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GROUPS CRY FOUL OVER FIRING OF DEC COMMISSIONER GRANNIS, CALL ON GOV PATERSON TO REINSTATE GRANNIS IMMEDIATELY
Governor Fires NY's Top Environmental Cop for Release of Internal Memo Revealing How Budget Cuts Will Impact Air, Water & Land Protection

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Released: Friday, October 22, 2010

(ALBANY, NY) State lawmakers, environmental, conservation, and public health organizations today attacked Governor Paterson for the reckless termination of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Alexander B. "Pete" Grannis. Governor Eliot Spitzer appointed Grannis to lead New York's primary environmental agency in 2007. The groups are calling for Paterson to reinstate Grannis and for the next governor to provide the DEC with resources necessary to responsibly safeguard New York's environment.

Press reports suggest that Pete Grannis was fired in response to the leak of an [internal memo](#) that reveals how the latest round of proposed budget and staff cuts will imperil the DEC's ability to monitor air and water pollution, clean up toxic oil and chemical spills, and keep an eye on out hazardous waste disposal and storage, among dozens of other critical functions. Staff and budget cuts also mean that new businesses moving to New York State must wait years for necessary permits and regulatory approvals, while polluters have little fear of enforcement and often escape regulatory oversight. According to the memo:

- Agency was told to lay off 209 staff, on top of 260 early retirement incentive approvals this year. This leaves the agency with 2,926 staff, a 23 percent reduction from 2007-08.
- The DEC is bearing 10 percent of all state layoffs, although the agency only accounts for 2.5 percent of the total state workforce.
- In the last 2.5 years, the agency has lost 595 employees, 16 percent of its workforce.
- The DEC's non-personal services budget (travel and equipment for inspections, oil clean ups) has been cut in half from 2007-08 to 2010-11.
- In 2007-08, the Spitzer Administration increased staff levels at the DEC and added 108 for a total of 3,775.

Pete Grannis has been an effective leader as head of the state Environmental Conservation Department and has been a big supporter of the Bigger Better Bottle bill and E-waste bills," said Senator Antoine Thompson, Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee.

"The firing of Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis is one more in a long series of examples of the Paterson administration's open hostility to the environment. It is obvious that the performance of Commissioner Grannis was anything but poor. He performed his duty as New York's environmental caretaker with diligence, clarity and fearlessness. Commissioner Grannis stood firm against proposals to cut the DEC to nearly the lowest levels in its history, and he paid for it. Today we

honor his courage to stand up for our water, land and air and to be a staunch advocate for his agency," Assemblyman Robert Sweeney, Chair of the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee.

"Commissioner Pete Grannis was fired for sounding the alarm and because the truth came out about the Department of Environmental Conservation. Budget cuts and staff attrition have pushed the agency to the brink. Instead of rising to the challenge and working to address these serious issues, the Governor's reaction was to fire the one person holding it all together. This wrong-headed move will cost New Yorkers dearly. A functional DEC is essential for the protection of our air and water quality and right now the agency is struggling to meet its responsibilities. We are seeing it locally with a permitting bottleneck further delaying responsible developments. Looking ahead, even if hydrofracking was safe, DEC does not even come remotely close to having the resources to enforce drilling regulations," said Assemblyman Kevin Cahill, Chair of the Assembly Energy Committee.

"PEF/encon, Division 169 of the Public Employees Federation, representing the 1700 (and rapidly diminishing Professional, Scientific and Technical Staff at NYSDEC), calls on the Governor to reinstate Commissioner Pete Grannis immediately. DEC is in turmoil as it is with drastically reduced staff at a time when there are numerous critically important environmental issues needing to be dealt with that have the potential for serious harm to public health and safety if not handled professionally and competently. We find it abhorrent that a Commissioner was fired without even the pretense of due process and having a chance to present his side of the story. The issues in the memo released to the public are not new to the professional staff--we have been telling the legislature and Governor for years that our staff shortages are resulting in drive-by inspections and triage management. It is almost criminal for the Governor and Legislature to pretend that this agency can fulfill its mission, statutory and regulatory responsibilities," said Wayne Bayer, PEF/encon Executive Board and Shop Steward. 2

"Firing Pete Grannis is the Paterson Administration's final insult to New York's environment. The Governor has been tearing the Department of Environmental Conservation limb from limb over the last few years and now they've cut off its head," said Rob Moore, Executive Director, Environmental Advocates of New York. We're calling on Governor Paterson to reinstate Pete Grannis and we're calling on the next governor to responsibly provide resources to the agency and protect our shared environment."

"The Governor's systematic dismantling of the DEC is reckless-critically endangering human and environmental health. One would think Governor Paterson has lost his mind," said Susan Lawrence, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Chair. "To fire such a dedicated, loyal DEC Commissioner as Pete, who held together this decimated agency, Paterson has clearly lost his heart as well. It will take years to repair the damage Paterson has done to New York's environment."

"The firing of Pete Grannis is a sad punctuation on the dismal environmental record of the Paterson Administration," said Adirondack Council Executive Director Brian L. Houseal. "We have seen cuts to staff, slashing of the Environmental Protection Fund, and a proposal to end land protection. The Adirondack Council applauds the efforts of Commissioner Grannis to protect the environment during his tenure and his truthfulness about what additional cuts would do to DEC's critical functions. We wish Pete the best in the future and hope this administration, which is openly hostile to the environment, does not do any further damage in its final days."

"The dismissal of Peter Grannis, a multi-decadal environmental statesman, is an act of political timidity and gutlessness reflecting an unwillingness to address the systematic fiscal challenges engulfing the state as well as a disregard for long-term environmental protection and health," said Jim Tripp, General Counsel, Environmental Defense Fund.

"Commissioner Grannis worked for the people of New York. He served them well by telling the truth about how devastating budget cuts are putting air and water quality at risk. Governor Paterson's act of firing

Pete Grannis betrayed New Yorkers' strong support for environmental protection and a transparent and accountable government," said Curtis Fisher, Regional Executive Director, National Wildlife Federation.

"When someone like Pete Grannis, who worked at the DEC in the early 1970's and championed environmental laws in the state Legislature for thirty years before serving as commissioner, says that the agency is at its weakest point in history and that critical environmental programs are 'hanging on a thread,' people ought to listen. Instead, Governor Paterson fired him," said Laura Haight, NYPIRG's senior environmental associate. "This is just another example of an Administration more interested in enforcing its ill-informed and heavy handed agenda than looking out for the public's interests."

"Pete Grannis has spent his life fighting for clean air," said Scott T. Santarella, President and CEO of the American Lung Association in New York. "As an assemblyman and as DEC Commissioner, he has led air quality and tobacco control efforts which have helped New Yorkers breathe easier. The Lung Association calls on the state of New York to follow Pete's legacy by restoring much needed funds to DEC and refocusing its resources on cleaning the air we breathe."

"The Governor just sent a chilling and frightening message to every government employee - tell the truth and you will get fired. The disproportionate cuts to the DEC will have dramatic ramifications to every New Yorker. Protecting drinking water, air quality, cleaning up toxic waste site and protecting surface waters are necessities not luxury items. Managing a budget deficit isn't an excuse to endanger the health and welfare of New Yorkers," said Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

"Pete Grannis has been a steadfast champion for conservation for decades, and it's a shame that the Paterson Administration's assault on the environment has claimed another strong advocate," said Albert E. Caccese Executive Director of Audubon New York. "This continued dismantling of the DEC by Governor Paterson and Larry Schwartz is leaving the state handicapped to protect its citizens, birds and other wildlife from emerging environmental threats, and it is our hope that the next administration reverses this wrongheaded strategy."

"Pete Grannis has long been an environmental leader in New York," said Richard Schrader, New York Legislative Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council. "As the head of the state environmental agency, he helped to create a landmark recycling program for electronics, invested in green jobs, and promoted smart growth in our communities. Commissioner Grannis is right - the dangerously understaffed agency has been badly injured by incessant, disproportionate budget cuts and in turn, so has New York's environment. These deep cuts are among the many reasons the state cannot move forward on risky endeavors like gas drilling - an issue the next administration will need to confront head-on."

"The ongoing disproportionate targeting of this agency for cuts and the Commissioner's firing serve only unscrupulous companies that benefit from lack of oversight at the expense of the public's health and welfare," said Kathy Curtis, Policy Director of Clean New York. "Commissioner Grannis should be reinstated immediately and no more cuts should be made to the Agency."

Prior to his time as DEC Commissioner, Pete Grannis served as a member of the State Assembly for decades representing the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Earlier this month, conservation and environmental groups called on Governor David Paterson to stop anticipated staff cuts at the DEC. According to published reports, 209 staff layoffs have been ordered by the end of the year. Coupled with staff lost to retirement incentives and budget cuts, the latest round of layoffs will reduce agency staff to the lowest levels since the 1980's, with serious consequences for the DEC's ability to respond to environmental hazards, not to mention critical routine functions such as monitoring air and water pollution.