system."

"We cannot allow a big real estate developer living in New York to dictate how we run our schools!" Norrell wrote.

The focus on Rich adds to what has already become a fiercely competitive contest. The two candidates have combined to raise more than \$90,000, setting up the most expensive race in Lancaster County history, officials in both parties say.

It's a matchup between old and new Lancaster. Norrell is a Lancaster city native who lives just off Main Street in the downtown district. Mulvaney resides in suburban-minded Indian Land, just outside Charlotte, on the county's bustling northern end.

Mulvaney hopes to diffuse questions over Rich by going public with a campaign pledge.

"I am not going to take any money from Mr. Rich," said Mulvaney, a real estate developer who supported Mitt Romney in the GOP primary. "I don't know how I can be any more clear than that. I hope that takes this non-issue off the table so we can talk things like education. And I can't imagine that it wouldn't."

Norrell blasted the pledge in an earlier interview, saying

Mulvaney is trying to distance himself from a potential liability. The two are vying to replace Greg Gregory in District 16, which covers the Fort Mill and Indian Land areas.

"If we couldn't trust him two years ago when he said he wouldn't support vouchers, we can't trust him now," she said. "If he was sincere, he would admit to the people of South Carolina he should never have voted for vouchers. He has not done that."

In recent months, Rich's influence has come under scrutiny. Critics say he gives money to S.C. candidates for one reason: To stock the Legislature with lawmakers who share his support for vouchers.

"I call them political terrorists," state Rep. Gene Pinson, R-Greenwood, told The State this year. "They're outside of the state, trying to do a hostile takeover of state government. I like for South Carolinians to run South Carolina."

### **Mulvaney outlines stance**

Last year in the House, Mulvaney voted against an open enrollment plan that required, in part, for children outside school district boundaries to be provided slots in local classrooms. The bill was defeated.

But Mulvaney generally supports school choice, which can provide vouchers and tax credits to families who send their children to private schools.

"I see vouchers as part and parcel of the overall choice package," he said. "You want to send your kid to the local Christian school, the local Montessori or the regular mainline school? Those are three choices that I think are all valid in South Carolina. Or should be."

Norrell, a lawyer, said she is open to school choice, but not if it diverts money from public schools. She denounces the influence of Rich, whose corporations gave at least \$155,000 to about 30 S.C. candidates in 2006, according to the National Institute on Money in State Politics.

Rich has made clear he'll keep making donations to candidates in South Carolina and elsewhere. This time, however, Mulvaney says he won't take them.

<b>Who is Howard Rich?</b>
Howard Rich is a libertarian political activist and millionaire real estate developer in New York City. He founded and is president of U.S. Term Limits and is chairman of Americans for Limited Government. He has financed

ballot initiatives in numerous states on issues including restrictions on regulatory taking and eminent domain, term limits for judges and legislators and state spending limits. He is a proponent of school vouchers.

-- Source: [www.sourcewatch.org](http://www.sourcewatch.org)

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