

GALE A. NORTON

Judge Ellen Segal Huvelle
United States District Court
For the District of Columbia
c/o Barry M. Hartman and
Brian W. Stolarz
K&L Gates
1601 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Re: J. Steven Griles

Dear Judge Huvelle:

My name is Gale A. Norton, former Secretary of the Interior. I am writing today in support of J. Steven Griles, who is to be sentenced before you on June 26, 2007. I am writing to present the Court with my views of Steve Griles' character and integrity. Although the current situation is unfortunate, it is only a small part of a distinguished career of private sector employment and government service.

I have known Steve for over twenty years. When I first came to work as an attorney for the Department of the Interior in the 1980's, Steve was already the Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals. Although he was relatively young, he had already served several years in Virginia state government. He had helped reform the Office of Surface Mining from a dysfunctional agency to an effective regulator. He impressed me as someone who was hard working and knowledgeable, but who also went out of his way to make sure everyone felt like part of the team. He was not only well respected by his subordinates; he had a real following of loyal friends.

When I was selected as Secretary of the Interior, Steve was an obvious choice for my Deputy Secretary. He had experience and a deep understanding of Interior issues, but he retained the idealism to believe that we could make a difference. He shared my view that finding ways to protect the environment while providing for the economic and recreational needs of Americans was an important undertaking.

Steve made personal sacrifices to re-enter public service. He ended his lobbying partnership, knowing that not only would his government salary be far less than his private sector earnings potential, but also that government ethics rules would restrict his future ability to handle Interior issues. At the point in his career when he could have reaped his highest financial rewards, he opted to pursue the idealistic path.

When the Senate confirmed him as Deputy Secretary, he launched into a schedule of long hours and hard work. He took on some of the toughest and least rewarding projects. In particular, we faced the daunting challenge of reforming over a century of

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bureaucratic management of lands and funds held in trust for tribes and individual Indians. He put together a diverse group of tribal leaders to explore and negotiate agency reorganizations and operational improvements. There is little way to really express the magnitude of the challenge. It included accounting complexities that would confound the most sophisticated banks, inconsistent practices used at scores of different locations, labored attempts to design and implement new computer systems, and a toxic litigation environment. Overlaying all of this difficulty was an emotional component: for American Indians, the government's management of trust assets tied back to long decades of suffering abuse and injustice.

Steve devoted his considerable problem-solving skills to this task. He recruited an outstanding and talented team. He bought pizzas and Chinese food for late night and weekend work sessions. He met with and talked with tribal leaders enough to develop an in-depth understanding of their concerns. He tried again and again as various proposals were considered, but ultimately blocked or rejected by one group or another. Throughout, he worked with employees to improve our management systems. There were no quick fixes that could magically heal old suspicions and scars, but Steve's dedication and leadership brought improvements far beyond anything ever achieved in recent decades.

This episode illustrates several things: Steve's willingness to listen to and work with people, his dedication to working hard on the most thankless tasks, his ability to lead and inspire a team to continue making progress despite difficulties. There was no personal benefit to Steve in taking on such an overwhelmingly difficult task; instead there was personal risk since everyone who "touched" Indian trust became embroiled in the litigation. He took on this task out of the same sense of duty and honor that brought him to public service in the first place.

The reality of Steve Griles is in many ways different from the public perception. His powerful size and bearing seem intimidating, but those who know him realize he is a compassionate and caring person. He helped co-workers who were struggling. He was encouraging and upbeat when people got discouraged. He was quick to praise people and applaud their accomplishments. We all knew he wouldn't be able to get through his good-bye speech at Interior without choking up.

Steve was truly enthusiastic about our efforts to improve national parks and encourage landowners to enhance wildlife habitat. He would often return from official trips with glowing reports of the great things Interior employees or local citizens were doing for the environment. Steve has a personal interest in history, so he became especially involved with Ford's Theatre and the Jamestown Quadricentennial.

Steve's experience in the private sector made him understand business perspectives, but it also made him an effective regulator. He understood and pushed for more stringent oversight in several situations that had not occurred to his less-experienced subordinates.

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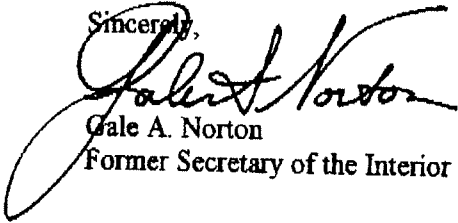
From a personal standpoint, I was pleased by our ability to work well together. Many men would have difficulty working with a woman as a superior, especially a woman he had once outranked. Steve instead was supportive and encouraging. We had one of the best, if not the best, working relationships of any Secretary and Deputy Secretary in the Administration.

Steve has an extraordinary sense of duty – the same view of honor that motivates others to serve the public in the military. With these values at the core of his being, and the motivation for years of work and sacrifice, the current situation hurts him very deeply.

I recognize this is not the phase in these proceedings for re-examining the particular aspects of the case against Steve. But I can say, as someone who saw his work on a daily basis, that I continue to believe he served the Department and the nation well.

I sincerely hope the Court will take Steve's dedicated and distinguished career of public service into account in considering his case.

Sincerely,



Gale A. Norton
Former Secretary of the Interior