



Fired Official: Governor Sarah Palin Did Not Tell the Truth to ABC

Walt Monegan Says He Was Called to Gov.'s Office Over a "Private Family Matter"

By **RHONDA SCHWARTZ** and **JUSTIN ROOD**

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"She's not telling the truth when she told ABC neither she nor her husband pressured me to fire Trooper Wooten," said Walt Monegan, the Alaskan official whose dismissal by Sarah Palin is the focus of a state investigation known as "Troopergate". "And she's not telling the truth to the media about her reasons for firing me."

In an exclusive interview with ABC News.com, former Alaska Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan said he resisted pressure by the First Couple to re-open an old case against a state trooper, who was in a hotly contested divorce and custody battle with the Governor's sister Molly.

Alaskan lawmakers are investigating whether Palin and her husband used the power of the Governor's office to conduct a personal vendetta against their former brother-in-law, whose behavior during the 2005 divorce was described by the Palin family as "threatening."

In a 20/20 interview, Palin told ABC's Charles Gibson she dismissed Monegan for poor job performance and that neither she nor her husband pressured Monegan to fire State Trooper Wooten. "We never did. I never pressured him to hire or fire anybody," Palin said.

But Monegan told ABC News.com he was summoned to a meeting with Todd Palin in December 2006, shortly after Sarah Palin became governor.

"I was called to her Anchorage formal Governor's office to talk with Todd Palin about an issue that was a private family matter," recounted Monegan. Todd became "upset," Monegan recalled, when told the allegations had already been investigated and the case would not be re-opened.

"When Sarah later called to tell me the same thing, I thought to myself, 'I may not be long for this job.'" But, Monegan said, he stood by his position. "I held the public trust. As Chief, I was responsible."

Governor Palin initially agreed to "cooperate fully" with the Alaska state legislative investigation but since being chosen as John McCain's running mate both she and her husband have refused to testify voluntarily. Friday the legislature issued a subpoena for Todd Palin.

Monegan said he tried to persuade the first couple to drop the matter. "As a cop for 35 years I'm pretty familiar with issues that come up in divorce cases," and said his argument to both Todd and Sarah was, "if this was so egregious, why didn't you bring it up sooner? Why did you wait until several years later?"

Monegan, who gave sworn testimony behind closed doors for nearly eight hours last week, said he also

provided the State's investigator with copies of e-mails he received from the Governor in which she referred in disparaging terms to her former brother-in-law.

"This is not a 'he said she said' situation. Others were contacted by Todd and Sarah as well," according to Monegan, who said he was confident the investigation would find adequate documentation to corroborate his testimony.

The former Public Safety Commissioner also strongly defended his job performance in response to Palin's complaints about his work to ABC's Gibson.

"After two years he wasn't meeting the goals I wanted met in that area of public service, there were a lot of things we were lacking and a lot of goals weren't being met." Palin said on 20/20.

"No goals were conveyed to me by the Governor at any time," said Monegan.

"All of the Commissioners who worked for the Governor would say the same. She was preoccupied with her pipeline proposal," Monegan said. "All of us were waiting to hear what goals she would set for our departments."

Monegan said the Governor never sat down to talk with him about public safety priorities. "She met with us perhaps four times," he said, "and half the time the Governor was busy on her Blackberry. In one meeting she took a phone call and left the room, directing us to talk to her aide."

The only goals that were set for his department, said Monegan, "we incorporated through the Department of Public Safety Strategic Plan, which we ran past her, she approved and we posted on our website."

The former Commissioner said under his leadership the department was pursuing several new initiatives, but that efforts were slowed down by union contract negotiations.

Monegan stressed he was not upset and did hold any animosity toward his former boss. "I like the lady," said Monegan. "I bear her no animosity, I admire her intelligence and initiative. I wish I could respect her more for her integrity."

Meanwhile the Governor has requested her own investigation of Monegan's dismissal by the State Personnel Board and Anchorage attorney Thomas V. Von Flein has been retained to represent the First Couple in the state legislature's investigating committee.

When asked how he came to represent the Palins, Von Flein told ABC News he could not reveal who hired him due to attorney client privilege but that "he worked through word of mouth."

Von Flein said he questioned the validity of the legislature's subpoena power and expressed his concerns that the committee's investigation had become "a highly politicized investigation conducted in secret " reminiscent of "the McCarthy era."

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