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For Immediate Release

New Questions for Lachelt as Outside Money Pours In as She Faces Recall

Durango, Co. - La Plata County Commissioner Gwen Lachelt faces new ethics questions with the revelation that a group with close ties to California billionaire Tom Steyer is pouring thousands of dollars to help her fight against a recall brought by local La Plata County citizens.

“O the irony!” says Dave Peters. It turns out the queen of outside dark money is actually Commissioner Lachelt herself.

“Her ties to a group with backing of a California billionaire only raises more ethics questions about who she actually represents”

“Even more troubling is commissioner Lachelt has made baseless false accusations against our local group of La Plata County citizens who have dared to raise questions about her relationship with outside organizations”

Background

A large group of La Plata County Colorado citizens have stated Commissioner Gwen Lachelt doesn't represent their interest and has acted unethically. The group has started a grass roots effort to recall her.

Lachelt has made several false claims that Americans For Prosperity and big oil companies are backing the recall effort. The citizens behind the recall do not have any connection to these organizations and have not accepted money from them. AFP has publically stated they have no involvement with the recall (ref. Durango Herald 2-19).

Conversely, Lachelt has big money special interest groups fighting to oppose the recall. Colorado State records show Conservation Colorado (who has financial backing from California billionaire Tom Steyer) is funding an issues committee called “United Against the Recall”. This group has launched several advertising efforts to oppose the recall.

Ethics concerns were raised last year when information surfaced that Lachelt formed an organization called Western Leaders Network, she is a paid employee of WLN and is paid for expenses for her lobbying in Washington D.C. La Plata County has revised their ethics policy as a direct result of Lachelt's actions.

Questions about her objectivity, as a county commissioner, were raised given her connections to several environmental organizations. She formed San Juan Citizens Alliance, Oil & Gas

Accountability Project (now Earthworks) and Western Leaders network. She was a director and/or paid employee for these organizations.

Last June Commissioner Lachelt proposed the county file a friends of the court brief in support of the Martinez Lawsuit. The commissioners voted 2 to 1 against Lachelt's proposal. If successful the suit would have a significant negative impact on the energy industry in Colorado. La Plata County relies heavily on the industry for tax revenue and jobs. When asked about conflicts of interest, Lachelt failed to disclose she was a paid employee of WLN and; one WLN Director is also a Director of Earthworks. Earthworks is named in the lawsuit.

Interestingly, the registered address for WLN and United Against the Recall is the same (1309 East 3rd Avenue, Durango).

It's time for Lachelt to come clean! We demand Lachelt make full disclosure of WLN finances including her salary, moneys spent on Lachelt's travels to Washington D.C. (for lobbying) and funding sources. If not, she should act in the best interest of La Plata County and step down.

Clearly the need for this recall is even more important now.