

January 23, 2024

Monique DeSpain
PO Box 51034
Eugene, OR 97405

Ms. Natalie K. Wight
U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon
1000 SW Third Ave. Ste 600
Portland OR 97204

Dear Ms. Wight,

I write to request your investigation into the disturbing patterns and developments surrounding US Congresswoman Val Hoyle and her relationship with the marijuana company La Mota, the associated non-profit ENDVR, and the owners, founders, and executives of La Mota and ENDVR. News outlets have reported that your office is investigating former Secretary of State Shemia Fagan's corrupt dealings with La Mota in conjunction with investigating La Mota and associated executives. I, and others, appreciate your efforts to determine the truth and uphold the law in the state of Oregon. Your efforts to hold all violators of the law accountable restores public trust.

News reports indicate clear connections between Congresswoman Val Hoyle, La Mota, and the subject of your current investigation, Ms. Fagan. I urge you to expand the scope of your investigation, or launch a new one on similar grounds, into Congresswoman Hoyle and her role in the unlawful award of a taxpayer grant of over half a million dollars to the La Mota-linked non-profit ENDVR, using federal funds.

Congresswoman Hoyle, while Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), played a key role in the award of \$554,000 in federal taxpayer funds to a group founded by, operated by, and benefiting La Mota personnel. *Willamette Week* has extensively reported on Congresswoman Hoyle accepting thousands in campaign donations from La Mota executives Rosa Cazares and Aaron Mitchell as they applied for the apprenticeship grant overseen by Hoyle. The facts presented in the media strongly suggest Val Hoyle abused her authority as BOLI Commissioner to enrich herself, her political campaigns, and her friends at La Mota and ENDVR.

The information released thus far regarding Congresswoman Hoyle's conduct raises serious questions about the existence of a "pay-to-play" scheme and other possible violations of federal and state ethics and corruption laws. The reported details include the following:

- In March 2021, Val Hoyle dined with La Mota CEO Rosa Cazares and the Director of BOLI's Apprenticeship and Training Division, to discuss a grant La Mota was seeking from BOLI. Hoyle would later claim she could not fully recall if the meeting took place although the meeting is well established.
- Over the subsequent 1.5 years, Hoyle received campaign donations totaling around \$26,000 from the founders of La Mota, Rosa Cazares and Aaron Mitchell and La Mota associate Laura Vega.

- In July 2022, BOLI's Oregon State Apprenticeship and Training Council members considered the proposal from La Mota's non-profit, ENDVR, seeking a BOLI grant of \$554,000 of taxpayer funds. During this meeting, the council members expressed concern about the ENDVR proposal. However, Hoyle, during that same meeting, texted the BOLI Director of Apprenticeships from her personal phone stating "You don't need to convince me. [...] it's the Board." The meeting was postponed, by Val Hoyle, for one month, despite there being no originally agreed or calendared additional meeting. Hoyle used her personal phone and texted the BOLI Director of Apprenticeship directing her to set another meeting to afford La Mota the chance to continue to compete for the grant.
- The next month, August 2022, the grant to ENDVR was approved by the Council.
- *Willamette Week* reported the nonprofit "had no evident track record in job training - or performing any work, yet Hoyle called it an "important investment" and vouched for the program."
- Hoyle's successor as BOLI Commissioner promptly revoked the grant because the apprenticeship it funded was found to be an unlawful use of federal tax dollars, though much of the grant had already been spent and could not be returned.
- Val Hoyle, after leaving her job as BOLI Commissioner, was directed by BOLI agency personnel to provide her personal phone and any records of state business conducted on it. This request, her own former employees are described as saying, "It's not customary, in my experience, to ask the outgoing administration for all public records held on personal devices [...] because elected officials are informed through training and policy that personal devices should not be used to conduct public business." However, Hoyle was known for having used her personal phone for state business and listed this phone in her BOLI email signature.
- For 11 months, Congresswoman Hoyle refused to turn these public records over to her former agency, and finally, only agreed to screen the texts herself, along with her attorney, and relinquish a limited portion of the public records. This obstruction of the ordinary course of business caused BOLI staff to object and caused government transparency advocates to describe the Congresswoman's actions as "an affront to transparency."

A criminal investigation into Congresswoman Val Hoyle, her conduct, and her involvement with La Mota, ENDVR and their respective associates is warranted. Obviously, La Mota's corrupt tentacles extend past Ms. Fagan to Rep Hoyle. No one should be above the law — any illegality involving La Mota and Congresswoman Val Hoyle must be rooted out before Oregonians' trust in their government can be restored.

Your prompt attention to this important matter is greatly appreciated. I have summarized the facts for your convenience at www.whatsvalhiding.com.

Sincerely,



Monique DeSpain
Candidate for Congress, Congressional District 4