



For Immediate Release
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Contact: Anne Ekern
anne@votewaynejohnson.com 202-445-3001

Candidate Brian Colón Fails to Reveal Major Auditing Conflict

*Colón's hand-picked top advisor sues auditor's office to protect powerful politicians;
Conflicted Colón Complicit in hiding public records*

Albuquerque, NM — Long-time politician Brian Colón is asking New Mexicans to trust him as New Mexico's watchdog in the office of the State Auditor. But he has failed to reveal that his former top aide and campaign contributor is suing taxpayers to hide public records and protect powerful politicians.

Politically-connected attorney Laura Sanchez-Rivet is suing taxpayers to prevent auditors from providing any oversight over an expensive government safety net program, the New Mexico Medical Insurance Pool.

"This is sickening, and it just doesn't smell right," said State Auditor Wayne Johnson. "Brian Colón was hand-picked years ago to hide Bill Richardson's shadowy secrets. In 2018, Brian Colón was hand-picked to conceal more secrets for his powerful political cronies. Brian Colón is just more of the same pay-to-play politics New Mexicans are tired of."

Brian Colón hired Sanchez-Rivet as his top aide in 2007, selecting her out of 29 applicants to serve as Executive Director of the Democratic Party. Colón and Sanchez-Rivet together oversaw the disastrous presidential caucus in February 2008 that drew mocking criticism from CNN. Sanchez-Rivet later contributed \$250 to her friend and boss Brian Colón in his failed run for Lt. Governor.

Colón has been asked several times if he has any conflicts with current or on-going audits. Rather than answering the question directly, he delivers a characteristically long-winded answer that says exactly nothing and fails to answer the question.

"At his best, Brian Colón is a nice guy who is incompetent," said Johnson. "At his worst, he's dangerously corrupt. Either way, the seriousness of the state auditor's office doesn't suit him. Conflicted Colón's close knit ties to Bill Richardson's cronies, past and present, are disqualifying."

New Mexicans can't trust Brian Colón to be our state's watchdog. He's part of the problem.

Background: *The NM Medical Insurance Pool was created by the state legislature to provide health coverage to critically ill New Mexicans denied coverage by big insurance. Insurance companies are forced to finance the fund as a condition of doing business in New Mexico. Those payments are passed on to New Mexicans through increased insurance premiums. State auditors have sought to fully audit the Pool, but received the High Risk Pool's version of "Talk to the hand."*

See it for yourself:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHvyrufgdCg>

At 2:38, Colón is asked, "Are there any audits you would recuse yourself from because of close friendships, business ties?"

At 5:31 Colón is asked specifically about the High Risk Pool, where he provides a non-answer and meekly relegates the authority of the office he seeks to a judge.

Conflicted Colón:

Aug, 2007

- Dem Chair Brian Colón handpicks Laura Sanchez as top aide

Feb 2008

- Colón & Sanchez run disastrous presidential caucus

August 2010

- Laura Sanchez gives cash to Brian Colon's losing political campaign

Apr 2017

- State Auditor Keller requests NMMIP docs

Mar 2018

- State Auditor Johnson requests audit documents from NMMIP

June 2018

- NMMIP refuses to cooperate with Audit Act

Aug 2018

- Laura Sanchez sues State Auditor blocking the public from the NMMIP

Oct 2018

- Brian Colon fails to disclose close ties with Laura Sanchez.



JAELYN DEMARSA/JOURNAL

State Democratic Party Chairman Brian Colón discusses Super Tuesday voting at a news conference Wednesday night in Albuquerque. "The buck stops with me," Colón said earlier in a Journal telephone interview.

future, and what form it should take."

Colón said Wednesday that he accepts responsibility for the Super Tuesday problems in New Mexico, though he also pointed to an unexpectedly high turnout of more than 153,000 voters and New Mexico's long history of close races. The turnout was close to 30 percent.

"The buck stops with me. I lay it squarely on my shoulders," Colón said. "We've got to work harder."

Reasons for problems

Colón said last month that he had expected 30,000 to 40,000 of New Mexico's 532,000-plus registered Democrats to show



ADOLPHE PIERRE LOUIS/JOURNAL

State Democratic Party Executive Director Laura E. Sanchez discusses the process for counting provisional ballots that probably will determine the winner of the Hillary Clinton/Barack Obama presidential caucus battle in New Mexico.

ing precincts into a smaller son is at least the symbolic number of caucus sites. Thors head of the New Mexico party