

Whistleblower plans to sue lottery over alleged retaliation

Procurement officer claims lottery officials forced him out

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A former employee has filed notice he intends to sue the Oregon Lottery for retaliating against him for blowing the whistle on the agency's leadership for questionable management practices.

Trinh Tran, a former lottery procurement officer, resigned from the agency in October, several weeks after then-acting Lottery Director Barry Pack took disciplinary steps against him, according to a tort claim notice filed in December.

Tran claims the disciplinary action came after he reported issues concerning Jack Roberts, who at the time Tran filed his report was director of the lottery.

Tran alleged that Pack pursued disciplinary action against him despite an internal investigation of Tran that found "no evidence of inappropriate conduct or violations of policy." The investigation, initiated by Pack in May, alleged that Tran engaged in "intimidating" and "belittling" behavior toward his colleagues.

"In short, any purported concern with Mr. Tran's 'management style' was a pretext for an investigation that was simply and blatantly a witch hunt in retaliation for Mr. Tran's raising and escalating his concerns about official misconduct," the tort claim states.

The Oregon Lottery had no comment on the pending litigation, said Joanie Stevens-Schwenger, a lottery spokeswoman.

Tran's allegations are similar to those of Roland Iparraguirre, deputy director of the Oregon State Lottery. Iparraguirre resigned in August on the same day the tort claim

says Pack placed Tran on a disciplinary plan.

"Mr. Iparraguirre's placement on administrative leave was a blatant act of retaliation for whistleblowing by former Director Roberts," wrote Loren Collins, Iparraguirre's former attorney, in a letter to state officials. The letter requested that the state officials reinstate Iparraguirre to his job.

Collins said Tuesday he is no longer representing Iparraguirre and had no comment on Tran's claim.

Tran and Iparraguirre both played roles in the April termination of Roberts, a former state labor commissioner and Republican gubernatorial candidate, as lottery director.

In March, Tran expressed concerns to Lottery Commissioner Liz Carle about "what he saw as Roberts' 'mismanagement and abuse of authority,'" according to Tran's tort claim.

The disclosure came as Carle was reaching out to

lottery employees for information about Roberts' management practices, the claim states.

Roberts was at odds with Commissioners Carle and Mary Wheat over Roberts' hiring of Farshad Allahdadi as interim assistant director for sales and retail services. Roberts requested in April that the Governor's Office order an investigation into his claim that the commissioners were creating a hostile work environment for Allahdadi, based on his national origin.

An independent investigation by Kyle Abraham of Barran Liebman LLP found commissioners had

expressed concerns about an anonymous email alleging that Allahdadi had engaged in questionable procurement and contracting practices in the past. The investigation found no evidence of discrimination against Allahdadi for his national origin.

In April, Tran and Iparraguirre also went to Gov. Brown's adviser, Heidi Moawad, to report their concerns about Roberts, according to an April email by Moawad.

"They believe he was being punitive toward employees he could 'prove' were talking with (lottery)

commissioners," Moawad wrote.

Roberts placed Iparraguirre on paid administrative leave in April after Roberts claimed Iparraguirre had a verbal altercation with a subordinate, Janell Simmons, a human resources director at the lottery.

Brown terminated Roberts the following day and appointed Pack as interim director. Pack was confirmed by the state Senate this month to serve as the agency's permanent director.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

Utah is fastest-growing state as West bucks sluggish trend

By **LINDSAY WHITEHURST**
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah is the fastest-growing state in the country, leading a cluster of Western states with populations on the upswing despite sluggish national growth, according to new numbers released by the U.S. Census Bureau Tuesday.

The state that's long had the country's highest birth rate grew just over 2 percent from July 2015 to July 2016, followed closely by Nevada, Idaho and Florida. Washington state, Oregon and Colorado also took top percentage-growth spots.

Oregon's population is 4.09 million.

The U.S. population, meanwhile, posted one of its lowest growth rates since the late 1930s, shortly after the Great Depression, said Brookings Institution demographer William Frey. That's largely because baby-boomer generation population declines haven't been fully replaced by new births or immigration.

Several Western states are bucking that trend as people are attracted by recovering economies and affordable housing, he said.

The demographic shifts mean 24 percent of Americans live in the West...

"As things start to inch up, people are finding good home values in central California, and that's spilling out into other mountain West states," he said, though in most places the growth doesn't yet match pre-recession levels.

Other states that have been recent growth powerhouses also flagged this year. North Dakota, for example, led the country for the past four years during an oil boom that started around 2004, but its growth slowed amid 2016's weak crude prices.

Eight states had population losses this year, including three — Pennsylvania, New York and Wyoming — that posted gains last year, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Illinois had the biggest drop, losing more than 37,000 people.

The demographic shifts mean 24 percent of Americans live in the West, and another 38 percent of the population is concentrated in the South, according to Census officials.

In Utah, the growth was

split nearly evenly between new births and in-migration of people attracted by the strong tech and financial industries, said Pam Perlich with the University of Utah's Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. The state is also home base for the growing Mormon church.

Utah's population passed the 3 million mark this year, a milestone for the state that's nevertheless a far cry from the country's most-populous states. No. 1 was California with more than 39 million, followed by Texas, with nearly 28 million people.

Still, Utah's raw-number population growth ranked No. 11 in the country as the state added more than 60,000 people, Perlich said.

In Nevada, gambling-sector growth in Las Vegas has paired with gains associated with a Tesla battery manufacturing plant in the north, pushing the overall population to just under 3 million people, said state demographer Jeff Hardcastle.

Probe of voter 'robocalls' suspended

Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon secretary of state is suspending an investigation into automated calls that told some voters in the run-up to the November election that they were marked as 'inactive' voters in registration rolls and their vote might not count.



Jeanne Atkins

Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins said Tuesday that while the calls

confused voters, there is no evidence that they contained deliberately false information.

She has said previously that the contacts may have relied on outdated voter rolls.

In a statement, Atkins says in the future, political campaigns should consult with state elections officials to make sure their voter records are up-to-date.

Voters all across the state

received the confusing automated calls in the week before the election.



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