

BILL SCHUETTE'S BOGUS EXCUSE FOR HIS BELATED INVESTIGATION INTO FLINT

This morning, Michigan's Attorney General and aspiring gubernatorial candidate Bill Schuette appointed a lawyer who has donated \$10,200 to his own state-wide elections and chunks more to other Republicans (as well as a smaller donation to Jennifer Granholm in 2005) to lead the "state" investigation into Flint (this is, of course, an investigation carried out by two private citizens granted the authority of the state, not the state itself – yet more private contractors who will make money off the screw-ups of Snyder's emergency managers).

Just as interesting as the financial ties Todd Flood has with the Republican party is the excuse Schuette gave for all of a sudden deciding he needed to conduct an investigation just after the story leaked on January 5 that Detroit's US Attorney, Barb McQuade, is investigating. Schuette said he decided to act in the wake of some resignations from staffers from the Department of Environmental Quality.

Initially Schuette had declined to investigate the Flint water crisis, but said that in early January new information including the resignation of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality officials had changed his mind.

This claim suggests some pretty whacky timing. The DEQ employees who had resigned by the time Schuette announced his investigation on January 15 were DEQ Director Dan Wyant and Spokesperson Brad Wurfel (Snyder subsequently announced the suspension of two unnamed DEQ employees on January 22).

But Schuette sure as hell didn't sound like he thought Wyant's resignation merited an investigation on December 29, when he released this statement.

I am saddened to hear of the resignation of Department of Environment Quality Director Dan Wyant. In my 20-plus years of knowing him, Dan has been a hardworking, dedicated public servant. I am committed to working with all parties, including the legislature and Governor, to ensure the public's health and the well being of Michigan residents.

On the contrary, Schuette sounded like it was a terrible thing that those mean poisoned Flint kids brought about a career setback for his buddy.

Moreover, the emails Snyder released make it clear that the "resignations" and "suspensions" of these DEQ fall guys was very closely orchestrated.

The day before the governor's Task Force on Water (directed by a GOP partisan but including the leader of an environmental group and some health academics) formally delivered an interim report to Snyder, December 28, someone sent an advance copy to the governor. (See PDF 269 for the advance copy and discussion that followed, and PDF 265 for the formal conveyance of the report to the governor.) Snyder's Chief of Staff, Jarrod Agen, his legal counsel, James Redford, his Director of Urban Initiatives, Harvey Hollins (who was involved in the Flint issues throughout, and whom Snyder laughably appointed as the "independent" person to oversee the Flint response in December), his privately-paid bully "Transformation Manager" Richard Baird, and his Communications Director Meegan Holland had a conference call to figure out how to respond. Agen's email to Snyder makes it clear that before that call, there had already been a plan to make "structural changes"

at DEQ.

Attached is a letter from the Flint Water Task Force which will be formally sent to you tomorrow. The Task Force then plans to release this letter publicly on Wednesday morning.

You will see the letter is harsh against DEQ.

Rich, Redford, Harvey, Meegan, and myself all just gathered on a conference call to discuss our upcoming actions regarding Flint. While we don't think this letter should change any of our actions, we agreed we may need to accelerate some of the structural changes at DEQ.

Our suggestions:

1) Make structural changes at DEQ as early as tomorrow: The recommendations in this letter suggest profound change at DEQ and openly criticize Director Wyant. If this is the path that the Task Force is on, it is best to make changes at DEQ sooner rather than later. That likely means accepting Dan's resignation. It also means moving up the termination of the 3 DEQ personnel previously planned for Jan 4 to tomorrow.

His notes also make it clear that there was already a plan to terminate 3 other DEQ personnel on January 4 (which presumably would be Wurfel and the two staffers who got suspended on January 22).

There's no indication that Schuette was involved in these discussions (though given that he was already defending Snyder in multiple lawsuits, you would think he was in communication with Redford).

Still, it's quite clear that the "resignation" of DEQ staffers was planned well in advance.

So why wasn't Schuette's investigation planned before it became clear that the US Attorney is also investigating?

At a time when MI is facing a \$1.9 million bill for Schuette's personal tirade against equality and can't pay to fix its roads, Schuette has launched this private investigation that will need a separate appropriation to compete with the pre-existing federal one.

He did not put a timeline or cost estimate on the investigations, though he said he was in discussions with legislative leaders regarding a possible need for additional appropriation to fund the operation.

Schuette's belated interest in seeing if any laws have been broken sure does stink.