

June 10, 2021

Senate President Leroy Garcia
Colorado General Assembly
via email: leroy.garcia.senate@state.co.us

Senate Minority Leader Chris Holbert
Colorado General Assembly
via email: chris.holbert.senate@state.co.us

Re: Ethics Commission

Dear President Garcia and Minority Leader Holbert,

Thank you for notifying me regarding the members you selected for the ethics commission to investigate the complaint I filed regarding Senator Bob Gardner. The fact that the Senate will be considering the issues raised in the complaint is heartening.

The members you have selected to the ethics commission, however, have conflicts of interest that will make the public question their actions. Three of the members you have selected for the ethics commission are on the Senate Judiciary Committee with Gardner. They are too close to Gardner to give a fair and impartial assessment of his actions.

People often criticize police departments for investigating themselves. Such situations are always appropriately criticized. You've decided to make it even more problematic by having Gardner's close co-workers investigate him.

This letter is to respectfully request that you remove Senators Lee, Gonzales, and Cooke from the ethics commission. Lee is not only on Senate Judiciary with Gardner, Lee co-sponsored HB21-1136 with Gardner at the same time both were assigned to a committee to hire an investigator to investigate the judicial branch. Lee has a vested interest in dismissing the complaint against Gardner because Lee has committed some of the same acts as Gardner.

I have testified before Gonzales in hearings, and she is always rude to the point of being unprofessional and immature. She has no desire whatsoever to listen for one second about the need for judicial reform in Colorado. She's simply not interested and always cuts off testimony criticizing the judicial branch.

Surely you understand by now, given your tenures during the General Assembly, that the judicial branch works very closely with the Judiciary Committee members to gain favor with them. Too closely. That's probably why the state court administrator so readily gave Gardner

what Gardner requested. Any member of Senate Judiciary has a conflict of interest that should prevent them from serving on the ethics commission in this instance. The appearances are that the members of Senate Judiciary want the perks of which Gardner to advantage. The members of Senate Judiciary have conflicts of interest that raise appropriate question about their fairness.

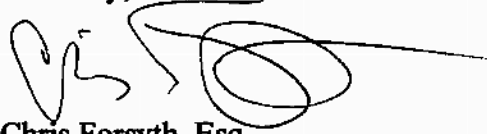
Likewise, Cooke is on Senate Judiciary with Gardner. They sit together and appear very friendly with one another. As far as I can recall, they always vote the same. Appearances are that Cooke is Gardner's closest co-worker in the Senate. It does not inspire confidence in the ethics commission to have Cooke on the commission.

Nether Lundeen nor Winter are on Senate Judiciary. I have no qualms with them. But I respectfully request that you reconsider your appointments of Lee, Gonzales, and Cooke to the ethics commission. I respectfully request that you replace them with Senators who are not on Senate Judiciary.

As I'm sure you're aware, the judicial branch has come under great scrutiny. Gardner's admissions show that if you're well-connected and have some power, you can get a different judge on a case when needed. That's not fair. It's actually outrageous. A judicial system that allows that to happen is not a judicial system worth having. Your actions in appointing these members to the ethics commission simply adds more fuel to the fire. Too often, the entire legislature defers to this insular group of legislators regarding legislation that affects the judicial branch. That's a mistake. That's what has gotten us to this point where we're having investigations and considering ethical complaints.

We need fresh eyes and ears looking at this complaint because what the complaint reflects is a judicial system that needs reform. The members you have selected to the commission have practically done everything in their power to keep reform from happening. They're the problem. Please right the ship and appoint more independent legislators to the ethics commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Forsyth', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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