

Lehigh County feud continues over donations to politicians ** GOP commissioner tweaks county executive for contribution. Cunningham says it's "political grandstanding."

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Lehigh County Republican commissioners have renewed their call for campaign finance legislation after one commissioner disclosed a recent contribution from a vendor up for a \$20 million no-bid contract.

Republican Dean Browning voted Wednesday evening against the five-year contract for the Harrisburg-based PrimeCare Medical to perform medical services at the county prison, saying he believes a contract of that size should go out for bid.

Browning also took the opportunity to tweak County Executive Don Cunningham over a donation from PrimeCare Vice President Theresa Hoffman. Hoffman donated \$5,000 to Cunningham on June 8.

Browning was joined in opposition by Republican Andy Roman.

Reached Thursday, Democrat Cunningham took issue with Browning's remarks, saying he embraced the Republican proposal for reporting of donation by vendors. Cunningham actually proposed a more stringent version of the bill, which has yet to be acted upon. As he has in the past, Cunningham said donations from contractors have nothing to do with awarding of contracts.

"This is political grandstanding by Dean Browning," Cunningham said. "We've had that bill in front of them for more than a month and they haven't done anything with it."

Director of Corrections Ed Sweeney confirmed Wednesday that he had received no direction from Cunningham or anyone in the administration to hire PrimeCare, adding that the company first began working for the county under former Republican County Executive Jane Ervin.

The Republicans first proposal called for any vendor with a contract worth \$50,000 or more to report donations over \$500 made to either the commissioners or the executive.

Cunningham's counterproposal dropped the contract limit to \$10,000 and the donation limit to \$50.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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