

September 9, 2019

Dear Governor Brown,

The purpose of this letter is to announce my resignation from my position as Public Records Advocate, effective October 11, 2019.

This was not an easy decision. This has been a wonderful opportunity and, on a personal note, I greatly appreciate the support you gave me during a very difficult time in my life.

I cannot, however, continue to serve in this role as I had hoped, because I do not think that the staff of the Governor's Office and I can reconcile our visions regarding the role of the Public Records Advocate. When I accepted this job, it was with the understanding that the Office of the Public Records Advocate was to operate with a high degree of independence and had a mandate to serve the public interest. That is an understanding that I believe the public, the Legislature, and the Public Records Advisory Council share.

Meetings with the Governor's General Counsel and staff have made it clear, however, that the Governor's staff do not share that view. I have received meaningful pressure from the Governor's General Counsel to represent the Governor's Office's interests on the Public Records Advisory Council, even when those interests conflict with the will of the Council and the mandate of the Office of the Public Records Advocate. I have not only been pressured in this direction but I have been told that I should represent these interests while not telling anyone that I am doing so. I believe these actions constituted an abuse of authority on the part of the General Counsel, and are counter to the transparency and accountability mission that I was hired to advance.¹

While I have always endeavored to work collaboratively with all offices of government, I believe strongly that independence is both essential to the effectiveness of the Office of the Public Records Advocate and enshrined in the law. However, if I am incorrect regarding the legal basis of the Advocate's independence, then the Advocate's responsibility to represent the interests of the Governor's office should be acknowledged before the public and the Council. If the Advocate were to represent the interests of an elected official while allowing the Council and the public to believe that she is acting independently, that would be both unethical and particularly inappropriate for an office that was founded to promote transparency.

I have made multiple attempts to find a workable solution, but at this point I no longer believe these conflicting visions of my role can be reconciled. As such I must, with regret, tender my resignation.

I hold you in great esteem and greatly admire the spirit demonstrated in the creation of the Public Records Advocate. The existence of such an office is an important step in ensuring transparency and accountability in the operation of government. It is my hope that these are just growing pains along that path and that a way is still found to fulfill that original spirit. I wish you much success in that effort.

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/newsroom/pages/NewsDetail.aspx?newsid=2508>

And personally, I remain thankful for being given the opportunity to start this office and participate in this work. It has been a unique and meaningful experience, and at times a real pleasure, and for all these things I am deeply grateful. I am honored to have been allowed to serve the people of Oregon.

Very Respectfully,

Ginger McCall