

# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **FROM THE VERMILION COUNTY DEMOCRATS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **LOCAL DEMOCRATS SPEAK OUT AGAINST PARTISAN FIRING OF NIKKI BOGART, HIGHLY RESPECTED 7-YEAR FINANCIAL RESOURCES DIRECTOR FOR THE VERMILION COUNTY BOARD**

*Bogart filed complaint on Friday with the Grievance Committee of Vermilion County alleging her termination by new County Board Chairman Michael Marron was improper and illegal*

**DANVILLE** – On Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>, Nikki Bogart filed a complaint with the Grievance Committee of Vermilion County alleging that her Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> termination as the Financial Resources Director for the Vermilion County Board Office by newly sworn-in County Board Chairman, Michael Marron, was illegally based on her being a Democrat.

“We have been hearing that over the past few months Mr. Marron has set about to purge Democrats from the county payroll, even those that are highly regarded civil servant professionals like Nikki,” Frank Wright, chairman of the Vermilion County Democrats, said. “This is very disturbing. We have a long tradition here in Vermilion County that after an election we stop the partisanship and start working together for the people. Mr. Marron apparently has another idea, and wants to turn the county payroll into his own patronage mill. There are hundreds of employees working hard for the county and they should not have to fear for their job just because of who they vote for.”

Ms. Bogart, an active Democrat who ran for Recorder in Vermilion County in 2012, has been the Financial Resources Director since Jul. 2007. Prior to that, she was a County Board Member for ten years. Her duties as Financial Resources Director were not political, but professional civil service. Ms. Bogart was highly qualified for the position. She has a Bachelor’s Degree in Accountancy from the University of Illinois and had thirteen years of accountant and financial experience prior to being hired by the County Board. She also brought the unique qualification of being a County Board Member for a decade.

“I served on the Finance and Personnel Committee all seven years that Nikki has been Financial Resources Director for the County Board,” said current County Board Member Bruce Stark. “Nikki has been an invaluable asset to all County Board Members, Republicans and Democrats. She’s a professional who does her job and I’ve never heard any complaints at all from either side of the aisle. I was devastated

when I heard Chairman Marron terminated her as one of his first orders of business as the new chair. There is nobody who has more knowledge of the county's finances than Nikki and this was a horrible mistake. I just hope it is not too late to reverse it."

Ms. Bogart has worked with both Democratic and Republican County Board Chairmen. She worked with Republican County Board Chairman, Gary Weinard, from 2012 to 2014, and received praise from him for her job performance. In Nov. 2014, Mr. Weinard recommended Ms. Bogart for a merit-based pay increase that was made effective in Dec. Ms. Bogart has never been reprimanded or criticized over her seven-year service and has received widespread bipartisan praise for her job performance, including from Mr. Marron. Just five months ago, in regard to the fact that the 2014-2015 county budget was passed unanimously without debate, Mr. Marron was quoted as follows:

"And I think that's a credit to our financial team, both the Auditor Linda Anstey and Nikki Bogart, Financial Resource Director, as well as all the elected officials and department heads. They did a great job, and the committee chairs did a wonderful job of getting everything through committee, and it was a very smooth process."

(Source: [Vermilioncountyfirst.com](http://Vermilioncountyfirst.com), Oct. 14, 2014)

He also said of the 2014-2015 budget, the very last annual budget worked on by Ms. Bogart just at the end of last year, "This is the smoothest budget process I have ever been a part of," and thanked Ms. Bogart by name for her work on it.

(Source: [Chairman's Comments, County Board Meeting Oct. 1, 2014](#))

The Vermilion County Personnel Policies, adopted by the County Board to govern the hiring, discipline, and termination of county employees such as Ms. Bogart, requires there to be a "justifiable reason" for an immediate termination. It also allows an employee to appeal a termination to the Grievance Committee, made up of a County Board Member on the Finance and Personnel Committee, an elected officeholder, an appointed official, and two county employees.

On Friday, Ms. Bogart's attorney, Matthew Duco of Spiros Law in Danville, filed an appeal of her termination before the Grievance Committee. The complaint alleges that on Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> Mr. Marron demanded Ms. Bogart resign and, when she refused, he terminated her. It also alleges that he gave no reason for her termination and that he had not reprimanded her or taken any disciplinary action against her at all prior to Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>. The complaint requests the Grievance Committee determine that Mr. Marron did not have the authority to terminate Ms. Bogart because she served the County Board and not him personally, that there was no justifiable reason for her termination, that Mr. Marron improperly and illegally terminated Ms. Bogart because she was a Democrat, and that Ms. Bogart be immediately re-instated to her position.

Mr. Marron was elected as the County Board Chairman on Dec. 1, 2014. Mr. Marron was also the chairman of the Vermilion County Republican Party. His demand for the resignation of Ms. Bogart, and termination after her refusal to resign, comes within just months of several other women who resigned from county positions because of the hostile and partisan atmosphere Mr. Marron has created in county government offices.

“I am concerned that highly trained and experienced women are being pushed out of their positions,” said John Dreher, a former County Board Member. “Nikki Bogart, Barbara Dreher, and Dee Ann Ryan are well known by all, including members of both political parties, as consummate professionals of the highest integrity. They have all kept their partisanship secondary to their execution of public service.”

Mr. Dreher is also the husband of Barbara Dreher, the former Executive Director of the Danville Election Commission. Mrs. Dreher retired from her position in Nov. 2014 after Mr. Marron issued scathing, factually inaccurate, partisan attacks on her for processing absentee ballots before election day – something every Republican county clerk was doing in each of the counties surrounding Vermilion. Mr. Marron demanded Mrs. Dreher resign, which she refused to do but instead, opted to retire early. Before being forced out by Mr. Marron, she worked for Vermilion County for twenty-two years, ten years of which as head of the election commission. Following her retirement, she was quoted as stating, “I don’t need this,” referring to the hostile work environment created in the county offices by Mr. Marron’s partisan attacks. Mrs. Dreher was replaced by a twenty-one year old that was involved in the Bruce Rauner Gubernatorial campaign and that has no election administration experience at all.

(Source: [Vermilioncountyfirst.com](http://Vermilioncountyfirst.com), Oct. 24, 2014, [NG](http://NG), Nov. 18, 2014, and [Vermilioncountyfirst.com](http://Vermilioncountyfirst.com), Jan. 15, 2015)

There have been two other women who have resigned their county positions because of Mr. Marron in the past few months. Karen Haner, a part-time receptionist in the County Board Office, where Ms. Bogart also worked, resigned on Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>, just ten days after Mr. Marron officially took over as County Board Chairman. Dee Ann Ryan, who served as the Executive Director of the Vermilion County Mental Health Board, also resigned in 2014.

“I loved my position as executive director of the mental health board, and felt that I was doing a lot of good for our county,” Ms. Ryan said. “It broke my heart to resign, but I just could not put up with Mr. Marron replacing committed mental health professionals with people who have no experience in the mental health field – including his mother. He made it very clear that he wanted to replace everyone on the board with people who supported him even though there were applicants on file who had been waiting to be appointed that were highly qualified. It is sad that so many qualified public servants are being chased out of their positions just because

of what primary ballot they decided to vote with, and that Mr. Marron thinks he can just bully people into resigning. That isn't right and the County Board needs to stop him before Vermilion County turns into Mike Marron's good ol' boys patronage club. I'm proud that Nikki is standing up to this bully and standing up for what is right for the people of this county. We need to contact our County Board Members and ask them to stand with Nikki."

The Grievance Committee has yet to be organized or set a time for its hearing on Ms. Bogart's appeal.

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