

Lawmakers Apologize for Describing Jews as 'Penny Pinchers'

South Carolina Republicans James Ulmer and Edwin Merwin have publicly apologized for describing Jews as penny pinchers in a newspaper op-ed piece the lawmakers co-authored.

Ulmer and Merwin, who serve as chairmen in the state's Republican Party, came under fire early this week after the article was published Sunday in the Orangeburg Times & Democrat.

The two men praised Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., for watching over federal dollars the way "Jews who are wealthy" take care of "pennies and dollars."

"There is a saying that the Jews who are wealthy got that way not by watching dollars, but instead by taking care of the pennies and the dollars taking care of themselves," the two men wrote.

"By not using earmarks to fund projects for South Carolina and instead using actual bills, DeMint is watching our nation's pennies and trying to preserve our country's wealth and our economy's viability to give all an opportunity to succeed."

The comments drew harsh criticism from South Carolina Democrat Sen. Joel Lourie, who is Jewish. "The words of these key Republican leaders are disgusting, unconscionable and represent prejudice in its purest form," wrote Lourie in a prepared statement late Monday.

Ulmer responded Monday with an e-mail to the press, in which he apologized for his remarks. "I meant absolutely nothing derogatory by the reference to a great and honorable people. I hope that anyone and all who were offended by my comment will

accept my humble apology.”

Merwin followed suit with a written statement. “I concur fully with the apology offered by my co-author, Jim Ulmer, and likewise beg that any and all who were offended will accept my deep- felt apology.”

Lourie insisted that DeMint and South Carolina Republican Party chairwoman Karen Floyd condemn the op-ed piece and remove Ulmer and Merwin from their positions.

The two lawmakers denounced the comments, but Floyd refused to call for Ulmer’s and Merwin’s resignations.

“It was an offensive and inappropriate comment that Jim and Edwin have rightly apologized for. These kinds of stereotypes are absolutely unacceptable,” Floyd said in a statement. “It goes without saying that some people will continue trying to exploit this mistake for political gain, but as far as we’re concerned, their apology ends the matter.”