

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel & Gov. gretchen Whitmer ties to investigation of Massive Elder Abuse ring

investigative reporter Rachel Hammond exposes massive elder abuse ring in Michigan

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- MICHIGAN ATTORNEY GENERAL [DANA NESSEL](#) AND GOVERNOR GRETCHEN WHITMER TIED TO INVESTIGATION OF MASSIVE [ELDER ABUSE](#) AND EXPLOITATION RING..

NESSEL FIRES THREE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS EXPOSED IN THE STORY.

An August 23 investigation detailing a massive alleged elder abuse and exploitation ring operating out of a [Michigan probate court](#) was published on the same day that Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel fired three public administrators, exposed in the story as allegedly exploiting thousands of vulnerable Americans under their guardianship.

The investigation also implicates four Michigan probate court judges in the scandal, one of whom, it alleges, has campaign ties to Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Attorney General Dana Nessel.

In a first-of-its-kind exploration into the state's probate court system, a team that included award-winning investigative journalist Gretchen Rachel Hammond and forensic accountant Tim Mulholland, CFE, MSAF spent the past 13 months examining the stories behind more than 2,200 Americans under guardianship at the Oakland County Probate Court in the Detroit suburbs.



AG Nessel

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Gretchen Rachel Hammond

High-profile cases such as the ongoing dispute concerning the estate of famed musician Aretha Franklin have been affected.

Franklin's eldest son Clarence is under the guardianship of Michigan attorney Jon Munger who is one of the targets of the probe which uncovered an unsettling number of alleged crimes including abuse, neglect, robbery, and exploitation, often in cases that arguably didn't merit guardianship in the first place.

In as little as a year, so called "incapacitated wards" are stripped of the entirety of their savings and possessions and rendered completely reliant upon social services and benefits such as

Medicaid.

Hammond states that she and her team revealed their findings to Nessel's staff at a March 12, 2019 meeting implicating three of the four public administrators Nessel eventually fired.

On March 25, 2019 Nessel announced the creation of a multi-agency Elder Abuse Task Force. The Task Force presented nine reforms to the guardianship system. Nessel claims the firings were due, in part, to Task Force discoveries.

Hammond says she does not buy it.

"Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel and her staff knew this story was coming ever since our March meeting," she says. "Her firing of the public administrators we discussed has been a long time coming but doesn't have any effect without criminal investigations. They can still take guardianship cases."

In a forensic review of the Oakland County Probate Court, available to the public for the first time in Michigan history, Mulholland also concludes that criminal investigations into the guardians are warranted.

Hammond's investigation found campaign donations from Nessel to Oakland County Probate County Chief Judge Kathleen Ryan. It also revealed hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations to Whitmer by a public relations company owned by Ryan's brother James.

Background:

Every US state still uses form of guardianship. Rooted in Medieval English law, at its best, it is designed to protect citizens who are no longer able to protect themselves by declaring them wards of the state. However, increasing reports of abuse cropping up nationwide, has prompted Congressional calls for reform.

But the level of controversy over how guardianship cases are handled in the Detroit-area Oakland County Probate Court has reached such heights, the story reads more like Orwellian fiction than it does a model of the American experience.

Discoveries include the forced separation of families and isolation of the vulnerable; fraudulent petitions for guardianship by Adult Protective Services investigators; massive over-billing; the forced removal of individuals from their homes and the placement of them in nursing facilities or unlicensed group homes with subhuman living conditions; real estate fraud; and missing assets that number in the millions of dollars.

The investigation met with constant challenges, including threats and harassment by Oakland County Sheriff's officers. A surreal March 12, 2019 four-hour meeting between Hammond's team and Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel's staff led to a new line of inquiry and discoveries of campaign ties between Nessel, Whitmer and Oakland County Probate Court Chief Judge Kathleen Ryan and her family.

Biography



Gretchen Rachel Hammond is an award-winning freelance investigative journalist based out of Chicago. Her work has won or been nominated for four successive Chicago Press Club awards, been recognized by the National Association of Lesbian and Gay Journalists (NLGJA), and covered topics such as criminal justice, abuse at ICE detention facilities, and alleged discrimination on the part of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services leading to the unnecessary separation of children from their parents.

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