
https://trib.com/news/state-and-regional/health/former-state-medicaid-watchdog-accuses-health-officials-former-attorney-general/article_b998cd25-d22e-598f-9367-c0de311df23e.html

BREAKING

Former state Medicaid watchdog accuses health officials, former attorney general of obstruction

Seth Klamann
Nov 7, 2019

SALE! Subscribe for \$1/mo.



The federal government seized the Northwest Wyoming Treatment Center facilities in Powell earlier this year. A judge found the property was connected to health care fraud.

Photo courtesy Powell Tribune

CHEYENNE — The former Medicaid watchdog for Wyoming accused top state health care officials and a former state attorney general of obstructing investigations into health care fraud, telling lawmakers Thursday that he was fired because of his refusal to let the inquiry drop.

“When the fraud scheme was discovered again, several attempts were made ... to obstruct and interfere with my team’s investigation,” the former watchdog, Mark Gaskill, told lawmakers on the Labor, Health and Social Services committee.

Gaskill worked for the state from July 2015 to May 2016, when he ran a unit that investigated fraud and abuse of Medicaid funds in Wyoming. His team identified **widespread fraud in northwest Wyoming**, including by psychologist Gibson Condie, who later pleaded guilty to a federal health care fraud charge. Three more men who ran a treatment center founded by Condie were **indicted on federal fraud and racketeering charges** in late September.

A spokeswoman for the Health Department said the agency has confidence in the agency’s Medicaid officials. She broadly denied Gaskill’s allegations.

“We’re confident that there was no wrongdoing at the Department of Health,” Kim Deti, the spokeswoman, said.

In his comments before the committee on Thursday, Gaskill called the attorney general's office "co-conspirators in this fraud."

Attorney General Bridget Hill — who was appointed to her position this year, after the period that Gaskill focused on during his comments to lawmakers — denied the accusations made by Gaskill.

"We are aware of Mr. Gaskill's allegations and believe them to be categorically false," she wrote in an email statement to the Star-Tribune. "The Attorney General's Office takes seriously our responsibility to investigate and prosecute Medicaid fraud."



Two Medicaid fraud cases swirl around Powell treatment center

Shane Sanderson , Seth Klamann

Gaskill was invited to speak to the committee by one of its chairmen, Sen. Charlie Scott, R-Natrona County. Along with making accusations against former top state officials, Gaskill used his comments to describe his investigation into the fraud and its extensive breadth. Federal authorities alleged initially that Condie defrauded Medicaid out of \$6.8 million. He admitted to more than \$2 million in health care fraud and is now serving time in a federal facility.

Prosecutors allege now that the three men indicted earlier this fall defrauded the program out of an additional \$8.5 million. They have pleaded not guilty.

Gaskill's unit, he said Thursday, previously investigated Condie in 2009, before Gaskill's tenure. Documents obtained by the Star-Tribune indicate there was an inquiry into Condie then. That investigation, Gaskill alleged in his comments to lawmakers, was "made to go away." He further alleged that a previous attorney general who was friends and college roommates with Condie influenced the decision to end the investigation.

Gaskill did not name the attorney general.

As his testimony continued, Gaskill told the committee that his 2015 investigation into Condie faced pressure from the Attorney General's Office and from higher-ups in the Medicaid division of the Department of Health. In a lawsuit brought on behalf of the U.S. government, Gaskill named Wyoming Medicaid director Teri Green as a defendant. He later removed her from the suit.

Gaskill has previously shared these concerns with lawmakers. After Thursday's hearing concluded, Sen. Anthony Bouchard, a Cheyenne Republican who serves on the health committee, posted to Facebook that the state should fire Green. He also indicated that Green was present during Gaskill's testimony.



Wyoming drug treatment center defrauded government of millions, federal prosecutors say

Shane Sanderson , Seth Klamann

Gaskill told the lawmakers Thursday that the alleged efforts to kill his investigation were "terrifying." He previously told the Star-Tribune that he attempted to wall off various officials from the inquiry to stop what he said were threats to the investigation's integrity.

According to documents obtained by the Star-Tribune, Gaskill referred the Condie investigation to federal authorities. He testified Thursday that he did so out of fear that his investigation would be made to go away or he would be fired to prevent it going forward.

He eventually was fired, in May 2016. His termination letter obtained by the Star-Tribune does not indicate a cause, and Gaskill maintains that his termination was influenced by his investigation.

The Health Department's new director, Mike Ceballos, was present at Thursday's meeting, as was his deputy. Neither health official responded at the hearing to Gaskill's allegations.

Deti, the health spokeswoman, declined to comment on Gaskill's termination, saying it was a personnel matter. She said that everything in the 2015 investigation moved forward as it should have, concluding with the criminal prosecutions. She said she no information was immediately available about the 2009 investigation. She referred questions regarding that investigation to the Attorney General's Office.

Gaskill's testimony had a broader intention than the allegations he made. He called on the committee to move his former unit into its own independent office, to prevent any question of impropriety or obstruction. He said that other states — like Utah, where he previously worked — had taken similar steps.



Wyoming psychologist sent to prison for health care fraud

BOB MOEN Associated Press

While several members of the committee had previously heard Gaskill’s allegations — Bouchard had posted about them on his personal Facebook page — the questions from the committee focused mainly on Gaskill’s call for investigatory independence.

Scott, the co-chairman of the committee, said the issue was one lawmakers should “take quite seriously.” He suggested the problem of establishing the independent office Gaskill described would be complicated and would have to include constitutional considerations.

As for the obstruction at “high levels,” the chairman said most of the people who Gaskill accused had retired or moved on.

But Gaskill’s description of the fraud perpetrated by Condie seemed to strike a note. Scott said he was “concerned” if the state had a significant level of Medicaid fraud. He told his fellow lawmakers that they “should not let this one drop.”

Star-Tribune staff writer Shane Sanderson contributed to this report.

Editor's note: This story has been updated to include comments from Attorney General Bridget Hill.

[View Comments](#)

Seth Klamann

Education and Health Reporter

Seth Klamann joined the Star-Tribune in 2016 and covers education and health. A 2015 graduate of the University of Missouri and proud Kansas City native, Seth worked for newspapers in Milwaukee and Omaha before coming to Casper.