

# OFFICE OF THE STATE INSPECTOR GENERAL

## MEMORANDUM OF RECORD

<b>FILE NUMBER:</b> 11-066	<b>DATE OF ACTION:</b> 8/29/2011
<b>OIG STAFF:</b> DIG Wallace	<b>DATE PREPARED:</b> 8/30/2011
<b>SUBJECT:</b> Interviews with Sherylin Streicker	

On August 29, 2011, I interviewed Sherylin Streicker, former Deputy Executive Director to Stacey Kalberman, Executive Director at the Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission (State Ethics Commission) concerning the allegation in this case.

Streicker told OIG she was first hired at the agency in late September 2010, after applying for her position via the agency's website with a depicted salary range into the high 90's. Streicker stated that her initial interview was with Director Kalberman and three other agency staff members. She was hired at 86k per year, a salary she maintains that was 10k less than her predecessor. Streicker stated it was her understanding that she was selected as a result of her professional experience, including investigative training with the FBI as a Presidential Management Fellow and approximately four years of working in the white collar crime unit at the Fulton County District Attorney's Office. As a prosecutor at the DA's Office, she often provided Task Force assistance to the FBI.

Streicker was employed with State Ethics until June 30, 2011, when her position was eliminated.

Streicker told OIG that when she first began working at the agency, there were approximately 100+ campaign finance related complaints backlogged which needed to be investigated. She recalled there were complaints ranging from 2007 through 2010. In an effort to begin clearing the backlog, Streicker stated she began investigating simpler complaints. In December 2010, Streicker presented her findings to the Commission Board Members on any complaint she had completed within her first few months of working, which cleared out a significant portion of the backlog.

Streicker told OIG that within her first week of working at the agency, she learned of the complaint that the agency had received against Governor Deal. However, Streicker stated she did not begin her investigative work into the actual complaint until approximately February 2011, due to the timing of 2010 gubernatorial election and subsequent legislative session.

She recalled that at some point, the FBI came to meet with her and Director Kalberman at the agency. At that time, Kalberman mentioned to them that the agency had an ongoing investigation with regards to a complaint against Governor Deal.

Streicker told OIG that she continued to investigate the allegations as best as she could, given limitations that had been imposed on her. Per Streicker, Kalberman asked her not to conduct

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external inquiries yet due to the ongoing legislative session and the fact that the allegations were politically sensitive. She stated she met with FBI Special Agent Mark Veesy and shared her work on the allegations which pertained to campaign expenditures Governor Deal made, contributions he received, airplane issues, and personal financial disclosures. Streicker told OIG that in her investigation, she began to notice "widespread and systemic irregularities."

Streicker told OIG that throughout the course of her investigation, both she and Kalberman had spoken with Senior Assistant Attorney General Steffan Ritter and Assistant Attorney General Maron Dagnew at the Law Department. She stated that Dagnew actually reviewed the complaint allegations, along with Streicker's investigatory file, and the draft subpoenas for legal sufficiency.

Streicker told OIG that during the course of her investigation, she and Kalberman also conferred with the US Attorney's office, who was investigating two different things involving Governor Deal involving tax records and financial dealings with loans. As a result, Streicker told OIG that the U.S. Attorney's Office "encouraged us to go forward on campaign finance investigation" and indicated they were interested in the findings. Streicker clarified that it was the US Attorney's office, not FBI, who offered the use of a forensic accountant to assist in the State Ethics investigation.

Streicker stated that it was at the Ethics Commission's May 3, 2011, meeting when Kalberman presented the draft subpoenas to Commissioners' Josh Belefante, Kent Alexander, and Kevin Abernathy. Streicker recalled that after Belefante was handed the draft subpoena he had to leave the meeting room for some reason. Streicker stated that after the meeting, she and Kalberman sat down with Abernathy and Alexander in Kalberman's office, to further discuss the subpoenas. Streicker told OIG that Abernathy "turned white and said he didn't want any part of this" while Alexander stated that "I had done a good job, however, he wanted the Feds to go first." Streicker stated that all of the Commissioners were informed that the target date to go forward on the subpoenas was June 15, 2011.

Streicker stated that throughout the course of her investigation, Kalberman had briefed Chairman Patrick Millsaps "who had come across as hesitant about our investigation."

Streicker told OIG, "Next thing you know the budget stuff came out of the blue and they eliminated my position." She stated it was June 9 when she was told she would be losing her job. She recalled having had an unpaid intern working with her only for about one week and having lined up numerous meetings wherein the intern would accompany her. She stated she received an email from Board Member Kevin Abernathy about getting a lunch set up with the intern in next 2 weeks. Reflecting back on this event, Streicker told OIG that she doesn't think Abernathy had any idea that her job was being eliminated or he wouldn't have called like that on June 9 – the day she was told she was losing her job. Streicker told OIG that Board Member Kent

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Alexander claimed he didn't know that she had not been offered other opportunities for employment, or to simply take a pay cut in her existing position at the agency.

In response to the allegation that Governor Deal abused his position and had Millsaps "get rid of Kalberman", Streicker stated that she cannot prove it but she believes actions taken were politically motivated regarding total elimination of her position as well as Kalberman's salary reduction. Streicker stated that she believes these personnel actions resulted from their work relating to the investigation pertaining to Governor Deal. Streicker stated that she believes her position was eliminated because her name was on the draft subpoenas. She recalled being told by Kalberman, via instructions from Millsaps, that she would remain on the payroll until June 30, 2011, but that June 17 could be her last day in the office after learning that her position was being eliminated on June 9.

Streicker told OIG that her interpretation is that subpoenas issued by State Ethics Commission must be signed by at least one but preferably about three Board members, in order to move forward.

Streicker told OIG that she had not been contacted by anyone from the Governor's office or anyone else concerning the position she held or any other opportunity for a state job. However, Kalberman conveyed to Streicker that she had received a call from Todd Markle, Governor Deal's former Executive Counsel. Kalberman informed Streicker that Markle offered assistance to Kalberman but that he made reference to Streicker's background, apparently confusing the two. Streicker also told OIG that she had lunch with Kent Alexander on June 17 and he "was basically concerned about leaks."

Streicker told OIG that she believes things could be improved at the agency going forward. She thinks it would strengthen operations to codify investigative procedures by policy or other mechanism, which would include when subpoenas are issued, how a subpoena is handled, presented, and who is required to sign it officially before issuance. Streicker also feels it would behoove the Board to clarify the role of the Executive Secretary with respect to communications with the Board, investigatory matters, budget matters, etc.