

OFFICE OF THE STATE INSPECTOR GENERAL

MEMORANDUM OF RECORD

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| FILE NUMBER: 11-066 | DATE OF ACTION: 8/04/2011 |
| OIG STAFF: DIG Wallace | DATE PREPARED: 8/09/2011 |
| SUBJECT: Interviews with Stefan Ritter and Meron Dagnew, Department of Law | |

On August 4, 2011, I conducted two separate interviews with staff at the Department of Law concerning the abuse of power allegation in this case. I interviewed Senior Assistant Attorney General Stefan Ritter and Assistant Attorney General Meron Dagnew, both of whom work closely with the Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission in the performance of their duties.

When asked if they had knowledge concerning the allegation that Governor Deal abused his position and "had his appointee, Millsaps, get rid of Executive Secretary Stacey Kalberman at Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission (State Ethics Commission)," neither Ritter nor Dagnew had information to support the allegation.

During his interview, Ritter explained the AG's office serves as a legal advisor to the Ethics Commission when the agency needs formal legal opinion or representation. He described the Ethics Commission as a repository for campaign finance laws and information pertaining to lobbyist efforts. He pointed out that the agency does not serve as a watchdog over conflicts of interest. When violations regarding filings and/or campaign finance laws arise, the Ethics Commission staff investigates complaints and once they are complete, they write a summary and present it to the five board members of the Ethics Commission. In the event they find reasonable grounds that a violation occurred, the matter is forwarded to the AG's office. Most are resolved by consent order which is facilitated through the AG's office. If there is no consent order, the AG's office refers the matter to an Administrative Law Judge who gives an initial decision which is then provided to the Commission. At that point, the decision can still be appealed by the politician. Ritter stated that at such point in time the Ethics commission ultimately finds probable cause, the case is turned over to the AG, who then takes over. Historically, it has taken a very long time before that has occurred.

Ritter explained that the AG's office provides official and unofficial opinions. However, he said they are not providing as many as they once did because about three years ago, legislation was passed which allowed the Ethics Commission to begin issuing their own official opinions.

When asked if he had reviewed anything relating to the Ethics Commission's ongoing investigation pertaining to Governor Deal, Ritter stated he has never reviewed any files or related subpoenas. To the best of his knowledge, the case has never been sent over to the AG's office by the State Ethics Commission.