

Interview with IPFW Student Body President-Elect Kody Tinnel

Pruitt: Obviously you won tonight congratulations.

Tinnel: Thank You

Pruitt: Let's just get this out of the way in regards to your controversial statement. I think the readers know what it was so there's no need to rehash all the details. But what was it like to be on campus after that. I mean obviously the paper covered it – was there any flak or fallout for you personally?

Tinnel: I didn't get anyone coming up to me directly and talking about it. I got a few facebook messages about people who read it and I responded to those obviously with something similar to what I said earlier. I think I might've gained a few votes from it as bad as that sounds. I did however hear that some of the professors were telling their students not to vote for me because of the comment.

And none of those professors actually came to speak to me which was kind of frustrated me but besides that it's been fine. The Communicator (campus newspaper) unfortunately doesn't get read by as many people as they would like.

Pruitt: So there were actually IPFW professors telling their students not to vote for you?

Tinnel: That is what I heard

Pruitt: During class time?

Tinnel: Those are rumors; I've heard them from a few different people, but yeah.

Pruitt: But nobody made you feel incredibly uncomfortable around campus by coming up to you or protesting you or anything like that?

Tinnel: Not at all. The people that did mention it to me said "oh that was kind of a funny comment uh probably shouldn't put it on facebook". These were all people that all know me and understand kind of the things that I say at certain times.

Pruitt: Ok so we'll move and leave that at that. So why did you decide to run? Obviously this started last year – you had a post on Tinnel Vision, your blog, about running for president but what led you to that decision?

Tinnel: Essentially no one else from student government seemed that they were going to step up to run for the position. I felt that at this time for student government, it's kind of crucial as

we're going through a lot changes, and we need someone with experience and knowledge of what's going on. And since no one stepped up I thought it would be a good thing for me to do to help out.

Pruitt: You were a student senator, why do you think nobody else from student government wanted to step up and run?

Tinnel: I think the current student body president does a lot more than he actually needs to and I think possibly some people are turned off by knowing they would have to fill those shoes. Besides that, I think a lot of it is the people involved here at IPFW are involved with a lot and don't necessarily have time to put in 20 hours per week as student body president or any of the other elected executives so I think that might limit who decides they're going to run.

Pruitt: Well you won in a landslide, anything over 20 points in an election is typically considered a landslide, why do you think people ultimately chose you over your opponent?

Tinnel: Mainly me and my running mate campaigned essentially non-stop every day Monday through Saturday when voting was taking place. Also, I know a lot of people around campus and the bios we had did kind of explain how I clearly have more experience and am more involved on campus – I think that helped as well. Possibly some people just didn't like the other candidates simply because they didn't have as much experience or they weren't really involved to the extent somebody who's running for student body president or any of the officer positions should be.

So to summarize, it was hard work with the campaigning, just good experience and popularity I guess was a smaller portion of it as well.

Pruitt: You mention the campaign, what exactly does an IPFW campaign consist of? There's obviously got to be a little bit maybe before the election and you said you were out during the election – walk us through both of those.

Tinnel: Since campaigning was allowed to start I've had non-stop fliers up in just about all the posting locations. That was the first obvious phase to get my name and information out there.

Pruitt: When was campaigning allowed to start?

Tinnel: It was the week before spring break so technically there was 5 weeks before voting week when campaigning officially started. I also utilized Facebook quite a lot. Social networking sites have helped me out quite a lot, although maybe not the past week or so, but overall they definitely helped with getting the word out. And then during voting week itself we just talked to a lot of people, passed out little information cards about ourselves and made sure we got people to the voting locations.

Pruitt: It's interesting you said that because that's kind of like a traditional get out the vote effort. I mean in this election where you have such a small percentage of students that show up to vote, from my perspective it would seem like getting people to physically walk to the polling place and vote would be the most important aspect. Did you see it that way?

Tinnel: Essentially. The key was to talk to as many people as you could and make them aware that student government was there, we want people to vote and what student government does is important. As a whole, student government is in charge of about a million dollars yearly which is quite a bit and once we tell people that they definitely get out more.

But to answer your main question, yea it really is just talking to people and getting them to take the few minutes to go there and physically vote.

Pruitt: I can't image the voting lines are too long so people shouldn't have been turned off by that.

Tinnel: They weren't very long except for on Tuesday when the bribery was pizza.

Pruitt: If you vote you get a piece of pizza?

Tinnel: Two pieces actually. This is something that frustrates me greatly, each day they have different food items to entice people to vote. Unfortunately a lot of the emphasis from some of the election board members and poll workers is free food and then voting is just kind of a side issue that comes along with it. Unfortunately I think this creates a lot of uninformed voters.

Pruitt: But you have to actually vote to get the free pizza?

Tinnel: Generally. Certain board members were in favor of "you have to vote in order to get the bribe" and others were like "oh we'd just like you to".

Pruitt: As a candidate you probably weren't allowed to hand out pizza?

Tinnel: I was not allowed to be around the polling place campaigning, however I could hover was the term I kind of gave to it. I could hover around the food locations and as long as I wasn't actively campaigning. I could just stand around but I didn't actually help out with the voting or hand out the food.

Pruitt: Interesting. Obviously on your blog you were kind of tied with the Libertarian Party of Allen County and I know you started a Libertarian group here at IPFW I believe.

Tinnel: Yes I restarted the campus Libertarians that were dead for about two years, not dead but inactive rather. But yea I got that going as President and now I've dropped down to the position of treasurer.

Pruitt: Did that connection help you at all and when you talk to people what did they think about you being a Libertarian?

Tinnel: It didn't really come into play at all. I did advertise the fact that I was the former president of a student organization but for lack of space on our candidate bios I didn't really specify what group it was so the Libertarian issue didn't come into play at all.

Pruitt: But did those members help you out in your campaign?

Tinnel: To a very small degree. The members did obviously vote themselves. However, the group as a whole is fairly small and the other people have things to do as well so I didn't really rely on them because there really wasn't much to give in the way of campaign assistance.

Pruitt: Has a Libertarian ever been elected as IPFW student body president?

Tinnel: Not to my knowledge. I think generally most of them are Republicans and Democrats but I would have to check on that to make sure.

Pruitt: It would be interesting to know if a Libertarian has ever been elected as student body president at any university in the state of Indiana. I doubt it happens very often.

Tinnel: Actually on that note, it's kind of funny I've thought about this in a way, essentially I'm one of the highest elected Libertarian officials in Allen County at this time.

Pruitt: I suppose you could say that (laughing). Obviously you had to have some goals or platform for your race. What do you actually want to accomplish in your term?

Tinnel: My main three goals that I've been using as platform points essentially is to get student government to be more of an influence on campus. In a lot of different ways I want to do that but I just want people to recognize that we are here and that we actually do something that reflects on the student body and helps us all out.

Next thing, I want to create a more environmentally friendly, sustainable campus. As something both to promote that we are moving forward as a campus and to potentially save us money in the long run. And my last main goal is to get social Greek organizations back on campus because I think that really helps out with getting the students involved.

Pruitt: What specifically do you think the university can do to promote a green environment here?

Tinnel: What I would like to do is hopefully use some of the student government influence to talk to the administrators and see if we can first off have someone check the entire campus out

and see how green friendly or unfriendly we are and then take the necessary steps to fix those problems.

In addition, as kind of a common sense thing, we really need more recycling on campus, both on the main portion of campus, the academic buildings, and in student housing. We're just greatly lacking those and I think that's a simple solution we can all get behind.

Pruitt: Your 3rd one, the Greek housing, I know as of just a few years ago there were Greek organizations on campus – what do you think drove those away and how do you propose to get them back?

Tinnel: From what I've learned, from the people that have been here longer than myself, social Greek organizations just didn't really work because at the time this was still mostly a drive in campus, which it still is, however there are people living on campus now in the student housing. But mainly it was lack of interest; people just didn't have the time or the motivation to put into the organizations so they just died out.

Pruitt: So how do you think you can get those back?

Tinnel: There are a few different things student government needs to do. There already are people that have an interest in getting these back on campus so the key is to work with these people and make the student government processes and procedures work with them better so they have an easier time advertising and utilizing student government resources for their potential student organizations. In addition we just kind of need to let social Greek organizations around the country know that we are a good campus, we're a growing campus, we have a lot of people coming here, student housing is increasing, so it's a better option than it was a few years ago.

Pruitt: This is kind of a follow-up to a previous question about your Libertarian streak and involvement. How do you see that Libertarian background that you have influence your role as president here. I guess what I'm getting at is how does Libertarianism factor into student government?

Tinnel: That's a fantastic question actually. First off, student senate approves quite a bit of money for different events for student organizations and different things on campus and as president I will have veto power. So if there's something I find fiscally irresponsible, and it doesn't truly benefit the whole, then I can veto that. Obviously I can be overridden by two-thirds of the senate but fiscal responsibility is something I definitely think most people can get behind as part of the Libertarian philosophy. In addition I want to kind of clean up the rules and regulations we have and simplify them so there aren't so many things people have to follow, unnecessary stipulations and things of that nature.

Pruitt: You're a political science major?

Tinnel: Political science and public affairs.

Pruitt: This is your first elected office I take it?

Tinnel: This is my first elected office. I wasn't actually involved much in high school which is why I'm so involved in college – I figure I'm making up for lost time.

Pruitt: You were a student body senator right? You weren't elected to that position?

Tinnel: Student senate is something you kind of volunteer for and as long as you get a petition with 100 names of students then you can be on student senate, and if you maintain a 2.0 GPA. So it's not difficult at all, but still we have a lot of empty seats in student senate.

Pruitt: Do you see this, now this is silly projecting at this point, but do you see this as the first of several public offices you might want to run for? I mean did this point you in the direction of "hey this campaigning thing is kind of fun and I may want to do this in the future"?

Tinnel: Yea I'm hoping this is the first of many to come throughout my life. I'm learning a lot about campaigning and I'm hoping to learn more about holding an elected office and making sure I represent people properly. I do think this will be the first of many I plan on running for. I'm not sure exactly which types of office but definitely some in the future.

Pruitt: Now you're a sophomore?

Tinnel: I'll be a sophomore in the fall so technically I'm a freshman.

Pruitt: What's the length of the term – one year?

Tinnel: Yep one year.

Pruitt: Are there term limits?

Tinnel: As of now there are no term limits in the student government constitution. I figure it could be fun to try and test those and see if people get sick of me if I keep running for office but as of now there are none.

Pruitt: But you plan on running, I mean if you had to say today, do you plan on running again in the future?

Tinnel: Most definitely.

Pruitt: Well I just want to say congratulations and I'm sure it's not going to be easy keeping this place running especially if there's not a lot of people involved and support. It sounds like you've got your work cut out for you so I just want to say good luck.

Tinnel: Thank you.