

What's Going On Here?

June 15, 2016

Today, in the Assembly Chief Clerk's Office, I paged through hundreds of emails provided by Rep. Scott Krug (R-Nekoosa) in response to an open records request regarding water legislation.

The initial emails had the bill numbers in the email's subject line, a clear statement by the citizen of his/her position in support or opposition, and the staff person's entry reflecting that position by noting after the bill number either "Supports" or "Opposes".

Shortly, I encountered multiple records where there was no statement by the citizen, only the acknowledgement of the email's receipt, the bill number in the subject line ([AB 477](#)), and the designation given by the staff person.

Designation after designation said: "Wants high capacity wells/CAFO's/groundwater reform". After AB 477, the staff person's entry was "None". The vague emails proliferated. I didn't know how to record them. Were they for or against AB 477?

I called Rep. Krug's office. Staffer Dan Posca answered the phone. I told him who I was and what I was doing. I asked, "What does the designation "wants...reform" mean? What internal code were you using here? How did you interpret that phrase?" The following conversation is paraphrased as best I can recall it:

"There's no internal code," he said. "The person could be either for or against the bill."

"But, I assume it mattered to Rep. Krug whether they were for or against AB 477. How did you record "wants...reform"? "We entered it as None. They could be either for or against," he said. "They said they wanted reform."

I asked one more question: "Did you interpret "wants reform" as opposition to or support for AB 477?" "Neither," he said. "Just that they want reform." I thanked him, and hung up.

Rep. Krug had created a designation for citizen correspondence that could not be interpreted as either support or opposition.

I created a new column for "Don't know" and began to count. About a third of the way through, my name jumped off a page. The designation of my email was the same as all the others. According to Dan, I was neither for nor against AB 477; I just wanted reform. Here's my email, sent Feb. 3, 2016 to all Republican legislators.

Subject: SB295/AB389; SB432/AB554

[Note: SB295/AB389 invalidated Special Registration Deputies; SB432/AB554 usurped local control and set the stage for water utility privatization.]

Dear Legislator:

Vote NO on these bills. You swore an oath to represent the people.

The people own their water. They want to continue to do so. Water is a public good. Care of the public good is the responsibility of government. Allowing a corporation to write a bill that makes

it easier for that corporation to buy and then profit from what belongs to the people is not representation. It is betrayal.

You swore an oath to represent the people.

Voting is a public good. Protection of the public good is the responsibility of government. Making registration more difficult by removing the ability of SRDs to reach out to community members and help them register is not representation. It is betrayal.

These bills make a mockery of your oath. They serve corporate profits on the one hand and your political power on the other. They do not serve the people.

You'll receive a lot of comment from citizens regarding these bills. The vast majority will tell you to vote NO. If you vote YES, against the people's express wishes, you will violate your oath of office.

You have done this too many times: GAB, John Doe, campaign finance, gutting public education, voter ID, and on and on. You no longer deserve to call yourself a "Representative".

Sheila Plotkin

I did not mention AB477. But, I opposed to the two bills I did mention. The designation on my email was identical to all the others:

“Wants high-cap/CAFO’s/groundwater reform”

AB 477

None

There were multiple contacts from people whose emails I had seen in other legislators' records. They opposed AB 477 and other current water bills. I knew their names and their positions. Rep. Krug designated them as “wants...reform” with no opinion on AB 477.

I have counted all 286 of the “reform-minded” citizens as opposed to AB 477. Rep. Krug withdrew AB 477 in mid-March.

Why were my email and others given an erroneous designation? Who looks at these records? Who analyzes them, and how can they do so when the designations are wrong? The emails were deliberately designated to obfuscate the writer's intent. Why, and for whose benefit? Why would Rep. Krug instruct his staff to reclassify opposition to his bill as “wants reform”? What's going on here?

Sheila Plotkin

Founder, We, the Irrelevant