

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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League Files Ethics Complaint against Governor Pat McCrory

Raleigh-Today, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) announced the filing of an ethics violation against Governor McCrory. Filed with the North Carolina Ethics Commission, the complaint details actions taken by the Governor and his appointees which appear to violate the law prohibiting acts exerting undue influence and improper use of state agency time and resources.

BREDL organizer Therese Vick, who filed the complaint on Thursday, said she reviewed thousands of pages of documents obtained through public records requests. Asked why the League is asking for an investigation, Vick said, “Among other things, the June 1, 2015 dinner meeting between the Governor, Duke Energy CEO Lynn Good, and the Department of Environmental Quality was not disclosed even though we had made several public records requests.”

At the time, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League had an ongoing lawsuit against the DEQ’s issuance of permits for Duke Energy coal ash landfills in Chatham and Lee Counties. However, the meeting was not divulged during discovery as required in the legal case. Vick said, “What we find most troublesome is that these permits were issued only days after the dinner party, and in record time. “

The ethics complaint points to legal depositions of state staff at the Department of Health and Human Services which indicate that the Governor’s office was apparently attempting to influence the state’s epidemiologists and toxicologists regarding “do not drink” letters sent to residents near Duke Energy coal ash impoundments, particularly those that had elevated levels of hexavalent chromium and vanadium. For example, Dr. Megan Davies, State Epidemiologist with DHHS, testified on May 4, 2016 that Josh Ellis, Communications Director for the Governor expressed concern “...over wording on the Health Risk Evaluation form.” The form was intended to inform well owners about the safety of their drinking water, which DHHS and DEQ had evaluated based on knowledge, expertise and the most up to date information.

State agencies are prohibited from helping political candidates. Vick went back through DEQ press releases during 2015 and compared them to 2016. She found that there were few

mentions of the Administration during 2015, other than the expected announcements of appointments, etc. Vick concluded, “This year, an election year, DEQ has produced a plethora of puff pieces that benefit Governor McCrory. We are asking the Ethics Commission to take a hard look at the activities of the Governor and his appointees.”

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League was founded in 1984. The organization has a thirty-year track record of victories over polluting facilities.

www.bredl.org

Complaint attached to this email

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