

October 11, 2007

Hon. John W. Sedwick
United States District Court Judge
222 W. 7th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99513

Hon. Jack Sedwick

I am writing on behalf of William Bobrick. The case number is 3:07-cr-00062-JWS.

I was the Executive Director of the Alaska Health Project from 1983 to 1988. The original mission was to do research, advocacy, an education around the issue of worker safety on the job. Those were the early days of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the Alaska Health Project filled an important gap in terms of training employers and employees regarding workplace safety and advocating for safer workplaces and doing the associated research. Over the years the mission grew to include environmental health and safety issues.

The Alaska Health Project was never a large organization, starting with two full-time people in 1982. By the time I left in 1988 it had 10 full-time people and a few part-time people. The board of directors consisted of Alaskans with a range of occupations, from construction workers to attorney's and scientists.

Bill Bobrick was eventually recruited onto the board of Alaska Health Project, as I recall because he had been a construction worker, he had a strong interest in the issue of worker safety and health, and several of the board directors were acquainted with him. Ultimately, because of his commitment to the work of the Alaska Health Project and his concern about occupational and environmental health hazards, Bill was nominated and elected president of the board.

I think this is notable on a couple of accounts. First, the board met monthly and the meetings often dragged on for two or three hours, yet board members received no compensation whatsoever, nor did they receive recognition from the community. They served because of their commitment to the health of working Alaskans. Then as now, it did not necessarily endear someone to the power structure to be an advocate for occupational health and safety.

To my way of thinking it revealed an important part of Bill's character when he devoted significant time and energy to serving on this board despite the lack of compensation or recognition because of his personal satisfaction of doing what he could for the health of working Alaskans. Moreover, the Board of Directors clearly had confidence in Bill's abilities to lead and they had confidence in the high level of his commitment to the mission of the organization.

As executive director, when Bill was president, I was supervised by him. I worked closely with Bill on all matters relating to the Alaska Health Project activities and during that time I found him to be compassionate, ethical, and giving of his time and energy in order to make our organization as effective as possible. Despite the fact that I was his employee, we became and have remained friends. In recent years I had come to think of Bill as kind of a big shot, holding fund raisers in his home and mixing with Alaska's leadership and being involved in the formation of important public policy issues. But, when ever we met he did not display arrogance and did not treat me any differently than when we were working together at the Alaska Health Project.

This past August, I was waiting at a bus stop in the evening to catch my ride home and Bill offered to give me a ride even though we weren't going in the same direction. This gave us the opportunity to talk as we have done many times in the past, but Bill really wanted to talk about the changes he has been through in past months. I invited him into the house and my wife and I sat and talked with him about his plans for the future and some introspective thoughts about how he came to be in his current legal situation. I decided that I should share my thoughts with you from that evening and my long association with Bill.

I understand fully that Bill has pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit extortion and bribery in connection with helping facilitate payments to Representative Tom Anderson. I believe that these crimes are far more serious than such crimes might be, for example, in a corporate setting, because these crimes in particular chip away at the very fundamental roots of democracy upon which our society is based. I also understand how someone, even someone like Bill, can yield to the pressures of his job like a lobbyist in incremental ways made in an attempt to please his clients year after year.

Ultimately, that resulted in a qualitative shifting of the balance from accommodation in gray areas to extortion and bribery. I believe Bill is essentially an ethical, moral, and concerned human being who found himself in an occupation that pressures those in this occupation to move in another direction, inexorably in a direction which may be quite different than the way they have spent the earlier part of their life. This does not forgive the cascade of decisions that resulted in bribery and conspiracy but it helps understand the social pressures on human frailty that resulted in these terrible consequences.

I believe Bill strongly feels remorse and guilt, and I believe he still has a vast reservoir of compassion towards human beings as he did when we worked together at the Alaska health Project. I believe that his position in politics led him to subjugate the very strong ethical foundation that he has had for decades. I believe he is relearning how to reconnect with his innate and strong sense of ethics and sense of obligation to the health of the community and the people within it. I believe Bill has within him a tremendous reawakened desire to help

build a better community and to do that in the context of an ethical and moral life to which he has a renewed commitment. I strongly hope that he is offered the opportunity to go down that road.

I urge the court to ask Bill to serve little if any prison time. I do not say this lightly, but I believe the true remorse that Bill feels and his tremendous sense of guilt and disappointment in himself will be a far better motivation for him to lead a more productive life after this, than will time in jail. I believe Bill is ready to become once again a productive member of society and I would hate to see his potential contributions squandered while he is locked up in prison and isolated from the society which I believe he is ready to serve again.

In a recent conversation with Bill, he told me that he was interested in talking publicly about ethics issues in Alaska politics, both in general terms, and in his case in particular. I think this would be an extraordinary contribution at a time when these issues are actively being discussed and when policy is actively being established. And I believe that these discussions from a credible and informed source such as Bill could be extremely effective with the younger generation of up and coming policymakers in our state.

Sincerely,



Lawrence D. Weiss Ph.D., M.S.
Professor Emeritus, UAA
5862 Kennyhill Dr., Anchorage
240-4141