



## **Saugerties police chief Sinagra raps Clegg over mailer showing DA candidate shaking hands with Kingston activist, ex-con Shabazz**

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KINGSTON, N.Y. — A campaign mailer for David Clegg produced by a political action committee backed by George Soros has rattled the race for Ulster County District Attorney, because it features the candidate shaking hands with a

Kingston activist who is also a convicted felon.

Saugerties Police Chief Joseph Sinagra believes the photo is proof of Clegg's inability to understand the job of a district attorney.

The full-color brochure, which was distributed to some households in the county, features a photo placed front and center, among three others, of Clegg and Kingston activist and ex-con Ishmail Shabazz shaking hands at Clegg's campaign [kickoff event](#) on the steps of the Ulster County Courthouse in January.

Clegg, a Woodstock Democrat who made an unsuccessful bid for Congress last year, and Sinagra both said that the political action committee behind the add is backed by progressive financier and billionaire philanthropist George Soros' New York Justice and Public Safety PAC.

"I have no connection to Soros' organization. No connection," Clegg said by phone Monday. "If they were trying to help me, they didn't. It seems like some sort of a ridiculous accident. A faux pas. A mistake."

Shabazz was released from prison in January after spending two years behind bars for selling weapons to undercover federal agents. He was arrested in June 2015 and charged with six counts of selling weapons to an FBI informant, nine counts of criminal possession of a weapon and one count of endangering the welfare of a child during the alleged sale of one illegal weapon. He could have faced up to 35 years in

state prison if convicted of all 16 counts he faced.

Shabazz pleaded guilty on Oct. 28, 2016, to one count of attempted criminal sale of a weapon, admitting he sold six illegal weapons to undercover federal agents. In pleading guilty, Shabazz told state Supreme Court Justice Richard McNally Jr. that he sold federal agents handguns, an assault rifle and a sawed-off shotgun, all in working condition, from his home on Prospect Street in Midtown Kingston.

Authorities said Shabazz sold weapons to agents of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force on four occasions between May 2014 and May 2015.

Clegg said he has had "absolutely no contact" with Shabazz since he was introduced to him by a minister at the January event. "I shook his hand. He was in a crowd. I don't shun people. I didn't know what he was alleged to have done."

A Saturday press release from Sinagra, president of the Mid-Hudson Association of Chiefs of Police in Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties, accused Clegg of "touting" his association with Shabazz. "Clegg's candidacy should offend every law-abiding citizen in Ulster County," the release stated.

In a phone interview Monday, Sinagra accused Clegg of posing for a photo with Shabazz.

"If you don't have enough common sense to know that will invoke strong feelings in the criminal justice community, then

you shouldn't be running for

district attorney. You have no idea what the office is about," Sinagra said.

In his defense, Clegg said he shook hands "with about 60 people that day."

Clegg said he is restricted by campaign finance law from interfering with PAC activities. "I can't even call them up and say, 'What the heck are you doing here?' ... The police know I have nothing to do with this. They should not be accusing me of doing this. This should not be coming from law enforcement. It's a blatantly political move," Clegg said.

Clegg said the controversy is a distraction from issues that should be front and center in the race for district attorney.

"There are more important things in this race than shaking someone's hand and having a picture taken," He said. "I was a victim of a violent crime. I support victims above all else. The opioid crisis is what we should be talking about. Community justice is what we should be talking about."

Clegg, a Democrat, and Republican Michael J. Kavanagh, the county's chief assistant district attorney, are vying to succeed Ulster County District Attorney Holley Carnright.