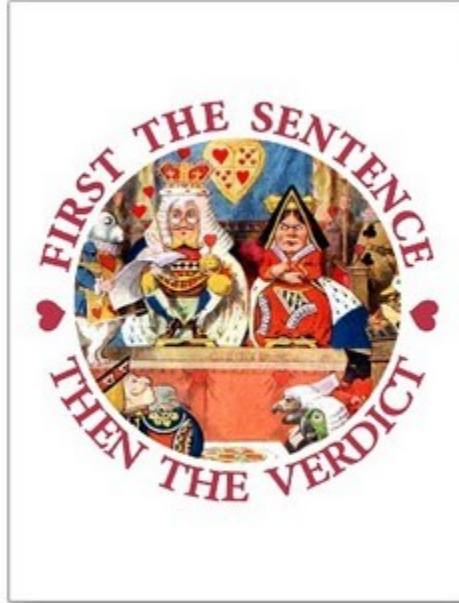


Tuesday, March 22, 2011



In the Matter of University of Minnesota

Regent Sviggum...

Has the Chairman of the Board of Regents Acted Fairly?

From the Star-Tribune:

A committee looking into Steve Sviggum's two roles at the University of Minnesota met for the first time Tuesday to receive paperwork that will help it determine [whether it's a conflict of interest for him to hold both jobs](#).

Among the documents: Sviggum's contract to be a legislative fellow in the U's Humphrey School of Public Affairs, his previous agreement with the school, excerpts from his interview to become member of the U's Board of Regents, and [the board's code of ethics](#).

That code does not speak directly to whether a U employee can also serve on the board.

[And there is a student member of the Board of Regents who would be subject to very much the same complaints about a conflict of interest as Sviggum. Has this Regent continuously been recused when any matters affecting the students at the University have come up?]

Next week, the three-regent committee could recommend what Sviggum should do: Choose between his two positions, edit his contract with the Humphrey School, or keep both jobs as-is, but with a "conflict-of-interest management plan," which would outline when Sviggum would abstain from a discussion and vote.

Allen said many people in the general public and on the faculty have contacted him about Sviggum's situation.

"They all are of one mind – that the two positions are incompatible," Allen said. He added, speaking of the regents: "We have not made that judgment yet."

Sure, Chair Allen, so if you haven't made up your mind and are going to be fair and impartial about the matter why did you make the statement above. It is certainly prejudicial.

Regent Allen, I ask you to recuse yourself from the three-member panel as well as from the final decision. You are the person who made the charge of a conflict of interest, before Regent Sviggum was even challenged on a specific issue and thus it is a conflict of interest to you serve on the panel.

There is also the matter of due process that has been violated by your action.

Please read your own conflict of interest policy and apply it to yourself.

Subd. 2. Financial Conflict of Interest. A financial conflict of interest exists whenever a Regent, a Regent's family member, and/or a business associated with a Regent or a Regent's family member has an actual or potential financial interest or any other interest in a matter pending before the Board that may impair independence of judgment or objectivity in the discharge of the Regent's public governance responsibilities.

How is this conflict any different for a faculty member regent or a student Regent?

Subd. 1. Recusal. Recusal shall mean noninvolvement of a Regent in any discussion of, and decision regarding, the relevant matter to ensure that the Regent's independence of judgment is not compromised, that the public's confidence in the integrity of the Board is preserved, and that the University's public mission is protected.

Subd. 1. Interpretation and Application. The conflict of interest provisions of this policy shall be interpreted and applied to best serve the interests of the University. In some cases, full disclosure and consideration of the particular facts may indicate that a potential conflict of interest is insubstantial so that the University's interests are best served by the Regent's participation. If doubt remains regarding the need for recusal, the Regent involved must elect recusal.

Please, Regent Allen, it is time to do the right thing in this matter and treat Regent Sviggum fairly.

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