Landry suit won’t stop search for the truth

When a senior aide to Gov. John Bel Edwards was fired over sexual harassment allegations, Attorney General Jeff Landry wasn’t shy about criticizing the governor.

The hard-charging Republican attorney general, who seldom passes up a chance to pick a fight with the Democratic governor, promised he would take a hard-line stance, including firing employees, if something similar ever happened in his office.

Well, it looks like something similar has happened in Landry’s office. The head of his Criminal Division, Pat Magee, allegedly “engaged in inappropriate verbal conversations” that included sexual slang and “unprofessional comments regarding the appearance of employees,” Landry’s office now admits.

Landry fashions himself as the state’s top lawman, but apparently his gumshoe instincts deserted him when there were sexual harassment allegations right under his nose.

But the attorney general has faced the crisis with his customary combativeness.

Not against Magee, the man who is accused of harassing civil servants in the Attorney General’s Office. Magee quietly returned to work last month.

Landry is going after Andrea Gallo, the reporter for The Advocate and The Times-Picayune who has been probing the whole sordid matter.

Gallo filed a public records request for the complaint against Magee and other documents related to the attorney general’s investigation of his allegedly misbehaving subordinate.

The attorney general denied her request in January, saying the matter was still being investigated. But when Gallo called the office and asked for Magee, she found he was at work.

Why was he back at his desk if the matter was still being investigated? The attorney general then admitted that the probe had indeed been concluded and Magee had been docked 38 days’ pay, or about $20,000.

But Landry’s office never released all of the records Gallo requested, and Friday he tried a novel legal approach to keep the details of the scandal secret — probably forever.

He filed suit against Gallo, asking a judge to issue a declaratory judgment denying her request and to seal the lawsuit itself.

Louisiana’s public records laws give all citizens, not just journalists, the right to seek documents from the governments their tax dollars support. Lots of people take advantage of the law: activists fighting pollution, bidders who feel they were cheated out of government contracts, victims of false prosecutions.

It’s not a violation to ask for public records. It’s a fundamental right found in Article 12, Section 3 of the Louisiana Constitution.

So we can’t sit by when an elected official uses taxpayer money to sue a private citizen for seeking records about a potentially embarrassing scandal in his office.

We will fight until the truth comes out.

That’s a promise to our readers, to all of Louisiana, and to Jeff Landry.
Landy suit won’t stop search for the truth

When a senior aide to Gov. John Bel Edwards was fired over sexual harassment allegations, Attorney General Jeff Landry’s only cry for criticism was his governor.

The hard-charging Republican attorney general, who seldom passes up a chance to pick a fight with the Democrats he despises, prides himself on being a corporate lawyer who would take a hard line on issues, including

(but, of course, if something similar ever happened in his office.

Well, it looks like something similar has happened in his office. The head of the Criminal Division, Pat Maggio, allegedly “en-

quired in inappropriate verbal communications” that included sexual slang and “unprofessional comments regarding the appearance of em-

ployees.” Landry’s office now admits.

But Landry defends himself as the state’s top lawyer, not because he is a public servant, but because he is an ideologue, as all Republicans are. That’s the view of Marjorie Taylor Greene, the nutcase whose recent election to represent a Georgia district in Congress will make headlines when she is in charge.

Biden off to the most left-wing start in history

Joe Biden is off to the most left-wing start of any Democratic president in recent memory. His first executive orders included passing a tax cut.

The lesson is that the most im-

portant thing the entire establishment moves with the wind. If the center of gravity of a party moves, the direction of a political party.

There will also be a continual fo-

cus on what Biden’s chief-of-staff calls “racial equity crises,” which will be a worry for many, more

serious identity politics.

Biden too is off to the most left-wing start of any Democratic president in recent memory. His first executive orders included passing a tax cut. Out for the long

run in 1994, Johnson embarked on a campaign of federal activism that no subsequent Democrat has matched, although

Johnson had been the most vocal in support of the idea. The lesson is that the most important thing the entire establishment moves with the wind. If the center of gravity of a party moves, the direction of a political party.

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focus on what Biden’s chief-of-staff calls “racial equity crises,” which will be a worry for many, more serious identity politics.

Biden too is off to the most left-wing start of any Democratic president in recent memory. His first executive orders included passing a tax cut. Out for the long

We've been heartened by the support we received since Friday, when Attorney General Jeff Landry filed suit against our reporter, Andrea Gallo, for submitting a public records request to his office.

Gallo is seeking to get to the bottom of a sexual harassment case that has roiled Landry's office. And based on his reaction, the case seems to have roiled Landry too.

Louisiana citizens have a right to see public records, and it's written into the state Constitution. Journalists file lots of public records requests, but so do average citizens who have a grievance with their elected officials.

But taxpayers who file requests deserve better than to be sued by the public officials that serve them.

Landry's suit against Gallo concludes with a six-item “prayer for relief.”

Chiefly, Landry asks the court to determine that Gallo is not entitled to see the original complaint filed in the matter against the head of the attorney general's Criminal Division, Pat Magee. He also asks that the record be sealed.

The fifth of the six prayers is a request that the court “Cast the Defendant with all costs of these proceedings.”

In other words, Landry asks the court to make Gallo pay the legal costs of his lawsuit.

The suit is not just an attack on Gallo, it is a warning to any taxpayer who might challenge any elected official.

After the suit was filed, people asked us what they could do to help, and to support open government.

Monday, our Publisher, Judi Terzotis, our Editor, Peter Kovacs, and the Chairman of Georges Media, Dan Shea, filed the same public records request as Gallo.

You can join in too by filing your own public records request with Jeff Landry and showing him that he needs to tell the taxpayers the truth about what happened in his office.

Here's how:

Go to this link, create an account and file a request: https://louisianaag.mycusthelp.com/WEBAPP/_rs/(S(holhfgldwdaoksslvcih5vnh))/supporthome.aspx

Go to the homepage for the AG’s office https://www.ag.state.la.us/ and click “public records” – on the far right side of the middle of the screen.

There is a dropdown box that asks you to choose the division from which you are requesting records. You can pick criminal (which is the division Magee heads) or executive, since he is a member of the executive staff.

You will also be asked to select a date range. You can ask for all documents since Jan. 1, 2020.

In the field which asks you to specify what records you seek, you can use the same language as Gallo's request:

- Any and all complaints of sexual harassment related to Patrick Magee
- Any records showing how those complaints were handled, including any records of investigations, as well as any disciplinary memos, orders to seek counseling, suspensions, resignations or terminations.
- Records of any settlements paid in connection with any such complaints.

Editorial published online
https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/opinion/article_147e2b9a-6a6e-11eb-a4bc-13960c0313c9.html
A Baton Rouge judge will hear arguments today about whether a powerful elected official can use the might of the state against a single Louisiana taxpayer whose sole offense was to ask for a public record.

Jeff Landry, the attorney general, filed suit against Advocate reporter Andrea Gallo last month, after she requested records related to an embarrassing sexual harassment inquiry against a senior aide. He asked a judge to seal the documents.

Gallo’s offense is that on Dec. 14, she filed a public records request for the complaint against Pat Magee, head of the criminal division in the attorney general’s office.

She was taking advantage of a right that belongs to everyone in Louisiana, enshrined in Article 12, Section 3 of the state constitution.

The attorney general denied Gallo’s request in January, saying the matter was still being probed. But when Gallo called the office and asked for Magee, she found that he was at work. Landry then admitted that the probe had indeed been concluded and Magee had been docked 38 days pay, or about $20,000.

Landry filed suit against Gallo last month and today he is asking 19th Judicial District Judge Tim Kelley to declare that he doesn’t have to turn over the initial complaint made against Magee and that Gallo should pay the court costs.

Gallo is represented by Scott Sternberg, who is the attorney for The Advocate and The Times-Picayune. She is asking Kelley to turn over the record, redacting the name of the victim and any others who have a right to privacy in the matter.

She is also asking the judge to review a report by Vicki Crochet, the lawyer Landry hired to investigate Magee and turn over information that is not privileged.

Finally, she is seeking attorney’s fees, costs and a penalty of $100 a day — dating back to the original date of the request, Dec. 14 — because the attorney general has acted in an arbitrary and capricious way in denying the records request and taking the extraordinary step of suing.

When Gov. John Bel Edwards fired a key aide over sexual harassment allegations, Landry was quick to jump on his Democratic rival.

So it must have been humbling to find a harassment case festering right under his nose.

A better approach might have been to be candid with the public and admit the problem.

Covering up the scandal and suing a reporter is not the best way to win public confidence.

What is Jeff Landry trying to hide?

Perhaps we’re fixing to find out.
Landry’s attack on open government should be exposed in courts

Baton Rouge juror will hear arguments today about whether a powerful elected official is acting in the interest of the people or as a political puppet for a single taxpayer.

Jeff Landry, the attorney general, filed suit against Pat Magee, head of the criminal division in the attorney general’s office.

Gallo hired to investigate Magee and turn over information that is not privileged.

He asked a judge to turn over the record, redacting the name of the original date of the request, Dec. 14 — or $25,000.

At a hearing in January, saying the matter was still under investigation and that Gallo should pay the court costs.

Finally, she is seeking attorney’s fees, costs and today he is asking 19th Judicial District

Baton Rouge judge will hear arguments against Pat Magee, head of the criminal division in the attorney general’s office.

He asked a judge to turn over the record, redacting the name of the original date of the request, Dec. 14 — or $25,000.

So it must have been humbling to find a hard-nosed attorney fighting for a public record request for the complaint against a senior aide. He asked a judge to turn over the record, redacting the name of the original date of the request, Dec. 14 — or $25,000.

Perhaps we’re fixing to find out.

The time is now for successful bipartisan change that improves Louisiana today and brightens its future. Our families, businesses and communities deserve no less. REDIST Louisiana’s Future is a targeted, comprehensive effort led by the Louisiana Senate, the House of Representatives, the Louisiana Lieutenant Governor and the Governor. We have focused on four state policy issues: education and workforce development, state revenue to expand access to quality child care settings, which will support the businesses where those workers are employed.

We thank everyone involved and to ensure high school student graduates with apprenticeships, associate degrees, certificate programs or high-demand credentials that lead to quality jobs.

Increase Louisiana’s annual investment in infrastructure, including road builds, bridges and levees, and support for our military. We rely on local governments — to help us safely navigate the pandemic.

We cannot settle for anything less.

An extraordinary jobs will allow us to break our addiction to corporate and governmental entities that are instead expected to govern as one. We have our own representatives.

We have our own responsibilities; our vote attracted to the people we are supposed to represent. We should be held accountable for our actions.

There are no politicians we are not supposed to govern. Our voters, we are supposed to represent.

It is vital that Louisiana is calling for an impartial review of the impeachment proceedings, which are now underway. Cassidy for serving as an impartial juror.

Those who are supposed to govern are supposed to represent. We are supposed to represent.

If Miguez has his way, no one.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges to our communities and economies.

The time is now for successful bipartisan change that improves Louisiana today and brightens its future. Our families, businesses and communities deserve no less.

We can report no side effects other than the virus.

The state should make funding for early education a top priority and appropriate a meaningful level of funds to support quality pre-K and early childhood education programs.

This is the right thing to do.

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This is the right thing to do.
The stakes were high Thursday in the courtroom of Judge Tim Kelley of Baton Rouge, where the powerful attorney general of Louisiana was trying to use the might of his office against a private citizen — for simply asking to see a public record.

Kelley rose to the occasion, throwing out a lawsuit by Jeff Landry against Andrea Gallo, a reporter for The Advocate and The Times-Picayune.

The courtroom showdown dates to Dec. 14, when Gallo requested records of the attorney general’s investigation into complaints about a key aide, Pat Magee, head of his criminal division.

Magee was placed on leave on Dec. 14, the same day Gallo filed her request. He returned to work in January and was docked about $20,000 in pay.

The attorney general’s office released a summary of its findings in the case, but Gallo pressed on, requesting the initial complaint and other documents created during the investigation. She made clear that the attorney general could remove names of the complainant and other witnesses, which is standard practice in media public records requests.

Landry responded in an unusual way, suing Gallo on Feb. 5 and asking a court to affirm his position that the initial complaint was not a public record. (Landry’s suit did not address Gallo’s other requests.)

The aggressiveness of his approach attracted the attention of The Washington Post and a critical statement from the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. The prestigious Public Affairs Research Council also weighed in on the dangers of having private citizens defend lawsuits when they seek public records, calling Landry’s suit an “unfortunate example that likely will encourage egregious behavior.”

Kelley handled that threat well Thursday in making Landry pay the legal fees for Gallo’s defense and ordering the initial complaint released, with appropriate redactions.

But ultimately legislators need to act to protect private citizens — everyone can request a public record, not just reporters — from the threat of being sued by powerful politicians seeking to avoid embarrassment.

State Rep. Ray Garafolo, R-Chalmette, introduced a bill to ban such lawsuits in 2018, but local officials objected.

In the end, the measure that passed allowed defendants to recover their legal fees if they prevailed, as Gallo did Thursday.

But private citizens who request public records — about a zoning change allowing a bar in their neighborhood, or an environmental permit in their parish — don’t have the resources to fight it out in court against their own government and its sprawling phalanx of agency lawyers.

Some legislators watched Thursday’s hearing by Zoom, including Rep. Barry Ivey, R-Central. Their scrutiny and attention to this issue is welcome.

They need to act. One of their constituents could be next.
A judge refuses to allow Landry to use his powers against open government

The stakes were high Thursday in the courtroom of Judge Tab Delaware, where the powerful attorney general of Louisiana was trying to use the might of his office against a private citizen — for simply asking to see a public record.

Kelley rose to the occasion, throwing out a lawsuit by Jeff Landry against Andrea Gall. Kelley said the suit is welcome. The attorney general’s office released a summary of its findings in the case, but Gall pressed on, requesting the initial complaint and other documents created during the investigation. She made clear that the attorney general could remove names of the individuals involved from the records. Kelley then turned to work in January and was docked $25,000 in pay. Gall’s suit released, with appropriate redactions. Gallo’s defense and ordering the initial complaint.

Transition from fossil fuels will take decades, so no need to panic

Mickey Christmas is the latest in a series of letter writers who apparently don’t understand the concept of transition. It’s possible that he has been indoctrinated by the Daily Republic’s letter writers. His letter says that he is concerned about the Aggressive approach at any cost. He states that the world is transitioning away from oil, gas and coal.

Petulant NFL players should remember sacrifices

My first role was for Harry Truman. As a year-old Democrat, I look at our policies with concern that what we know is not merely for the public benefit to all, but local officials objected. In the military, we protected allied Americans to receive their legal fees if they were, as Kelly said Thursday, simply asking to see a public record, not just reporters who are, in fact, request a public record.

How much does it hurt to leave something extra?

Reading Will Sutton’s article on tipping,ową about all of these remarks is that the man who makes them is not merely saying that the other man’s behavior does not happen to please him. He is appealing to some kind of standard of behavior which he expects the other man to know about such standards, and generously tip in their memory, especially on an inexpensive meal: 20% of a dollar.

hard-working teachers deserve a fair raise

I am speaking only to what’s going on at Villa Del Rey Elementary, where my hard-working teachers do their magic between 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. They work hard so they can educate in their charge. They care to work extra, they have to take student fees to faces and to really find like they’re doing two jobs simultaneously. They have my phone calls after hours and have never complained. When I drop my daughter off at school every morning, I have full confidence that the awd to be good hands — rules, sound and being taught by a teacher who is in the right way. What more could a parent want?
Now we know what Attorney General Jeff Landry was trying to hide when his office lied about a sexual harassment complaint against a key aide, and then sued the reporter trying to get hold of it.

The complaint was released Monday by state District Judge Tim Kelley of Baton Rouge, who ruled correctly Friday in throwing out Landry’s legal assault against reporter Andrea Gallo of The Advocate and The Times-Picayune. Kelley also ordered Landry to pay Gallo’s legal fees.

The harassment complaint was made against Pat Magee, head of the criminal division in the attorney general’s office.

Gallo filed a public records request on Dec. 14, taking advantage of a right every Louisianan has under the state constitution. The appropriate response would have been for Landry to release the requested records and omit the names of the complainant and any victims identified in the document.

Landry’s office lied about what was in the complaint, saying that redacting the names and other identifying details would result in so many erasures that the document would be meaningless.

He went to war against Gallo, filing suit against her and asking a judge to rule the complaint was secret, and make Gallo pay court costs.

Kelley was wise to all that, and he took it upon himself to make the appropriate redactions and turn the complaint over to Gallo. And he acted quickly.

The result was about three dozen small erasures from a complaint that stretches across four pages. What Kelley left in the complaint explains why Landry fought so hard to keep it under wraps.

The complaint, filed Nov. 20, says that Magee wanted one woman attorney to be assigned to a trial because “male jurors would want to have sex with her.”

Another attorney, he said, was “not currently as pretty as she was in law school at age 20.”

The complainant also said Magee declined to promote a female attorney, and “he would later express concern to me privately that he would not be able to control himself sexually if she worked that closely with him.”

Landry’s office, in a statement, said it “concluded that his conduct did not rise to the level of sexual harassment.”

But the attorney general decided Magee must have done something wrong, because he was suspended for 38 days and docked $20,000 in pay.

Landry portrays himself as the state’s top lawman, and voters can decide for themselves what to make of the fact that all of this bad behavior occurred right under his nose, and of his conclusion that none of it amounts to sexual harassment.

For our part, we can promise that our quest to get to the bottom of the case isn’t over. Gallo has a pending request for documents that will show how the complaint was investigated.

If Landry wants to sue her for filing that request, bring it on.
It was tell-the-truth Monday for Jeff Landry, and the picture isn’t pretty

Now we know what Attorney General Jeff Landry was trying to hide when his office did a soft-revelation of sexual harassment in his office last week. But the apparent six-figure settlement with his key aide, Alabama Democrat Rep. Galen Wofford, is far from the only cloud Landry can’t seem to shake.

The harassment complaint was made, according to sources, and no one on the staff appears to have been aware of its existence or made any demands about the sexual conduct alleged.

Wofford was then asked by the lawyer trying to get hold of it. The complaint was signed Monday by state District Judge Tim Kelley of Baton Rouge, who ruled correctly Friday in throwing out Landry’s legal aid against reporter Andrea Gallis of The Advocate and The Times-Picayune. Kelley also ordered Landry to pay Gallis’s legal fees.

The harassment complaint was made, according to sources, and no one on the staff appears to have been aware of its existence or made any demands about the sexual conduct alleged. Wofford, who ruled correctly Friday in throwing out Landry’s legal aid against reporter Andrea Gallis of The Advocate and The Times-Picayune. Kelley also ordered Landry to pay Gallis’s legal fees.

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