

## 'Ethics' in the Alaska Legislature

Alaska is a strange state when it comes to ethics and integrity. We got a few more examples recently. Nope, I'm not going to talk about the two Democrats who have just quit the state House of Representatives because of the charges brought against them or the way the House Majority handled it. I'm going to look at the "conservatives" in this article.

On Jan. 31, the House voted 31-6 to remove Rep. David Eastman, R-Wasilla, from the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics. No hearing; no due process. A subcommittee of the Ethics Committee brought the charge, and the House committed one of the most shameful acts ever done by that body. No proof was presented and no defense was allowed. Rep. Eastman was permitted only to object and to make a statement on the floor.

Although a few conservative legislators voted to support him in his request for a hearing, the majority voted to remove him from that committee without a hearing. Their behavior was inexcusable because, even in the worst of circumstances, justice demands that due process be followed. It's also blindingly obvious that he couldn't have been guilty. He was accused of revealing confidential information in the spring of last year, yet he wasn't in a position to have any confidential information shared with him until August. It appears that the liberals and moderates in the House were getting back at Rep. Eastman for his conservative stances and votes.

On Feb. 1, a letter was published from the legislative HR director, Skiff Lobaugh, accusing then-Sen. David Wilson, R-Wasilla, of retaliation against a staffer whom the senator had been accused of harassing. The staffer never had filed a complaint.

An investigation found that Sen. Wilson was innocent of that charge. The letter claimed Sen. Wilson retaliated because he spoke against how Speaker of the House Bryce Edgmon, D-Dillingham, was handling the situation and that the speaker should step down. Lobaugh then stated that if Edgmon were to (step down) he'd lose a staffing position, and that might end up being that staffer. So, somehow, the possibility of that event meant that Wilson was retaliating.

Wouldn't that mean that when Edgmon asked then-Rep. Zach Fansler, D-Bethel, to resign for hitting a woman (and he admitted that had happened) that, because his staff would be out of a job, he was harassing Fansler's staff? But there's more: Lobaugh also stated that because Wilson claimed the alleged incident didn't happen, that itself was retaliation. So just proclaiming your innocence is retaliation. Again, another travesty of justice.

Fear of the Ethics Committee has prevented one conservative senator from making a pro-life pledge. He's afraid that the committee will come down on him for pledging his support for the issue of life.

In September, Rep. Tammie Wilson, R-North Pole, was brought up on ethics charges because she had mailed postcards to constituents about air quality. The Ethics Committee accused her of using state resources. As Rep. Wilson pointed out, she didn't. However, she did admit to the mistake of putting the LIO return address on some postcards. But guess what? She wasn't allowed to speak to the committee. Again, no due process.

Half a dozen years back, a very conservative man from Stony River, Alan Dick, was a member of the Legislature. Being an educator, he was put in charge of the Education Committee. While in that position, he held off an incredibly liberal agenda that was undermining education. Rep. Dick was so effective at holding back the Common Core bill that the Speaker of the House, Mike Chenault, R-Kenai, rerouted it to other committees to get it passed. At the end of his term, Rep. Dick was brought up on ethics charges for doing such things as sleeping in his office and other inconsequential items, and then was fined a lot of money.

What you'll find is that a lot of the Alaska Public Offices Commission and ethics charges are brought against true conservatives with the help of those who pretend to be conservative. In the end, it's easy to determine who is whom by the way they vote; that is, when you actually have a vote to see. Otherwise, you have to dig a little to find out what's going on.

True conservatives are the ones who stand on principle, speak truth to power, and work and vote for what is right. In this election year, please truly vet your candidates. Find out whether they're really willing to stand on principle.

