

## ***Doing In the Opposition***

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Destroying the opposition rather than just winning the election seems to have become the trend in recent campaigns. Senator John McCain saw this strategy in his losing race for the presidential nomination. Former Senator Max Cleland felt it in his unsuccessful race for re-election. Both war heroes spent time defending their patriotism and their war records against opponents who wrapped themselves in the flag, claimed higher moral values, but let the character assassinations take place.

A repeat of this technique is being used in the presidential campaign with the Swift Boat allegations. With some of the most distinguished military medals one can receive in battle from the U.S. government, Senator John Kerry is having to defend his service in the war in Vietnam. Meanwhile, President Bush who received no medals in the National Guard stands by and lets the character destruction take place.

Most disturbing is seeing this technique creep into local and state politics. Any objective observer would give Governor Mark Warner high marks for his performance in office. Pulling the Commonwealth through a six-billion-dollar deficit and restoring the state's financial stability and integrity, Governor Warner has received high praise throughout the country for his leadership. He has introduced efficiencies in government through the use of technology and has modernized the creaky, old machinery of Virginia government.

Success brings with it detractors, especially for a young leader like Mark Warner who has the potential to run for office again. Already the political attacks are underway. The president of the Republican Club of Greater Reston asked in a recent column, "Is Mark Warner the nation's first 'Benedict Arnold Governor?'" Note the technique of asking a question rather than making a direct assertion. What did the Governor do to earn this distinction? Nothing directly, but with the character assassination political approach you do not need to have done anything.

You see, Virginia Tech marketed its web-based Master's in Information Technology degree program to the S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research in India. Tech, along with other institutions of higher education in Virginia, have excellent reputations for quality, and their programs are in high demand. These programs actually make money for the universities, and this money is used to develop curriculum and improve instruction by giving faculty international experience.

How would this situation make the governor a Benedict Arnold? Well, the students are in India, one of our high tech competitors. No tax dollars are used in the program, and faculty are only involved in India while Virginia Tech is on break. The State Council of Higher Education approved the program because it does nothing to reduce programs or classes available to Virginia students. The largest IT firms in India with thousands of employees throughout the United States, as well as U.S. IT firms, like it for preparing students for jobs that are in high demand throughout the world.

Doing in one's political opponent by character assassination is wrong at all levels of government. The people need to express their disdain for this kind of campaigning by a strong vote at the polls in November.