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pencilpusher, Tulsa (15 hours ago)

Skiatook, now Broken Arrow. Ronda, keep the good ol' boys accountable. It is great to see citizens wake up to the cause and demand to see where and how their money is spent. Eventually, sleepy Tulsa will look into the financial black hole at 31st and New Haven.

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Anonymous Guy, Tulsa (10 hours ago)

I've heard of lots of audits, but I never heard of bringing your lawyer to an audit.

I expect to be reading about BA schools quite a bit for the next couple of years.

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zzx375, BA (9 hours ago)

"Having district attorneys present during the exit audit process, in light of having no charges filed as yet, is a waste of taxpayer money"

Vuillemont-Smith must have had a specific alternative in mind.

The state law regarding the process of auditing school districts and the subsequent reporting of these audits is either being followed or it is not.

Does the writer possess specific information that indicates the law is not being followed?

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gadfly, Broken Arrow (6 hours ago)

When a School Board hires a superintendent, with a PhD from ORU, it creates the appearance that such a Board is not interested in fiscal accountability -- or promoting the best science curriculum possible.

We get what the voters vote for -- and the voters usually don't have any idea what they are voting for.

Shameful

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Jolie2, (6 hours ago)

The media left something important out when they included Ronda Vuillemont-Smith's spoken concerns about the State Auditor's recent meetings with BAPS in their news reports: her husband Tim Smith owns a heating and air conditioning company in Broken Arrow: Triad Service Company, a direct competitor of Air Assurance, the heating and A/C company that Sisney targeted with his allegations of fraud. He's also president of the Green Country chapter of the Air Conditioning Contractors of America.

Don't you think that connection should have been mentioned in all the news articles? Did any reporter bother to research anything about Mrs. Smith and her possible motivations for speaking out before rushing to publish her remarks?

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612, Broken Arrow (6 hours ago)

Ronda's appearance seems to have provided some insight into the involvement of Representative Mike Ritze and Representative Mike Reynolds in the concocted BA Schools scandal.

Being politicians, their motives are likely to be, well, political. They may have needed a home-grown display of corruption in an Oklahoma school system to help promote their position in the press. Whatever their position might be and whether it has any merit, their methods were deceitful and sneaky, and they contributed to our school system's reputation being marred and hundreds of thousands of dollars wasted on fake lawsuits.

They might have believed the accusations made by the former superintendent, but it doesn't really matter. As long as they could make it look a certain way in the press, it would serve their purposes.

A move by Ritze and Reynolds to use the BA Schools controversy also explains the unsolicited appearance of Rep. Mike Ritze in the then-superintendent's office. My feeling from reading the ex-super's deposition is that he told the truth on everything in it. I don't see any inconsistencies between what he said in it and what we can glean from the evidence.

So I think it's very likely that Ritze sought him out, rather than the other way around, and it may have been at the request of Reynolds. Reynolds may have been on the lookout for a "troubled" district, and upon hearing of the clamor in BA, tasked the representative for BA with connecting with the guy supposedly being "railroaded".

The intensity of the attacks on BA's administration seems way out of proportion, and the continual hammering in newspaper articles and comments of a viewpoint that doesn't make sense and ignores the facts seems to support the idea that there was a high-level planned and coordinated mission to promote the impression far and wide that things went very wrong at Broken Arrow Schools.

Someone was awfully quick to glom on to the fire at the storage facility. It doesn't make sense to link it to AA, but it certainly has

worked. People are still bringing it up as proof that board members committed crimes! Crazy.

The Bossier City story, Reynolds' press releases full of nothing, the never-ending attacks on board members whenever there is ANY story, about ANYTHING related to the schools - this is not normal.

No wonder my job's been so hard. These guys are professionals. Judging from the protesters and some of the local board-bashers, they recruited people by appealing to their sense of outrage - either at being gypped out of work (HVAC people) or at the suggestion that the board members had their own "personal agenda", were committing fraud, and were targeting an innocent and hard-working superintendent.

Too bad for them their theory doesn't hold water. They were probably dismayed when the BOE approved the audit. Their snow job gets harder when the facts come out. Hence the furious attempts to discredit the audit and auditor in advance.

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612, Broken Arrow (6 hours ago)

Let's not forget Ritze's and Reynolds' desperate attempts to get out of their depositions. Ritze was even on the prosecution's witness list, and he still tried to escape testifying!

There could be some tough questions in there. If the depositions become public, it could be very damaging. Let's hope they are made available before November. Then Reynolds can finally have something to talk about in one of his press conferences.

I get the sense Ritze was following instructions and didn't really look into the situation before he jumped in. He spoke at a board meeting supporting a man he had just met, presumably with no input from the board on the circumstances, and helped circulate a petition to remove board members, with no grounds to accuse them of any wrongdoing. He has not participated in Reynolds' blasts of the administration, at least not publicly. I think he may be regretting his role in this.

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612, Broken Arrow (6 hours ago)

The website associated with my profile has court documents and other related information, as well as analysis of the claims of corruption falsely made against BA Schools administration.

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Jolie2, (6 hours ago)

Very recently, Vuillemont-Smith made the papers speaking out against federal funding for Broken Arrow Public Schools, in addition to joining in to try to defeat the major school bond issue recently passed.

On August 19, 2010, CapitalBeatOK published an article titled "Comments hint at stormy Broken Arrow audit sessions" featuring this subject and Ronda's perspective fills up more than half of the article. She is quoted as saying, ""Last year I fought to defeat the Broken Arrow bond issue as I felt that it was too much money at the wrong time. ... I'm a firm believer in transparency, fiscal responsibility and accountability." Note that Rep. Mike Reynolds regularly uses this publication to get his attack points across against the BAPS district, further evidence, to me, that Vuillemont-Smith has an agenda that goes much further than 'concerned parent and taxpayer.' Doing a search online for news articles quoting Vuillemont-Smith will reveal a long list and quite a number of the ones feature Vuillemont-Smith's quotes but no other private individual commenting. In my opinion, she is a political operative acting on hidden agendas.

News on 6 article dated August 11, 2010, titled "Where would Oklahoma schools be without stimulus money?" Guess what Ronda's stance was on accepting millions of dollars in federal stimulus money to save 84 teachers jobs in Broken Arrow and 292 jobs Oklahoma and teacher jobs elsewhere in the state? She said we shouldn't accept that money and we should figure out how to fund those needs by ourselves by cutting administrative positions and other costs.

In my opinion, Mrs. Vuillemont-Smith is a political operative acting on hidden agendas

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Jolie2, (6 hours ago)

Correction to my last post, third paragraph

It should have read 292 teaching jobs in TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (were saved by the Federal funding, in addition to the 84 jobs saved in the BAPS district plus unlisted numbers of jobs in other parts of the state)

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Jolie2, (6 hours ago)

Anyone wanting to verify the facts about Vuillemont-Smith's husband owning a heating and air conditioning company in Broken Arrow, can verify it by checking these news articles online:

The first one is a NewsOK article from March 20, 2010, titled "Issue drives some Oklahomans to act" which states the spouse of Concerned Parent Ronda Vuillemont-Smith owns a heating and A/C company.

The second article to read is here in the TW from April 27, 2010, titled "Don't lose your cool" which verifies which heating and A/C company that this spouse owns.

Mr. Smith is also mentioned to be the owner of Triad Service Company of BA in the Tulsa World article of May 12, 2010, titled "PSO

CoolSaver has AC Humming." It also states Mr. Smith is also the president of the Green Country chapter of the Air Conditioning Contractors of America.

Of course, the TW reporters can always contact Mrs. Vuillemont-Smith or Mr. Tim Smith to verify this fact. They both seem to be eager to talk to the press.

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612, Broken Arrow (6 hours ago)

"I refer to the controversial practices of the Broken Arrow Public Schools that resulted in the firing of the superintendent and an investigation of the bidding practices."

Is Mrs. Vuillemont-Smith sure that it was the schools' practices resulting in the firing of the superintendent? What specifically does she claim the administration did wrong, that resulted in his firing? Does she have any specifics? He didn't, in his deposition in his now-dismissed wrongful termination case.

Does she not think it could be related to his public accusations against a vendor, his takeover of the school board's meetings, his emailing the entire school staff disparaging and misleading statements about board members, his attempts to coerce the board into giving him an early extension on his contract, his barring board members from access to the District's legal counsel, his scheming with certain board members to discredit and embarrass others, or his filing a frivolous lawsuit against 3 "unnamed co-conspirators" for leverage?

These things are all shown in the court documents. Yet Mrs. Vuillemont-Smith and other continue to promote a story that doesn't make sense and flies in the face of the facts.

See the website associated with my profile for an extensive list of the former superintendent's lies, misleading statements, and questionable actions in this controversy. Court document, including his full deposition, are also posted.

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Jolie2, (5 hours ago)

To address Vuillemont-Smith's complaint about spending more money on legal fees to have the BAPS attorney attend the meeting with the state auditor:

It would seem obvious that while the district is a defendant in a lawsuit filed by Sisney, the district's attorney would need to stay on top of the issues related to it. The audit report will be essential for the attorney to be fully informed of. Attending the meetings allows him to hear the auditor's explanations in detail and to ask questions.

One way or the other, the attorney would need to spend time on this. It seems an efficient use of his time and our tax money to have him gain this information up front, while these meetings are being held for the board members and superintendent.

Where was Vuillemont-Smith when former BAPS school superintendent Jim Sisney filed these lawsuits for his own PERSONAL benefit (defamation and wrongful termination lawsuits) after he neglected to take any official action with state authorities at any level on his so-called suspicions of wrongdoing by district board members and a vendor working for the district? He had six months from the time he began to express misgivings about Air Assurance and begin his so-called internal investigation and when he was suspended from his job. What prevented him from having an official investigation and audit done while he was still superintendent at BAPS? Nothing.

Defending against those personal lawsuits filed by Sisney has cost our district well over \$200,000. So far, there is not one shred of evidence given by Sisney to the public or to the courts to prove his claims. He said he had none in his deposition.

Why is Vuillemont-Smith not speaking out against this waste of taxpayer dollars caused by the negligence and possible maliciousness on the part of a former BAPS employee, an employee who is now superintendent at Sperry Public School district. Does this willful neglect of duty (at the very least) on the part of Sisney while at the helm of BAPS not concern her?

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independent, tulsa (5 hours ago)

CONSOLIDATE SCHOOLS

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612, Broken Arrow (5 hours ago)

The heat sure has been turned up by the people seeking to damage the District's reputation. A press conference criticizing an audit by a guy who hasn't seen it, a new star of the show sent out on stage to promote their point of view, more articles relentlessly driving home the inaccurate claims of intentional wrongdoing at BAPS.

At least this one's in the opinion section, where it belongs.

Why do Reynolds and Ronda object so strenuously to RFR being present in the meeting? What's it to them? I don't buy the "irresponsible spending" plea.

I think it's more likely that they hate the idea of the District's legal counsel - the law firm of Doug Mann, hated and feared by the fired

superintendent - getting a look at the results before they do.

If there is anything in the audit about their involvement in the PR campaign against BA Schools, it will be very embarrassing for them.

If it does not support the fired superintendent's claims of corruption, everything he and Reynolds have been using as ammunition against the schools for the past two years evaporates. No wonder he is trying so hard to discredit, the auditor, and BA Schools in advance.

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612, Broken Arrow (5 hours ago)

Come to think of it, if the audit does include information about Reynolds' and others' crusade against BA Schools, that could explain Mendenhall's statement that they had a "lot to digest", and Ronda's report that the school's attorney looked angry.

It could also explain Ronda's statement that the District is going to hire a PR firm. Ronda did not provide any specifics, but it may have been suggested that a professional approach is needed to restore the reputation of BA Schools after these unfair and malicious attacks. Whether it's the "biggest PR firm in the state" is irrelevant - size in itself does not indicate anything in terms of expense.

To make it fair, the PR firm should be paid for from the proceeds of a lawsuit against the people who perpetrated this smear campaign!

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zzx375, BA (4 hours ago)

"When a School Board hires a superintendent, with a PhD from ORU, it creates the appearance that such a Board is not interested in fiscal accountability -- or promoting the best science curriculum possible."

If that is where he took his advanced course work in order to get his superintendent's certification from the state, exactly why does it matter?

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Ice Queen, (4 hours ago)

"why the district feels obliged to have its attorneys present."

Maybe they already know what's in the audit.

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612, Broken Arrow (4 hours ago)

I don't think it's the District that's worried. They're not the ones holding press conferences trying to discredit the audit in advance, trotting out new faces with the old message, and trying to make something perfectly reasonable look underhanded.

In all their criticism, there has been not one suggestion of any actual wrongdoing. Wait for the specifics. Two years and one dismissed lawsuit later, and we're still waiting.