

# OH, THAT KIND OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVE

I asked a while back what the TrooperGate investigator, Stephen Branchflower, might have meant when he said a key witness—whom he believes lied to him in an interview—had a "financial incentive" to do so.

It appears that Murlene Wilkes, who handles the state's workers comp claims, was pressured by the governor's office to deny a claim from Trooper Wooten. Yet, when Branchflower asked whether she had been pressured, she said "no." So Branchflower subpoenaed her (and she gave a deposition, on Friday), to find out whether she continued to say "no" under oath.

But it wasn't clear why Branchflower believed that Wilkes had had a financial incentive to lie to him.

Andrew Halcro clears that up for us. Apparently, the state is fighting to keep the workers comp contract in Wilkes' hands—and they're willing to pay her \$300,000 more than they otherwise would have to do so.

Regarding the Harbor Adjustment issue and "open govt" policy. The adjusting contract for the State is currently under dispute- the State is trying to renew Harbor Adjustment's contract for over \$300,000 per year (1.5 million dollars) over the life of the contract, more than the next highest bidder. Harbor bid approx \$1.5 million per year for the contract. the next highest was \$1.2 million per year. Harbor won the bid; why?

*Harbor Adjustments is the company at the center of the controversy surrounding former State Trooper Mike Wooten's injury claim. The company has a contract with the state to process workers compensation claims and has been reported to have been pressured by the governor's office to deny the claim back in the spring of 2007.*

*At first, company owner Murlene Wilkes told special investigator Steve Branchflower that no such pressure occurred. Shortly thereafter, an employee of Harbor Adjustments called Branchflower and ended up giving a sworn deposition that the governor's office did pressure the firm to deny the claim.*

It appears that the state is trying to stick with Murlene Wilkes' company—the witness in question—in spite of the fact her bid for that contract came in \$300,000 higher than the next highest bidder.

\$300,000. I'd say that's a financial incentive alright.

*photo by crazyneighborlady*