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Fair Political Practices Commission  
Via email to: [CommAsst@fppc.ca.gov](mailto:CommAsst@fppc.ca.gov)

In 2017 I filed a complaint against Crystal Geyser and its fake campaign committee in Siskiyou County. This matter is before you on Wednesday's consent calendar as item 4 on the agenda.

As you consider your decision, I have several comments I would like to make in this letter, and in your meeting if possible.

### **Justice Delayed**

First, I am concerned your commission and staff clearly do not have adequate resources to enforce the very important laws at stake here, in a timely manner. Political corruption is on the increase and remains a particular problem in Siskiyou County, from where I have now moved.

More than five years ago, our initiative to protect the county's groundwater resources failed county wide although it was approved by voters of Weed and Mt. Shasta. These voters saw first-hand how Crystal Geyser's activities harm water resources. However, voters from outlying areas rejected it, swayed by well-funded mailers telling them our proposal would affect household wells. Those mailers funded by Crystal Geyser were absolute lies.

Fortunately, despite other nefarious efforts (including an unsuccessful SLAPP suit against nine Weed citizens who spoke against the company in public meetings), strong community voices prevailed. Today, the company is fleeing Mt. Shasta; their unopened plant is for sale.

While celebrating this victory, and genuinely appreciating your staff's investigations and findings leading to the stipulated settlement before you today, I can't help but note that for the citizens of Siskiyou County today, this matter is ancient history.

Justice delayed really is justice denied. As commissioners, I hope you will support your staff, streamline processes, and ensure adequate funding for your agency, because this outcome is too late for our community celebrations. How can we as citizens support your important work?

### **Inadequate Fines**

The proposed \$48,000 fine, while larger than most, is a trivial amount for this company in the context of its \$50 million project. It is unlikely to even cover your costs of investigating the complaint. I strongly urge you to assess the maximum amount allowed. This is a serious matter. Here again, I understand that fines the law allows may be insufficient to stop this type of corruption but nevertheless urge you to take the strongest action you are able.

Crystal Geysers's public relations firm, Burson-Marsteller, is known for creating these "Astroturf" (fake grassroots) groups which give false impressions of popular support for harmful corporate causes. What can the FPPC do to halt such practices and hold them accountable?

**Community Bad Actors**

As your staff discovered, Crystal Geysers funded nearly all of this political campaign, and further assigned its employee Jill Harris to direct its efforts to spread false information. I appreciate that the stipulation does hold them somewhat accountable to the community.

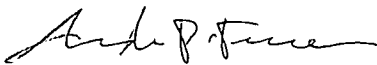
Nevertheless, I must disagree with the stipulated agreement's failure to hold Daralyn Reed, Joan Smith Freeman, Dorian Aiello and John Kennedy similarly responsible. These individuals willingly signed on to this effort to spread lies in the community and remain active in civic matters. They violated the trust of their neighbors and did so freely.

They surely knew they were fronting for a corrupt company and should not be allowed to escape accountability merely because their participation was minimal – that, in fact, is precisely why they should be held accountable through meaningful fines.

If possible, I would like an opportunity to speak before the commission tomorrow regarding this matter. Please let me know if that is possible, either online or in person.

Thank you for your investigation, and I hope your agency can remain strong in your important duties.

Sincerely,



Andrew P. Fusso