

From: [REDACTED].ok.gov>

Subject: Nondisclosure of Conflict of Interest at the Wall Street Journal

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To: "gabe@checksandbalancesproject.org" <gabe@checksandbalancesproject.org>

Mr. Elsner,

It was good talking with you this afternoon. The following is general information on the apparent conflict involving Stephen Moore and the Wall Street Journal. As we discussed, this is not an issue on which I can take a public stand, but I hope you will find it of value.

Nondisclosure of Conflict of Interest at the Wall Street Journal

The following information is being provided because of failed attempts to elicit a response from the Wall Street Journal concerning what appears to be a disregard for journalistic ethics.

Over the past year, the *Wall Street Journal* has dedicated substantial space to tax policy discussions in Oklahoma. The reason could be related to a *Wall Street Journal* editorial board member who is a partner in an econometric firm hired by an Oklahoma anti-tax group to advocate in the discussion.

The econometric firm of Arduin, Laffer & Moore was retained last year by the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OCPA) to create a report calling for elimination of the Oklahoma personal income tax. Throughout the discussion, Stephen Moore, a partner in the firm, has used his position as a *Wall Street Journal* columnist and editorial board member to advocate for the position his firm was hired to promote.

The *Wall Street Journal* has never disclosed the ties Mr. Moore has with the firm and the ongoing tax policy debate.

In September 2011, the Governor's Task Force on Economic Development and Job Creation released a report that included a call for elimination of the personal income tax. The task force study group on taxation was headed by Michael Carnuccio, president of the OCPA. Two months later, the OCPA released a report prepared by Arduin, Laffer & Moore that called for elimination of the personal income tax.

Since then, the *Wall Street Journal* has published without disclaimer no less than five unsigned editorials or columns by Mr. Moore that advocate the position adopted by Arduin, Laffer & Moore.

The dates of Wall Street Journal editorials and/or columns advocating for the position adopted by Arduin, Laffer & Moore:

- February 8, 2012, *The Heartland Tax Rebellion*, unsigned editorial.

- May 15, 2012, *Oklahoma Reform Showdown*, unsigned editorial.
- May 16, 2012, *GOP vs. GOP in Kansas Tax Row*, column by Mr. Moore, including reference to Oklahoma's tax discussion.
- May 29, 2012, *Oklahoma GOP KO's Tax Cut*, column by Mr. Moore.
- August 22, 2012, *Tax Cut Talk in Oklahoma*, column by Mr. Moore.

I hope this information is helpful to you and that your organization finds interest in pursuing action to uphold ethical standards that are clearly being ignored.

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