



CONTACT: Tony Daunt
PHONE: (517) 812-4134
E: Press@MichiganFreedomFund.com

Benson's Family Ties, Embrace of Duggan, Cast Cover-Up Cloud over Redistricting Commission Announcement

Secretary of State Brazenly Features Detroit Mayor at Announcement, Days After Duggan and Friedrichs City Hall Cover-Up Scandal Explodes

LANSING, MI, October 24, 2019 – Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson today cast an ominous cloud of doubt and scandal over the state's new redistricting commission, prominently featuring scandal-plagued Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan at a commission-related press event. The Commission was sold to voters as a move to bring transparency to Michigan's map-drawing process.

According to a bombshell report this week from Detroit's Inspector General, Duggan's Chief of Staff Alexis Wiley, Chief Development Officer Ryan Friedrichs and Deputy Chief Development Officer Sirene Abou-Chakra engaged in an illegal cover-up attempt, pushing to destroy public records related to a Mayoral scandal involving his personal relationships and Wayne State University's "Make Your Date" program.

Friedrichs, implicated prominently in the I.G. report, is Secretary of State Benson's husband.

"Jocelyn Benson continued her stunning hypocrisy today, tainting the state's redistricting commission by tying it to prominent Democrats – including her husband's boss – who are the subject of an Attorney General investigation into cover-ups and the destruction of public records," said Freedom Fund Executive Director Tony Daunt. "If Benson is willing to demolish the commission's credibility to back her husband and her political ally during a cover-up scandal, voters are right to wonder how she'd react if officials or family members in her own office were ever caught destroying public records."

Friedrichs and Abou-Chakra admitted destroying public records, according to the I.G. report. The Inspector General has formally recommended all three high-ranking officials receive "appropriate discipline." Mayor Duggan has refused to hold any of the three accountable, and dismissed press questions and good-government-advocates' criticisms. The Mayor has even claimed that the illegal destruction of public records to hide them from the press does not constitute a "cover up."

Duggan's office, Friedrichs, Abou-Chakra, and Wiley remain subjects of an ongoing legal investigation by the office of Michigan's Attorney General.

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