



Thomas L. Sansonetti

May 15, 2007

Judge Ellen Segal Huvelle
US District Court for the District of Columbia
c/o Barry M. Hartman & Brian W. Stolarz
K&L Gates
1601 K St., NW
Washington, DC 20006

Re: J. Steven Griles

Dear Judge Huvelle:

My name is Tom Sansonetti and I am writing today in support of J. Steven Griles, who is to be sentenced before you on June 26, 2007. I write to ask you for leniency for Steve when you sentence him.

I have known Steve since June of 1987 when I arrived in Washington, D.C. from Gillette, Wyoming to become the Associate Solicitor for Energy and Resources at the Department of the Interior. Steve was then serving at Interior in the presidentially appointed role of Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management. As the chief policymaker for three federal agencies (Bureau of Land Management, Minerals Management Service and the Office of Surface Mining), Steve had me and the forty attorneys in my division as his primary legal counsel. Through the end of the Reagan administration and the beginning of the first Bush administration when I returned to Wyoming, I spent hundreds of hours with Steve in meetings of various sizes on a daily basis discussing potential policies and his authority to implement those policies under the law. During that time period, I came to appreciate many of Steve's admirable traits. He is a loyal individual to not only the presidents and cabinet secretaries he has served but to all of those political and career employees that have served under him. He is honest and straightforward. He hears people out. He runs an efficient meeting. He makes decisions in a firm, clear and decisive manner that leaves no doubt what he desires to accomplish. His leadership skills are augmented by an effusive, happy personality that makes people want to work for him and accomplish common goals.

As a result of our time spent working closely at Interior, Steve and I became social friends after we both returned to private practice in the early nineties. (I had returned to Washington in 1989 to first serve as chief of staff to Wyoming's Congressman, then as Solicitor at the Department of the Interior until the end of the first Bush administration.) I saw him with some frequency through 1993, when I once again returned to Wyoming.

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We maintained a social friendship for the years up to and including 2001, when as the head of the Bush-Cheney transition team for the Department of the Interior, I introduced Steve to Interior Secretary Gale Norton as a potential candidate for Deputy Secretary. The two of them hit it off. Shortly thereafter, President Bush nominated Steve to be Deputy Secretary and the Senate confirmed him to the position in the early part of 2001.

As it evolved, I was destined to become Steve's lawyer once again. In late 2001, I was confirmed by the Senate to be the Department of Justice's Assistant Attorney General for the Environment and Natural Resources Division. In this role I was responsible for the management of all of the litigation facing eight cabinet secretaries. The Department of the Interior's matters represented approximately one third of the Division's caseload. Consequently, I again had the opportunity to work with Steve on a variety of legal issues on a regular basis.

The individual I observed in the Deputy Secretary's position was the same one I had first known fifteen years earlier during my initial exposure to the federal government. Steve is the consummate public servant. He took on huge, complicated, and often unpopular, tasks for Secretary Norton within the Interior building, such as the complex and high-profiled *Cobell* case involving the management of Indian Trust Fund monies. He did so without complaint while managing his regular portfolio of assignments as well. Again, people loved to work for and with Steve and I never saw him act in a manner that showed a lack of honesty or integrity, although I observed him in many tough spots.

When I was interviewed by federal agents during the investigation of Steve and his dealings with Jack Abramoff, I was asked if Steve had used his high office to try and influence me on matters dealing with Indian tribes and their affairs before the Justice Department. The answer was a resounding "no". In particular, Steve had absolutely no input into one of my decisions to require tribes, applying to Interior to take land into trust for gaming purposes, to produce an environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act. In fact, Steve never contacted me in any manner on an Indian matter during my entire three and a half year tenure at the Justice Department.

Both of us had left the Bush-Cheney administration by the Spring of 2005. Steve had joined a new government relations firm in Washington, D.C. while I returned to my former law firm in Wyoming. We have continued our social friendship during this time and have occasionally worked together on the same legal or legislative issues for different clients. Thus, I have had the opportunity to observe Steve in the private sector as well.

As recently as last autumn, I watched as Steve coordinated a complicated legislative effort that included industry, labor, environmental groups and several state agencies. Despite the odd conglomeration of usually differing entities Steve engendered a fair and thorough process that vetted each issue while acting as an honest broker for the entire group until a common goal was created. He then marshaled the resources of the group's individual members to eventually

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obtain the successful result of the negotiated legislation being passed by Congress and signed into law by the President.

In conclusion, Steve is a man I have known for twenty years in both a social and business capacity. He is a man of fine character who is fair, honest, loyal and treats people with integrity. He has twice served his country in important posts achieving acclaim in both instances. I ask that you take this all into account on June 26th. Thank you for this opportunity to address Steve's background and character prior to that date.

Sincerely yours,



Thomas L. Sansonetti

a Partner of Holland & Hart

TLS:cb