



Legal Ethics and Public Corruption In Arizona

Is it "Sui Generis" or a National Pattern?

PHOENIX, ARIZONA, UNITED STATES, January 4, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Large firms' "captive client" relationships

Over a number of years, two of Arizona's largest law firms have gradually taken over control of the state's two largest public utilities by placing their firm members, former firm members and relatives on their governing boards and executive offices, while at the same time each serving as their law firms. It is also a matter of some irony that while these law firms were taking control of their public utility clients, members of one of these law firms served for many years as the State Bar's Chief Ethics Counsel.

When a law firm controls a public utility's governing board and executive offices, this results in the creation of a "captive client" who is powerless to make independent decisions concerning what law firm should represent them, what legal services they require and, most importantly for the utility's ratepayers, the size of the law firm's legal bills. Not only is this an egregious ethical violation, but there is concern that excessive legal fees paid to these law firms over the many years that these arrangements have existed may have amounted to billions of

dollars. If these practices did not exist, the cost of water and electricity would be considerably less for consumers than they are now. Are these practices limited only to Arizona or are the financial incentives for large law firms to impose their control over our public utilities so great that these practices exist everywhere?

Another unethical scheme that has long existed in Arizona that has gone unchallenged and, may also be ignored in other states, has been the practice of large law firms contributing bundled campaign contributions from firm members, relatives and friends to political candidates who, when elected, control government agencies at the state, county and municipal levels. These contributing law firms are then generously rewarded by successful candidates through the referral of all of their agency's outside legal business to the law firm. Such "pay to play" schemes also have many of the earmarks of a "captive client" relationship between the contributing law firm and the government agency, because the head of the government agency who has received gifts of campaign money is less likely to look out for the interests of taxpaying citizens.

About Jack Levine

Jack Levine has been an active member of the Arizona Bar since 1964. He is a graduate of the New York University School of Law. After graduating he served as a Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He was a member of the State Bar of Arizona's Board of Governors from 2011-2013 and is a past Chair of the State Bar's Sole Practitioner/ Small Firm Section's Committee on Lawyer Discipline.

He is a member of the American Bar Association, the Arizona State Bar Association, the Maricopa County Bar Association, the Arizona Association for Justice and the Arizona Employment Lawyers Association. He is a past Chair of the Trial Practice Section of the State Bar of Arizona, a past

President of the Arizona Trial Lawyers Association and was the founder and initial Director of its Continuing Legal Education program. He has also served as a Mediator and Advisor to the American Arbitration Association on liability insurance claims.

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