

YELLOW SHEET REPORT

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·NEWS NOTES AND GOSSIP·

THE BACKSTORY IS EVEN WEIRDER

Last week's resignation of Rae Chornenky as chair of the Maricopa County GOP was precipitated by a months-long power struggle between the county party and the Trump campaign, former county GOP Executive Director Van DiCarlo told our reporter. Another former top-level party official largely confirmed his account. Chornenky's resignation followed criticism from within her own party that she failed to appear to observe the October logic and accuracy test of voting machines in the county. Chornenky's absence looked suspicious to conservatives convinced that the voting machines helped enable vote fraud, and intense criticism from Townsend and others led up to her abrupt resignation last week ([YS, 11/11](#)) But, according to DiCarlo, who resigned yesterday in protest, Chornenky is not to blame. On the day of the logic and accuracy test, Chornenky had left her law office to observe the test when she got a phone call that Gina Swoboda, the Trump campaign's Arizona director of elections, had arrived and declared herself Chornenky's designee to observe the test without her knowing. Chornenky turned around, only to receive a call from the county informing her that Swoboda had left and instead a representative from the state party named Jack Clark had taken over the duty. DiCarlo said that the county told Chornenky that there was a "big problem," and that she was advised that Swoboda could not observe the test because she's a representative from a campaign, and candidates are not allowed to enter voting facilities after early ballots go out. Megan Gilbertson, a spokeswoman for the Maricopa County Elections Department, told our reporter that the county's policy is not to allow candidates, campaigns or their agents inside the ballot tabulation room, and Swoboda was invited to watch from the public observation area instead. Clark also came to the test, but when the county called Chornenky, she said he wasn't authorized to act as her agent. Steven Slugocki, the Maricopa County Democratic Chair who first pointed out Chornenky's absence on Twitter, said he remembers Swoboda waiting outside the facility and some man from the state party – presumably Clark – coming in and initialing a few of the machines. "He and I even joked about it. He was like, 'guess I'm getting kicked out,'" Slugocki told our reporter. Swoboda did not return an email or phone call, nor did a spokesman for the Trump campaign in Arizona.



HER ORIGINAL RANT MAKES MORE SENSE IN CONTEXT

Chornenky has not returned calls for comment at her office but confirmed parts of the story this week on Twitter, where she wrote that as she was arriving at the County Election Center, she was told that Swoboda had signed in as an observer. "Although I had RSVP'd as the GOP-authorized Observer, AZ law allows only one single observer per party," she wrote ([LINK](#)). "AZ Election Day Operation Director Swoboda knows this and House Elections Committee Chairman Kelly Townsend knows this. To avoid a GOP public conflict in front of the Democrat Secretary of State and county chairman, I did not walk in." This background also shines a light on Chornenky's vitriolic response to Townsend on Twitter last week. "I'll tell you what, I'll resign when you sprout even an ounce of integrity and obtain the intelligence to check your facts before spreading filth about a person whom you don't know on a topic about which you have not the slightest clue," she wrote ([YS, 11/10](#)).

TRUMP'S TEAM USED BULLY TACTICS, YOU SAY?

As DiCarlo tells it – and Chornenky tweets it – the wrestling between Trump campaign representatives and the county party started over who would train poll observers. Before the primary, the county began training the observers – volunteers who go to polling places to watch for irregularities – but found the applicant pool to be thin. “There were about 10,000 one hour time slots that had to be filled,” he said. “Let’s just say we weren’t successful.” Ahead of the November election, DiCarlo and Chornenky got a call from Swoboda, who said the Trump campaign wanted to take over the recruiting, training and deploying poll observers, DiCarlo said. “The problem with that is the authorization to be a poll observer is the exclusive purview of the county party,” he said ([LINK](#)). Chornenky, not sure if she could legally abdicate her responsibilities and not particularly wanting to regardless, refused. The campaign could not abide by this. “They came to her, and with heavy-handed tactics, pressured her into relinquishing her duties,” DiCarlo said. “They said, ‘If you don’t do this, we’re going to lose the election, and if we lose, you’re going to be the person responsible for it.’” After weeks of pressure, DiCarlo, Swoboda and Chornenky entered into an agreement: The Trump campaign could recruit and train observers, but they must provide an updated list of trainees and copies of the training materials – with the opportunity to make additions – to the county GOP. “They didn’t follow through on either one,” DiCarlo said. This, for obvious reasons, was problematic for Chornenky. “There’s about 1,000 ways a polling observer can go to a polling location and do something or say something that can be illegal and get them thrown out,” DiCarlo continued. “The county chairwoman would bear responsibility in that.”



IF SHE RESIGNED, WHO WOULD BE THE SCAPEGOAT?



The Trump campaign also demanded Chornenky pre-sign paperwork that poll observers fill out, and at one point, she felt so uncomfortable with what the Trump campaign was asking her to do, she offered to resign, according to DiCarlo. “What they were demanding of Rae was that she sign one thousand blank authorization forms and turn them over to Gina,” he said. She begrudgingly agreed, but didn’t move fast enough, and the angry calls resumed, along with emails, texts and tweets. Eventually, while Chornenky was out of town, the campaign demanded that she hand over the forms, and told her that an envoy would meet her upon her arrival at Sky Harbor to retrieve them, DiCarlo said. Separately, the Trump campaign asked Chornenky to relinquish access to the live-lookup voter file that all county party chairs and state parties can access. This arrangement made her uncomfortable, as she’s not just a party activist but also an attorney who could be subject to bar complaints. “Because of the agreement you sign with the Maricopa County elections department, there’s a certain amount of liability that attaches to the chairman if and when that information is used improperly or becomes public,” DiCarlo said. “Rae, because of her profession, has added exposure.” As such, she offered to resign and let First Vice Chairman Linda Brickman take over – that way, if something improper were to occur with the voter data, Chornenky’s career wouldn’t be in jeopardy. But Swoboda and the Trump campaign asked that she stay, DiCarlo said.

WITH TALK LIKE THAT, NO WONDER HE RESIGNED

DiCarlo isn't so sure that it even matters that Chornenky wasn't there for the test – he figures that if there was a problem with the logic of the tabulation machines, it could hurt Democrats as well – meaning that Slugocki or the various county or state officials present would likely have said something. However, this didn't stop the waves of criticism. “That one tweet from Kelly Townsend got 5,266 likes,” DiCarlo said. “That was the straw that broke the camel's back. How do you explain yourself to 5,000-plus people who already have the mindset that you were negligent?”

WE WERE STARTING TO GET WORRIED ABOUT DOUG

With pressure mounting from several elected officials to issue a statewide mask mandate, Ducey is set to face the public in his first press conference since the election. It's unclear what the governor's focus will be, but Hoffman yesterday published a statement calling for a statewide mask mandate, among other efforts, saying they “are essential to protecting our healthcare and education professionals and institutions, including our students and families.” She didn't call out Ducey by name, but it's clear she was addressing the governor. Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego took a more direct approach. “I have asked [Ducey] to issue a statewide mask mandate and keep that order in place until we have wide distribution of a vaccine, more effective treatments, or both,” she tweeted and said during her State of the City address today. Ducey has not spoken to Gallego since he allowed cities to issue mask mandates in June and he did not attend a press conference with Hoffman and Dept of Health Services Director Cara Christ last week about schools and coronavirus. Ducey is now the only governor in the country to not give any live public statements to the press in the past two weeks ([LINK](#)).



THREE-DAY WORKWEEK!

Bowers chose Jake Hoffman, whose political consulting firm was kicked off social media for using fake accounts to spread election disinformation, to be second-in-command to Kavanagh on the new House Government and Elections Committee. Hoffman is also personally banned from Twitter for his use of Russian troll farm tactics to push disinformation ([YS, 10/14](#)). Besides that eyebrow-raising pick, the biggest change from Bowers' announcement about Republican committee assignments today is that the House will have far fewer committees – just 13 compared to 19 this year – allowing Bowers to shorten the four-day workweek down to just three days. Thursdays will be solely dedicated to floor action. Gone are the Federal Relations Committee, the Regulatory Affairs Committee, the State and International Affairs Committee, and the Technology Committee. Besides mashing Government and Elections committees together, Bowers had the Military and Veterans Affairs Committee absorb the Public Safety Committee to become the Military Affairs and Public Safety Committee. The Land and Agriculture Committee also added a rural component to become the Land, Agriculture and Rural Affairs. There's also one new committee: Blackman, after a full term of agitating for sentencing reform, will at last get his standing committee on Criminal Justice Reform. The new chairs include Pratt, who will take over for J Allen on the Judiciary Committee; Osborne, who will replace Barto on the Health and Human Services Committee; Bolick, who will chair Ways and Means, replacing Toma, now the House majority leader; and Carroll, who will replace Campbell on Transportation. Nutt will replace Kern on Rules, and replace Shope as head of Ethics. Payne will remain chair of the retooled Military Affairs and Public Safety Committee; Dunn will retain control of the new Land, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee; Cobb and Kavanagh will continue to rule over the powerful Appropriations Committee; Udall will remain chair of the Education Committee alongside freshman Rep. Beverly Pingerelli; and Nutt will remain chair of the Natural Resources, Energy and Water Committee.

WHAT'S BLUE ON TOP AND RED ALL OVER?

Outgoing Arizona Democratic Party chair Felecia Rotellini abruptly ended a call with our reporter today after insisting Democrats had a banner year. “We are a blue state,” she emphatically told our reporter. She pointed to the fact that Arizona now has two Democratic US Senators in Sinema and Mark Kelly, two Democrats on Corp Comm and sent its 11 electoral votes to a Democrat for the first time since 1996. Adding a seat to Corp Comm still does not give Democrats control of the body. Republicans kept the majority in both legislative chambers, retained all Maricopa County seats and picked up the County Recorder’s Office, which complicates the simplistic argument that Arizona is blue. Yet Rotellini argued that nothing went wrong for Democrats in the election. “We killed it in early voting. That’s why Biden had a 10 percent advantage on the night of the election,” she said. Biden still only won by three-tenths of a percent. She said if people want to blame her for not winning more seats further down the ballot, then that’s their business. “Politics is a blood sport and if folks have to find somebody to blame for something, then that is what I signed up for as chair, but I can tell you that we will continue to work very hard to flip more seats,” she said. The state party will have to do that without Rotellini in charge as she’s already announced she won’t run again ([YS, 11/16](#)). Rotellini then ended the call with our reporter after being asked if the Biden or Kelly campaigns could have used their national resources or endorsements to help down ballot candidates. “I really don’t have a comment on that. I need to get off the phone. I work for a living and I have to take a call,” she said.



IT'S REALLY BRINGING OUT THE BEST PEOPLE



Former lawmaker Barbara Blewster joined the chorus of Republicans calling on legislators to start a special session to conduct “an immediate recount” of the 2020 general election – a prospect that’s highly unlikely. The former lawmaker, who has a penchant for conspiracies and racist rhetoric, is a lifelong member of the John Birch Society. She sent a letter to House and Senate lawmakers today calling on lawmakers to immediately begin a special session, though, of course, a special session must be called by Ducey or by two-thirds of each chamber, meaning it would need Democratic support. She attached to her email an interview from *Fox News*’ Lou Dobbs with Sidney Powell, a right-wing attorney who represented former National Security Adviser Mike Flynn during the Russia probe. Powell “exposes the altered elections program of the Dominion Voting Systems and indicates corruption of state governors and other state officials similar to Joseph Biden in the Burisma-Ukraine case,” Blewster wrote. Calls for audits and recounts have become commonplace among conservatives who have bought into (or propagated) baseless claims of election fraud centering on the use of Dominion Voting Systems, a company that several states contracted with for voting machines. House leadership has not signaled any interest in a special session on this subject. Blewster, who represented the Dewey area in the early 2000s, had a record of racist, deeply homophobic and anti-Semitic remarks while at the Legislature, to the point that her name still comes up as one of the most controversial lawmakers to ever serve. Among the most frequently repeated stories of her time at the Capitol is when she told then-Republican lawmaker Barbara Leff, who objected to holding a special session over Passover, that she was surprised to learn Leff was Jewish “because you don’t have a big hooked nose and you don’t act like one” ([LINK](#)).

·PRESS RELEASES AND NEWS CLIPS·

Speaker Bowers Announces House Committees and Republican Member Assignments

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – House Speaker Rusty Bowers today announced committees, schedules, and Republican member assignments for the 55th Legislature 1st Regular Session.

Democratic Leader-elect Reginald Bolding is expected to announce Democratic member assignments in the near future.

MONDAY PM

Health & Human Services

Rep. Joanne Osborne (Chair)
Rep. Regina Cobb (Vice Chair)
Rep. Joseph Chaplik
Rep. Jacqueline Parker
Rep. Justin Wilmeth

Land, Agriculture & Rural Affairs

Rep. Tim Dunn (Chair)
Rep. Joel John (Vice Chair)
Rep. Brenda Barton
Rep. David Cook
Rep. Gail Griffin
Rep. Frank Pratt

Military Affairs & Public Safety

Rep. Kevin Payne (Chair)
Rep. Quang Nguyen (Vice Chair)
Rep. Walt Blackman
Rep. Judy Burges
Rep. John Fillmore
Rep. Mark Finchem
Rep. John Kavanagh
Rep. Bret Roberts

Rules

Rep. Becky Nutt (Chair)
Rep. Travis Grantham (Vice Chair)
Rep. Leo Biasiucci
Rep. Rusty Bowers
Rep. Ben Toma

TUESDAY PM

Commerce

Rep. Jeff Weninger (Chair)
Rep. Steve Kaiser (Vice Chair)
Rep. Joseph Chaplik
Rep. David Cook
Rep. Becky Nutt
Rep. Justin Wilmeth

Education

Rep. Michelle Udall (Chair)
Rep. Beverly Pingerelli (Vice Chair)
Rep. Joel John
Rep. Quang Nguyen
Rep. Frank Pratt
Rep. Bret Roberts

Natural Resources, Energy & Water

Rep. Gail Griffin (Chair)
Rep. Judy Burges (Vice Chair)
Rep. Frank Carroll
Rep. Tim Dunn
Rep. Mark Finchem
Rep. Jacqueline Parker

WEDNESDAY AM**Government & Elections**

Rep. John Kavanagh (Chair)
Rep. Jake Hoffman (Vice Chair)
Rep. Judy Burges
Rep. Frank Carroll
Rep. John Fillmore
Rep. Kevin Payne
Rep. Jeff Weninger

Judiciary

Rep. Frank Pratt (Chair)
Rep. Jacqueline Parker (Vice Chair)
Rep. Walt Blackman
Rep. Mark Finchem
Rep. Quang Nguyen
Rep. Beverly Pingerelli

Ways & Means

Rep. Shawna Bolick (Chair)
Rep. Brenda Barton (Vice Chair)
Rep. Regina Cobb
Rep. Tim Dunn
Rep. Travis Grantham
Rep. Steve Kaiser

WEDNESDAY PM**Appropriations**

Rep. Regina Cobb (Chair)
Rep. John Kavanagh (Vice Chair)
Rep. Jake Hoffman
Rep. Steve Kaiser
Rep. Quang Nguyen
Rep. Becky Nutt
Rep. Joanne Osborne
Rep. Michelle Udall

Criminal Justice Reform

Rep. Walt Blackman (Chair)
Rep. Shawna Bolick (Vice Chair)
Rep. Joel John
Rep. Bret Roberts
Rep. Ben Toma

Transportation

Rep. Frank Carroll (Chair)
Rep. Justin Wilmeth (Vice Chair)
Rep. Brenda Barton
Rep. Leo Biasiucci
Rep. David Cook
Rep. Kevin Payne
Rep. Frank Pratt

AS NECESSARY

Ethics

Rep. Becky Nutt (Chair)

Rep. Frank Pratt (Vice Chair)

Rep. Jacqueline Parker

Former School District Secretary Indicted for Allegedly Stealing School District Funds

JOSEPH CITY, AZ --- Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced that based upon an investigation performed by the Office of the Auditor General, a State Grand Jury indicted Tonnie Rae Pugh, a former attendance secretary for the Joseph City Unified School District. Pugh is accused of stealing \$40,436 in District funds.

Joseph City Unified School District is one of 11 public schools in Navajo County and provides public education from preschool to grade 12 and serves approximately 412 students. In addition to her duties as attendance secretary, Pugh was also responsible for depositing funds raised through student activities such as club fundraisers and those raised by auxiliary operations like athletic event ticket sales. It is alleged that between July of 2011 and January of 2018, Pugh used her position to take cash payments she collected from faculty, students, and parents for her own personal use. Pugh was indicted on charges of Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices, Violation of Duties of a Custodian of Public Monies, and Theft.

All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Assistant Attorney General Mary Harriss is prosecuting this case.

No booking photograph is available.

Copy of [Indictment](#)

[Arizona Auditor General Special Investigation Report](#)

Congressman Biggs Applauds Continued Withdrawal of American Troops from Middle East

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Department of Defense Acting Secretary Christopher Miller announced that the Trump administration would continue to withdraw American troops from Afghanistan and Iraq. According to the acting secretary, there would be 2,500 troops left in both Afghanistan and Iraq by January 15, 2021. Congressman Biggs issued the following statement:

“Today is a great day for our nation and for the men and women who serve in our military. For almost two decades, American troops have occupied Afghanistan and Iraq – at great cost to our nation both in lives and in dollars. Our men and women in uniform deserve to fight constitutionally sanctioned wars where American interests are on the line. American servicemembers have fought valiantly in the Middle East, but the current stage of these conflicts can no longer justify the tremendous sacrifices made by our troops stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“Since taking office, President Trump has kept his promises to withdraw our troops from the Middle East and to stop America’s involvement in endless wars. President Trump understands that our troops should only be used to defend American interests where there is an immediate or ongoing threat to our citizens or allies. And President Trump knows that our propensity for endless wars has bankrupted our grandchildren’s financial futures. I am grateful for the president’s courage and commitment to his promises, and I look forward to the return of our troops.”

Last week, Congressman Biggs [sent a letter to President Trump](#), asking him to continue to strategically draw down our nation’s military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“QUOTE
OF THE DAY”

“They came to her, and with heavy-handed tactics, pressured her into relinquishing her duties.”

- *Van DiCarlo, former executive director of Maricopa County Republican Party, on the Trump campaign’s attempt to take over party duties from former Chairwoman Rae Chornenky*