

None Dare Call It Spying

By Commissioner Roger Koopman

At our last work session, I was taken to the woodshed by my colleagues on the Public Service Commission. Yup. A good, old-fashioned tongue lashing it was – led by that paragon of professionalism, Randy Pinocci, together with a cheering section of equally incensed commissioners Johnson and Lake. O'Donnell was silent -- perhaps out getting a hotdog during their fine performance.

Okay. I obviously had it coming. From Pinocci's perspective, the extensive hacking of my PSC e-mail account, which led to 39 of my messages – including three involving extremely private family matters – being dumped onto the internet, was entirely my fault. I had been committing the ultimate sin. I was speaking and writing openly about the work of the Public Service Commission, hoping the sunlight of public awareness might have an antiseptic effect on a diseased and dysfunctional PSC.

Oh, by the way. Randy Pinocci, with the help of Chairman Brad Johnson, was one of the hackers, having twice requested and received all of my e-mails through the Department of Administration. My fellow commissioners had one clear goal in mind: secrecy. Had they followed normal protocol and requested the e-mails through the PSC itself, I would have been appropriately notified. But that would have involve more of that pesky sunlight that none of us want! No, this little caper needed to be hidden from view. Commission view. Staff view. My view. And none dare call it spying.

What never occurred to these amateur Dick Tracies is that they could have spared themselves all the trouble and intrigue, and just asked me for them. It may have shocked them to know that I have nothing to hide, and I would have cheerfully passed them all over. But secrecy and intrigue are much more fun.

As if the commissioner-on-commissioner spying wasn't enough, a DOA investigation has revealed that at least one PSC staff person had also gained full access to my e-mail account, and for the past six months or more has been secretly viewing all of my correspondence. This came to light shortly after the 39 e-mails were disseminated to a Kalispell alternative news service, resulting in a data security breach that has the DOA and PSC legal division deeply concerned. Considering the amount of sensitive and confidential information that travels through the PSC e-mail system, a breakdown in security undermines agency trust and devastates our ability to do our job.

The most malicious aspect of the PSC Spygate was the providing of the very personal three e-mails that had nothing to do with my job. Personal communications is permitted on state accounts, albeit not encouraged. If Pinocci, Johnson or the guilty staffer had gone through the accepted procedure of a PSC records request, the privacy and legal reviews aspects of that process would have redacted or removed these personal messages. But that process was circumvented and my privacy intentionally violated. Which of these three were responsible? When asked, denials all around.

Concerning the spying itself, the two caught commissioners are unrepentant. They believe they have done nothing wrong. Really? Then please explain to us, gentlemen, for what purpose this spying was done? What kind of "dirt" were you trying to dig up on me, and how much harm did you wish to inflict? From Pinocci came the kind of answer we've come to expect from this mental and moral giant: "I was trying to help Roger." Gosh. How can I ever thank him?

In fact, Pinocci is so kind and considerate that he says he plans to “release” more of my e-mails in the near future. He’s being very strategic about this you understand, to have maximum impact and do (he thinks) maximum harm. QUESTION: does this sound like the thoughts and actions of a Public Service Commissioner, or of a full-time, 365 days a year, on-the-fight politician, whose job it is to politick, not to serve?

Therein lies the problem with elected commissioners like Pinocci and Chairman Johnson. While running for office, they spout nice-sounding platitudes about protecting the consumer, and they get elected by having the best named ID and the most signs on the interstate. But once on the commission, they remain in permanent campaign mode. It is their obsession. They read nothing. They study nothing. They express no original ideas and show no intellectual curiosity for anything the PSC does.

Just view any archived PSC hearing or meeting and see how much these men contribute. Aside from the occasional stock political speech that reflects no work or understanding, they remain bored, sleepy and silent. What gets their juices flowing is politics, and a perpetual campaigning mentality that divides the world into two camps: their enemies and their friends. Their enemies receive their constant, often sadistic attention. And what the hate most is to be exposed.

Johnson and Pinocci are making a great case for appointed rather than elected commissioners. I look forward to that debate. In the meantime, no amount of threats, retaliations or intimidations will keep this commissioner from speaking the truth to the people we serve. If the other commissions, here’s my simple advice. If you’re up to something that you don’t want to have made public -- don’t do it.

2 PSC commissioners waste time on spying

- ROGER KOOPMAN

At our last work session, I was taken to the woodshed by my colleagues on the Montana Public Service Commission. Yup. A good, old-fashioned tongue-lashing — led by that paragon of professionalism, Randy Pinocci.

OK. I obviously had it coming. From Pinocci’s perspective, the extensive hacking of my PSC email account, which led to 39 of my messages being dumped onto the internet, was entirely my fault. I had committed the ultimate sin. I was speaking and writing openly about the work of the PSC, hoping the sunlight of public awareness might have an antiseptic effect on a diseased and dysfunctional commission.

By the way. Randy Pinocci, with the help of Chairman Brad Johnson, was one of the hackers, having twice requested and received all of my emails through the Department of Administration. These commissioners had a specific goal of keeping this secret from me. Had they followed required protocol and requested the emails through the PSC itself, I would have been appropriately notified. But that would have involved more of that sunlight thing that they don’t like. No, this little caper needed to be hidden from view. Commission view. Staff view. My view. And none dare call it spying.

What never occurred to these amateur Dick Tracys is that they could have spared themselves all the trouble and intrigue, by just asking me for them. It may have shocked them to know that I have nothing to hide, and I would have cheerfully passed them all along. But secrecy and intrigue are much more fun.

As if the commissioner-on-commissioner spying wasn't enough, a DOA investigation has revealed that at least one PSC staff person had also gained full access to my email account, and for the past nine months has been secretly viewing all of my correspondence. This came to light shortly after the 39 emails were handed over to an alternative news service, resulting in a data security breach that has DOA and the PSC legal division deeply concerned. Considering the amount of sensitive and confidential information that travels through the PSC email system, a breakdown in security undermines agency trust and greatly compromises our ability to do our job.

The most malicious aspect of PSC Spygate was the disseminating of three very personal, family-oriented emails that had nothing to do with my job. Personal communications are permitted on state accounts, albeit not encouraged. If Pinocci, Johnson or the guilty staffer had gone through the accepted procedure of a PSC records request, the privacy and legal review aspects of that process would have redacted or removed these extremely personal messages. But that process was circumvented and my privacy was intentionally violated. Which of these three were responsible? When asked, denials all around.

Concerning the spying itself, the two guilty commissioners are unrepentant. They believe they have done nothing wrong. Really? Then please explain to us, gentlemen, for what purpose this spying was done? What kind of "dirt" were you trying to dig up on me? From Pinocci came the disingenuous response so typical of this man: "I was trying to help Roger."

Therein lies the problem with elected commissioners like Pinocci and Chairman Johnson. While running for office, they spout nice-sounding platitudes about protecting the consumer, and they get elected by having better name ID and the most signs on the interstate. But once on the commission, they remain in permanent political campaign mode. They read nothing. They study nothing. They express no original ideas and show no intellectual curiosity for anything the PSC does. Just view any archived PSC hearing or meeting and see how little these men actually contribute.

Roger Koopman is serving his second term on the Montana Public Service Commission, representing District 3 in southwest Montana. He previously served two terms in the Montana House of Representative as a Republican from Bozeman.

(2) comments

[Amy Isenhour](#) Mar 4, 2020 2:08pm

How thoughtful of Roger Koopman to have this posted for the great citizens of Montana. Each commissioner at the PSC is as useless as the other. Roger Koopman stating they should have used internal protocol for an email request is hysterically funny, as the Commission themselves could just block the request. An open records request through DOA is the State of Montana protocol, a process any citizen would have to use to obtain access. Koopman was denied the Ability to request Phillip English (PSC employee) to delete all his email records, as has been done in the past for other open records requests for this Agency. Watching the runaround play out publicly is comical, and points to the obvious that this Commission needs to be relieved of their duties entirely, as none of the Commissioners have the education or background to complete the jobs they have been elected to do.

[Michael Bacon](#) Mar 4, 2020 11:49am

Another example that criminals are in charge in Helena. Voters that support these criminals simply because they represent their conservative politics. The far left has their criminals also. A county attorney that refuses to prosecute criminals. A Department of Corrections that reduces a judge's 10 year sentence to 1 year in rehab for a career criminal. The criminals are running amok in Helena right down to the people that run stop signs multiple times a day.

t was in today's Helena Independent Record and you were explaining your position. I was in total agreement with your statements. What jerks - they need your email?? Disgusting.

Koopman, Roger

Wed 3/4/2020 9:30 AM

Sent Items

To:

Millons <bmillons@yahoo.com>;

Thanks for the note, Mardi! I admit that I often lose track of what shows up where. What editorial?

Cheers,

Roger

Millons <bmillons@yahoo.com>

Wed 3/4/2020 6:42 AM

Great editorial. Wish I could have written it in support of you.

Mardi

