

# MEMO

**RE:** Kirsten Anderson Work Product and Policy

**DATE:** Friday May 17, 2013

**TO:** Eric Johansen, SRC Staff Director

At our meeting on May 10, 2013 you and Tracie gave me an update on my work product and how it is not satisfactory for the Senate Republican Caucus. You stated my work product has not made satisfactory improvements since an earlier request you made on January 31 of 2013. At both meetings you and Ed (at the 1/31/13 meeting) requested that my work – specifically the Bottom Line newsletter articles – have “fewer mistakes”, “flow better” and have fewer unnecessary words incorporated into the text as well as have sentences ending in prepositions removed. Ed has also stated that I am not to use contractions or plural possessives at any time in any of my writing. I have been striving to meet these requirements throughout the 2013 Legislative Session. To this point I have attempted to loyally follow direction hoping that we can move forward constructively. I have never had complaints regarding my final work product and have always worked collaboratively with senators and staff to work through versions of draft products.

I am writing this now to document my disagreement with the criticisms of my work and challenge your motives in bringing them to me. You, Ed and Tracie criticize my draft work with no collaboration or insight. During the 1/31/13 meeting Ed was condescending, patronizing and went so far as to tell me I couldn't write at a high school level, implying he was teaching me college English.

During the May 10 meeting you continually referenced the February meeting (it was actually 1/31/13) that took place. I am specifically requesting in writing the changes you require in my work product, specifically for the Bottom Line newsletter as you allege, is the biggest body of my work on which you base your claims. Specifically it would be useful to give concrete examples from my final work product as opposed to work-in-progress. I would also like you to specify the time period which I have to make these “progressive changes.” During our 5/10 meeting you mentioned, “a few weeks” will pass and I would then be re-evaluated. While I believe these criticisms are unfounded and unfair, I believe that it is the least you can do. For what it is worth, I acknowledge that like every other employee, I am not perfect and I am sure that there are things I can do to improve. I will do my part to address deficiencies in my work. I want to reach my potential and am willing to not only listen to constructive criticism, but be proactive about improving where I can.

If there is issue with the substantive nature of my work I am asking for the fourth time, to be included in key meetings so I may be better equipped to quote members or include important legislative details in my writing. Excluding me from these meetings impairs my ability to effectively communicate senator thoughts, ideas and information.

It is unfortunate our weekly media meetings ceased in the month of April as that was the only means for me to gain information and get feedback. During those meetings there was never a mention of any alleged deficiency in my work or what improvements needed to be made. During the month of February, I

was told by Ed that Tracie had an interest in writing and that she would be editing my work. None of the edits she made to my work were ever discussed but I was given the directive they were to go out with the changes she made. There was never an opportunity for me to make another attempt at the corrected versions or request to remove specific words or phrases. In fact there has been more than one occasion where I have inquired about a press release I wrote and had my laptop taken from me and used to make corrections rather than asking me to make another attempt at writing a release that was more in-line with what was requested of me, or working collaboratively to suggest revisions or changes.

I want to be a productive member of the Senate Republican Caucus team and have gone so far as coming into the office at 10:00 p.m. recently in order to rectify an oversight. I have always taken pride in my work with no formal complaint in my five years as Communications Director. I have always had good performance reviews so you can imagine my surprise in the timing of this sudden change in evaluation of my work product.

Given the sudden change, and what I believe to be an obvious pretextual basis for these negative comments, I am left to speculate what this is really about. I'm left with only one conclusion: my complaints about the boys' club atmosphere in the Iowa Senate Republican Caucus. The failure to adopt meaningful policies regarding sexual harassment, among other things, and the continuously crude and hostile work environment I am forced to tolerate each and every day is what this is about. We have no real policy while senators and staff regularly and publically talk about women as object, their body parts as if detached from their bodies leaves me wondering what it will require for this environment to be cleaned up.

Will enacting policies be enough? It occurs to me that will just be the start. In sum, I believe that while constructive criticism is fair, the timing and the nature of the criticisms leveled against me suggest it really isn't about my work but about my complaints. While I am willing to address ways in which my work needs improvement, I am also requesting a thorough investigation regarding the sexually hostile work environment that exists here. I specifically request that policies are adopted and training follow. As people who work at doing the people's business and writing and passing laws, we can do a lot better. No private sector workplace would tolerate the kind of environment that currently exists here. I am doing this now not just because the criticisms of my work are unfair but because this environment must change. Please let me know how I can help make that happen and what you plan to do to address these concerns. If there isn't an investigation and meaningful change, I am willing to take these issues to the next level.

I appreciate your prompt response to these issues.

Kirsten D. Anderson