

**Statement by
District of Columbia Auditor Kathleen Patterson
On *The Washington Post* Editorial *A Pattern of Dysfunction*
October 14, 2019**

I appreciate *The Washington Post* advocating for a strong and effective Board of Ethics and Government Accountability in the October 14, 2019 print edition. But I object to an unattributed “concern” about the experience of my staff member who supervised the report that prompted the editorial. A specious allegation with no factual support deserves a response.

Our [report](#) faulted BEGA for mishandling a whistleblower complaint about procurement practices at the Department of Housing and Community Development. The procurement issue was the subject of an audit released in May, [Low-Ranked Projects Secure Affordable Housing Funds](#).

ODCA followed up on the whistleblower’s complaint filed with BEGA more than a year ago. We obtained and reviewed relevant emails exchanged among BEGA staff and other Executive branch offices. I tapped Audit Supervisor Stacie Pittell to supervise the project with Program Analyst Ingrid Drake as auditor-in-charge. Their names appear on the report cover. Ms. Pittell was BEGA’s first general counsel.

The Post’s Associate Editorial Page Editor Jo-Ann Armao asked me, via email, about the “objectivity” of a former BEGA employee working on the report. Our exchange follows:

Armao to Patterson, Oct. 9, 2019, 3:22 p.m.

Kathy: in reporting this, I have heard concerns that one of the people involved in this audit used to work for BEGA, raising some questions about objectivity.... Has anyone asked you about this and what is your response.....thanks.... I am at 202 334 6080 if you prefer to talk....

Patterson to Armao, Oct. 9, 2019, 3:46 p.m.

The person whose name is on the front of the report as audit supervisor is Stacie Pittell, who was BEGA’s first general counsel when Bob Spagnoletti chaired the board and Darrin Sobin was director. Darrin now serves on the board. I recruited her as my chief of staff in 2015 and she was promoted to audit supervisor this past year. She did not overlap with either Brian Flowers who succeeded her, or Brent Wolfingbarger, the director, the two BEGA employees named in the report. She is an experienced investigator with strong experience in email searches which made her the obvious supervisor for this report. Her previous employment at BEGA was discussed by me and my deputy at the outset when each team member fills out an “independence” statement as part of the audit process. We did not and do not see her prior employment as an independence (i.e. objectivity) issue.

The “auditor in charge,” Ingrid Drake, is an accomplished auditor/analyst who was an honorable mention in the annual Cafritz awards program last year and was part of the team that produced our Housing Production Trust Fund audits. She is the ODCA staff member who was contacted by the whistleblower.

Darrin made a reference to Stacie when he acknowledged receipt of the report last week via email. Please let me know if you have any questions; thanks.

I assumed my explanation satisfied any lingering concerns with ODCA objectivity. The report is short and factual with no room for subjectivity. I did not share my own commentary on the question – that the “concern” constituted “pounding the table” and an obvious effort to deflect attention away from the serious management issues revealed by our report.

As the leader of a legislative audit shop that undergoes a peer review every three years—and we passed with the highest rating in 2016 and again this year—I take very seriously our adherence to Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). A bedrock of GAGAS is objectivity or, in auditor parlance, independence.

I stand by our work. I regret that *The Washington Post* undercut its own otherwise strong statement in support of government accountability by giving voice to an anonymous and unsupported allegation. My chosen hometown newspaper is better than that.