



Marci McCarthy's Testimony in Favor of SB222 to the Georgia Senate Committee of Ethics | February 23, 2023

Hello, I am Marci McCarthy and am the Chairman of the DeKalb Republican Party.

We need to amend **SB202** and close the **ZuckerBucks Loophole** in sections **O.G.G.A. 21-2-71** and **O.G.G.A. 21-2-212**. Our Election Integrity Task Force has suggested language which has been included in **SB222**. Here is why. In 2021 the General Assembly passed wide-ranging election reform legislation known as the Election Integrity Act of 2021. This law addresses various issues that had arisen in the 2020 elections. One principal issue was to prohibit the funding of county government election operations by private groups and organizations. Appropriately, I am here in front of the Senate Committee on Ethics to tell you that high ranking employees of DeKalb County and its' Democrat Party appointed Chairwoman of the Board of Elections have conspired to intentionally violate the Election Integrity Act of 2021.

At its January 27, 2023 meeting, in a gleeful tone boasted that the DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections announced it had been awarded a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence. As evidence that this is a highly partisan exercise the Republican appointees to the DeKalb BRE had no prior knowledge of the grant.

In fact, **DeKalb County Board Elections Chair Lowman Smith** brazenly stated **"I'm excited about this. It's kind of a nerdy big deal since election offices are not allowed to receive grants directly, the lengthy application process was led by the county's finance department."**

Indeed it was – In May of 2022, Preston Stephens, Deputy Chief Financial Officer for DeKalb County completed the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence application.

In the application, it is asked "Are there ways that your **STATE** elections division could better support local offices with additional resources?"

DeKalb County's CFO, Preston Stephens writes "I suspect so, but not specifically certain, I'd defer this to the VRE Director." Mr. Stephens also asks that they keep his application confidential. But he refers Shauna Dozier, Elections Director of Clayton County and says "Yes - you can share my name with them."

This clearly an attempt to establish a Shadow Secretary of State Office. This is evidence that partisans are attempting a private takeover of our election functions in advance of our 2024 elections.

Alliance's DeKalb County grant is also a clear violation of Article One of the Georgia State Constitution, which guarantees equal protection under the law. It is unconstitutional for DeKalb County to receive \$2 million while

the other 158 counties are prohibited from receiving any direct private monies from third party organizations. This is a re-branded scheme to privatize Georgia's elections is in direct violation of state law. The process of the application and collecting the proceeds of this grant will likely violate other state laws as well. To make this matter worse they have admittedly to have sought other county personnel and election offices in this unlawful scheme.

This is a cancer to Georgia's elections. If we do not clarify the language in this session, this unlawful behavior will metastasize and spread throughout the State. It will undermine the great work that the General Assembly has accomplished to restore FITness – Faith, Integrity and Trust in our elections.

Thank you for your consideration.