

March 22, 2014

North Carolina House of Representatives
16 W. Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

To: House Standing Committee on Ethics

Re: Request for investigation of possible ethics violations regarding the
Speaker of The House Rep. Thom Tillis – Mecklenburg surrounding
UNC Board of Governors appointments.

Chairman	Rep. Carney, Rep. Howard
Vice Chairman	Rep. Setzer
Members	Rep Adams, Rep Avila, Rep. Boles, Rep. Brisson, Rep. R. Brown, Rep. Farmer – Butterfield, Rep. Jackson, Rep. G. Martin, Rep. McGrady, Rep. Michaux, Rep. Stevens

Madam Chairwomen and members of the House Standing Committee on Ethics,

I am deeply concerned that open, honest, and good government may have been severely compromised in the North Carolina House of Representatives by your own leader and Speaker of The House, Rep. Thom Tillis from Mecklenburg.

According to several media reports that have been published in the Raleigh News and Observer, several board appointments to the UNC Board of Governors made in 2013 were made by the House under the recommendation of The Speaker of The House. These appointees have made substantial political campaign contributions to The Speaker and his campaign committees. According to one media report the spokesman for the Speaker in the past has stated that the practice,

“puts North Carolina government up for sale to the highest bidder.”

In the Speaker’s own words according to the report, **“I would estimate he is directly responsible for more than \$100,000.00 in financial support through personal contributions to my campaign committee and other candidates and through the Hospitality Alliance,”** Tillis wrote in a March 21 email to House leaders.

Rep. Michaux, a member of your committee, very keenly and astutely observed in the same article.

“It sure sounds like a pay for play to me,” “It seems pretty blatant.”

I think many North Carolinians would share in my appreciation for Rep. Michaux's keen and astute observation and his willingness to so candidly and honestly frame the issue.

I'm reasonably certain that a "pay for play" scenario initiated by the Speaker of The House would certainly violate existing ethics rules. Many rules were set forth by the body in legislatures past, were put in place to discourage any abuses of power or improprieties by the leadership.

I have transmitted a letter to the state's Attorney General as well as the State Board of Elections to investigate the matter further to see if any laws were broken.

I'm requesting that your committee fully review the circumstances surrounding the appointment of board members to the UNC Board of Governors. In particular the circumstances that existed regarding The Speaker of The House and how those appointees that he favored were selected and approved and if there were any other mitigating circumstances that weighed heavily on the selection of the appointees to the Board of Governors in 2013 to see if any ethics violations have occurred.

Having served in the House of Representatives I am aware of the challenge you have at hand in investigating this matter as you help the people of North Carolina get to the bottom of this matter.

Any attempts to threaten, intimidate, coerce, whisperings of political retribution against your office or your person, or attempts to interfere in your investigation of ethics violations in this matter from the leadership or The Speaker should be fully documented and immediately passed onto the state's Attorney General for review through that Office's State Bureau of Investigation.

I need not remind each Honorable member of this committee that you serve the people of North Carolina first and not The Speaker of the House or any other entity.

Thank you for your hard work in this matter and please contact me should you need clarification on any item included in my communication to you.

Best Regards,

The Honorable John Rhodes
Huntersville, NC

Source: Raleigh News and Observer July 26, 2013 Tillis pushed several major political contributors for UNC board, documents reveal.