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NM Politics blog titled:

The First Pic Together Of The Three Who Would Be Guv, Plus: The Politics Behind The Martinez Water Battle, And: The Big Reason Dunn Is Done For Congress

## **WATER POLITICS - Dated October 18, 2017**

The esoteric world of the State Engineer, the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC), complicated water rights and Gov. Martinez's ability to influence all of the above exploded into the headlines this month when three members of the ISC--including Republicans appointed by Martinez--**abruptly quit** the panel. That forced the Governor to quickly make **new appointments** to the ISC.

The resignation that really caught the eyes of La Politica was from ISC Chairman Caleb Chandler of Clovis. His son, Matt Chandler, is a charter member of the Governor's political machine.

So what's going on? We asked one of our readers with years of experience in all things agua and who wishes to remain anonymous, to tell us about the politics behind the upheaval:

*Joe, the Interstate Stream Commission has lost all but two of its senior staff and their institutional knowledge. State Engineer Tom Blaine has taken over the ISC, which would require the Governor's blessing. The Governor has starved the ISC of staff and resources and depleted its special purpose funds to pay for routine operations. Now, even Governor Martinez's appointed Republican Chairman Chandler has resigned. The ISC will have to be rebuilt under the next Governor, and it must be reformed and made non-partisan at the same time.*

*One trigger for the brouhaha is the ISC's protest of water rights applications before the State Engineer that could impact compliance with New Mexico's interstate water obligations. The application by Italian billionaire Bruno Modena's Augustin Plains Ranch to speculatively import mined groundwater to the Rio Grande is the most prominent, and appears to be the reason the State Engineer fired ISC Director Deborah Dixon.*

*Remember that State Engineer Tom Blaine resurrected the defective application after former State Engineer Scott Verhines rejected it as fundamentally insufficient, a judgment that was also reached independently by District Court Judge Reynolds. You may remember that this project appeared as NM's entry on President Trump's priority infrastructure projects list, one project per state. Rumor has it this project is a favorite of the Governor. Campaign contributions involved?*

*Regarding the lead sentence, here is the tally of recent ISC senior staff casualties; Director Deborah Dixon was fired. These employees were the victims of the current conflict with the State Engineer or austerity policies: Colorado River Bureau Chief Kevin Flanigan, Special Projects Bureau Chief Craig Roepke, General Counsel Amy Haas, Acting General Counsel Kim Bannerman, and Rio Grande technical guru Nabil Shafike (PhD, PE) are gone within the last six months or so. Kim Abeyta-Martinez, the chief financial person, is retiring early at the end of the month. Remaining bureau are Rolf Schmidt-Petersen (Rio Grande) and Hannah Riseley-White (Pecos). Hannah is relatively new.*

Man, that is deep insider stuff that really lets us know what is going on.