

SUSAN B. CASTNER

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Representative Greg Smith.
Senator Betsy Johnson, Representative David Gomberg,
Representative Nancy Nathanson

FROM: Sue Castner

DATE: 11 March 2013

RE: **TESTIMONY on funding for the Oregon Advocacy
Commissions Office**

I served on the Oregon Commission for Women from 2008 through 2011, serving as Chair the last two years of my tenure. When considering continued funding of the OACO, I implore the elected representatives to consider the following:

MISSION OF OACO CHANGED WITH NO LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

According to ORS 185.005: "Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office is established to provide administrative support to support..." the Commissions on Hispanic Affairs, Black Affairs, Women and Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs.

Prior to July of 2010, the OACO served in that capacity, that of support staff. Since the hiring of Admin Baker, the OACO mission has been unilaterally amended to read:

Working together for the success of Oregon communities of color and women.

Long-term goals:

- Build community partnerships on legislative advocacy
- Develop governmental partnerships on justice, safety, education and other priority areas
- Increase leadership opportunities with mentoring and internships
- Grow community outreach and awareness using web strategies and databases

This should be disconcerting to the Joint Ways and Means Committee and the General Government Subcommittee because the OACO office is now providing very little "support." A cursory glance at the OACO website will prove this point. The OACO Strategic Plan and Strategic Priorities pages on the website is over 4,300 words long while no such page even exists for individual Commissions.

In addition very few of those goals and responsibilities outlined have been met in the three years since they were detailed. While internships, a goal NEVER mandated by ORS 185.005, have taken place, there are no

measurable results to be gleaned from these time-intensive programs. Aside from a nice line to be added to a student's resume, the ONLY actionable recommendation from these internships is that the OCBA should continue to study the issue.

While transparency and accountability may be proudly listed as goals, the individual advocacy Commissions – the very agencies OACO is supposed to support - don't even have current meeting minutes or newsletters posted on their websites. Some most "current" minutes date back to September 2012. In addition, Admin Baker eliminated the ability for constituents to call in for meeting participation claiming budgetary concerns. A "free conference call" account was set up in 2012 but the OACO refuses to utilize it while wearing the mantle of "transparency." Expenditures are proposed and passed in a vacuum with no ability for the public to weigh in on viability or value of these proposals.

Short-term goals in the Power Point presentation provided you are also NOT mandated nor are they being met. "Increasing customer service to Commissioners, policy makers and partners" is an absurd goal considering the fact that it ignores the very constituencies the Advocacy Commissions are allegedly serving – people of color and women. The OACO is SUPPOSED to help the people of Oregon, not Commissioners and policy makers.

The Status of Oregon Women Report was CONVENIENTLY published four weeks prior to your meeting today on March 11, 2013. Unfortunately, it merely contains regurgitated information from the 2010 US Census, AAUW and the ACS detailing how poorly women may fare, with no appreciable suggestions or goals for improvement.

CURRENT INITIATIVES ARE CERTAINLY NOT CURRENT

HB 2226 concerning name change notification for victims of domestic violence has been on the books for the OCFW since 2010. It is NOT an original idea as it has also been a concern for the Oregon Women's Health & Wellness and the Oregon Law Center. The effort is wastefully duplicative and precious state funding should best be invested elsewhere when other non-profit and similar organizations are already working to correct such challenges.

A gender parity executive order was proposed for the OCFW in January 2011 and has yet to be issued. The theory was that it should be issued in 2012 to honor the centennial suffrage celebration for Oregon women. The centennial suffrage "celebration" went largely ignored by the OCFW save for funds that went to pet projects of the former chair.

RAISING FUNDS FOR STABLE FUNDING

When the Advocacy Commissions were reconstituted in 2007, one mandate from the State Legislature was that the Commissions raise funds for their programs and initiatives so as not to be dependent upon unreliable state funding swings. The Key Performance Measures for 2007-2009 list a goal of \$3,000 annually for each Commission.

In an effort to meet these goals, when Admin Baker was hired, grant writing was a required skill as was fundraising. This mandate has not only been ignored by OACO, it was reversed in the OACO APPR written in July 2010 by Admin Baker. Rewriting one's own job description seems to be commonplace at the OACO.

In 2008, the OACO lost thousands of dollars hosting an alleged fundraiser. The annual Women of Achievement Awards in 2009 and 2010 more than exceeded the goals making the OCFW the ONLY Commission to exceed the stated mandate of the Legislature, raising tens of thousands of dollars over two years. This was an amazing turnaround in tough economic times for ANY charitable/advocacy organization.

Unfortunately, in 2011, the wildly successful Women of Achievement Awards celebration was summarily canceled. Then Vice Chair Jenny Greenleaf actually suggested it be reduced to a press release. It was, in fact, reduced to a photo op in the Governor's office with no public participation and not one penny has been raised to meet the legislative mandate since October 2010.

More troubling is the fact that fully HALF of the funds raised in 2009 and 2010 have been given to organizations that feather the personal and professional nest of the former Chair of the OCFW, Sunny Petit, in the last year. Then Chair Petit presented and promoted these projects TO the OCFW, which she and clearly cross the line of what is considered ethical in state government.

- Thousands of dollars were given to an organization upon which Petit's best friend serves as a board member, Century of Action.
- Thousands of dollars were given to a project that promoted Petit's employer, Portland State University.

Despite the legislative mandate, fundraising is NOT mentioned anywhere in any OACO documents – KPM or APPR. It baffles the mind and begs the question: how can this mandate be ignored?

NO COMMISSION HAS A FULL SLATE OF COMMISSIONERS

This has been the case since late 2010. While communities of color and women may well be underrepresented in the hallowed halls in Salem, I submit that continued funding for the OACO is NOT the way to help these communities. If the Commissions can't even meet the mandate for the number of serving Commissioners, how can a six-figure budget get them there? The vast list of "partnerships" proves that their limited work is duplicative and redundant. The deliverables are nonexistent.

There are SO many other questions that should be asked when considering any exemptions from budget reductions or continued funding of ANY kind in a state so strapped for funding. I have only covered four issues of the plethora wasteful spending that exist in this office. **A year's free rent due to "unexpected charges from DOJ" needs to be examined fully unless the stated goal of transparency is as much of a joke as it appears. What were these charges FOR and what guarantees are there that such "unexpected charges" won't continue?**

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Representative Greg Smith.
Senator Betsy Johnson, Representative David Gomberg, Representative
Nancy Nathanson

FROM: Sue Castner

DATE: 11 March 2013

RE: **Follow up testimony and questions for Tuesday's Work Session
on funding for the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office**

First let me thank you for at least attempting to get answers on issues and irregularities in the OACO as you decide on continued funding this office. As a former OCFW Chair, I watched the hearing online and was consistently frustrated by the lack of substantive answers given and quantifiable results actually achieved by the OACO. It appeared to be another exquisite example of trotting out the usual suspects in an effort to ensure one's salary for another two years with little or no progress made from the last go-around.

Most troublesome:

1. As an Asian American, I am disturbed by Commissioner Ying's racist comments about Asian families and children and the horrific stereotype perpetuated by alleged "cultural" influences. As Commissioner Lorraine Wilson tried to explain, the number of offenses committed by each ethnic group is the same; it's the corrective actions taken in response to these infractions that differ. It has NOTHING to do with Asian children always being driven to success by their doting parents. How does this feeble stereotype apply where Asian gangs are involved? This dismissive attitude does nothing to get to the root of this issue. If the Chair of OCAPIA subscribes to such erroneous stereotypes and is supported in these fallacies by the OACO administrator, how can the Asian/Pacific Islander community hope to change peoples' perceptions and drive policy that works for all despite skin color?
2. Representative Smith was right to question the OACO's use of cell phones but, in all honesty, when there are ONLY 20 INCOMING CALLS PER MONTH, why be concerned? The OACO is essentially serving as a conduit, and not a particularly productive conduit at that, for an extremely limited number of Oregonians. Does such a limited referral service really need to be funded by Oregon taxpayers to the tune of \$450,000?
3. Commissioner Andrea Cano made the specious claim that there are hundreds of emails exchanged almost daily. What do these emails cover? Surely organizing 70 meetings per biennium (Baker's claim) cannot take hundreds of emails on a daily basis especially since the public notice for every

Commission essentially contains the exact same information regardless of Commission: who, what, when and where with no pertinent information as to what will be discussed at any meeting.

4. The Commissions claim they serve an invaluable role, providing critical information to legislators such as you. Do any of you recall receiving regular updates, or ANY updates, from the Commissions besides the last minute publications just in time for budget hearings? While these ARE underserved communities, what services are they providing that their partners are NOT? Would the voter registration efforts NOT have taken place without OCHA? Would the Rose Festival Parade NOT have taken place without a grant from OCFW and were the women of Oregon served by two Commissioners marching in a *parade*? With Baker, Ying and Petit ALL serving on BOLI's Civil Rights Council, isn't this more akin to an exclusive, bureaucratic game of musical chairs than a viable advocacy agency? Should such a duplicative, redundant agency be funded so extravagantly?
5. If, as Baker claims, the OACO coordinates events, please have her name some of those events. If it works with partners, please have her explain what that entails. We already know that fewer than 20 referrals are assigned each month, so that certainly can't take more than a hour or two per month. If the OACO maintains Commission websites, please ask her why none of the Commission websites contain any current information on current legislative priorities in the midst of a busy legislative session? The Tuition Equity Bill/HB 2787 is SURELY the biggest piece of legislation to positively impact the Hispanic community in decades and there is absolutely no mention of it anywhere on ANY websites. Why? With Baker charged with tracking pertinent legislation, why wasn't OCHA at the forefront leading the charge on this groundbreaking piece of legislation under Baker's watchful eye? What is the OACO excuse for dropping the ball on this critical legislation?
6. Senator Steiner Hayward asked the \$600,000 question: what ARE the "unexpected" DOJ charges? Administrator Baker's non-answer can certainly not stand in the face of the current budgetary constraints! Her claim of attorney client privilege is ludicrous. Who here is the attorney and who is the client? What happened that necessitated a YEAR'S FREE RENT? If Baker's actions required attorney client privilege, why are taxpayers footing her legal bills? If it involves the actions of the OACO, shouldn't lawmakers KNOW what egregious actions took place prior to continued funding? Baker claims they do not anticipate future legal charges. Shouldn't the Joint Ways & Means Committee be aware of past indiscretions to make informed decisions about its continued funding? I know what a large percentage of these charges entail, ALL under the "leadership" of Baker and Frank Garcia. The committee deserves answers prior to a vote on funding.
7. The Power Point presentation provided by the gentleman after Baker (forgive me but I did not catch his name) listed General Funds, Other Funds and money that came from the fundraising efforts of the Commissions. This bears repeating: the fundraising mandate, handed down in 2007 and outlined in the OACO KPM for 2007-2009, is being ignored and was written OUT of the APPR by Baker mere months after her hiring. Again, rewriting one's own job description CANNOT be acceptable in State government.

You'll have to forgive me but I have a corporate/business background. Any business unit that over-promises and under-delivers as consistently as the OACO would NOT be allowed to operate in the real world. It is a shameful disservice to the people of Oregon and a sad testament about state government.