
Hunter proclaims innocence after report found she conspired against Pouncey

By **Sam Mattison**

Alabama Political Reporter

Board of Education Representative Mary Scott Hunter proclaimed her innocence on Wednesday after a report found that she had colluded with four others to discredit State Superintendent Candidate Dr. Craig Pouncey.

Other conspirators include Interim State Superintendent Dr. Philip Cleveland, two attorneys in the Alabama State Education Department, and General Counsel Juliana Dean.

Hunter called the report a “coordinated scheme” that was “cooked up” by some of her colleagues at a Board of Education meeting on Wednesday.

She denied working to discredit Pouncey after the report included emails where Hunter pursued an anonymous ethics complaint sent to the Alabama State Department of Education.

The ethics complaint centered around Dr. Pouncey plagiarizing his doctoral dissertation.

Hunter sent the anonymous plagiarism complaint to the Ethics Commission without the knowledge of her fellow board members.

The Ethics Commission normally doesn’t accept anonymous complaints for consideration but Tom Albritton, executive director of the Alabama Ethics Commission, said the commission accepted the complaint at the urging of Hunter and the four others accused of conspiring against Dr. Pouncey according to the report.

Pouncey was cleared of all wrongdoing but the report notes that this was never made clear to the rest of the board, the public, or Dr. Pouncey.

“Rather than informing a variety of interested parties that Dr. Pouncey was innocent of all ethical allegations, they simply let the charges and unsubstantiated assertions hang in the air with no interest or desire to make a public declaration of Dr. Pouncey’s vindication,” the report said.

Hunter said she had a lot of respect for Dr. Pouncey but the report notes that David Pope, chief information officer for the Alabama State Department of Education, testified under oath that “Hunter’s demeanor, tone, and actions were very negative against Dr. Pouncey.”

Pope also confirmed during his testimony that the ethics complaint was being pursued by Hunter and not endorsed by the State Superintendent or other board members.

Pouncey has said he feels vindicated by the report which acknowledges him as being cleared of all ethics violations.

State Superintendent Michael Sentance tasked Michael Meyer, an attorney in the general counsel office, with putting together the report.

Meyer said the allegations against Pouncey were unsubstantiated and should have been done away with a year ago.

He said he presented the report to Sentance on June 6th.

Meyer said Sentance told him at the meeting “If I release this report, it will ruin some board member’s political career.”

Sentance denied he ever made the comment.

The report was then reviewed by former State Supreme Court Justice Bernard Harwood who said the report unfairly included lawyers who he said were just performing “their legal duty.”

Harwood was also hired by Sentance.

Alleged conspirator and General Counsel for the Department Juliana Dean denied she conspired to undermine Pouncey and said Meyer's report was "self-serving."

Dean, Hunter and the other three alleged conspirators were all named in a lawsuit filed by Pouncey in February after he was not considered for the State Superintendent position.

The board voted 6-1 with one abstention to accept the report without Harwood's review. Hunter was the only one to dissent.

Hunter is running as a Republican to be Lieutenant Governor.

The Board meeting was supposed to be conducted privately today, but after **APR** published a leaked report on Wednesday morning the board decided to keep the meeting public.