

**Testimony for Confirmation Hearing  
on C. Heidi Grether**

**Michigan Senate  
Natural Resources Committee  
September 7, 2016**

**Presented by: Jim Egged**

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My name is Jim Egged, I am a retired firefighter and have served on the Western Wayne Hazardous incident Response team. In this work I learned quickly about the delicately intimate relationship we have with the various ecosystems in any given geographic area. In addition I have seen how quickly threats to public safety can escalate without diligent and immediate mediation. It is from this experience that I have drawn my concerns for the environment and public safety. With this attention I would like to express as a citizen of the State of Michigan why C. Heidi Grether would not be an appropriate appointment to the office of Director of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

Qualifications and experience are chief among the prerequisites for this position. Without a doubt Ms. Grether has the education and experience that will enable her to perform the functions of this extraordinarily important position. The question here is, with this background, can these functions be performed without prejudice?

Twenty years with Amoco and British Petroleum in governmental affairs and then being responsible for communications and external affairs after the Deepwater Horizon spill is quite impressive. In her capacity with this oil company she managed the team to develop, nurture and maintain stakeholder relationships, which included external activities and funding requests. She communicated approved messages and delivered agreed objectives. Her Master's degree in Natural Resource Economics and Policy, coupled with this private sector experience, should provide us with an idea of the priorities she will bring to the job.

Of course we all would like to think that every one of us is a conscientious human being with only the best interest of society as a priority. I am certainly not here to say that anybody would compromise the safety and well being of the public intentionally.

Your respective constituencies have placed their faith in each one of you that your decisions here in Lansing will first and foremost consider their best interests. While the economics of this state are important to its people, it is not the sole driving

force of our welfare. Our responsibility as members of society is to see to it that we are secure, not just economically but in the health and safety of our everyday lives.

Corporate interests have demonstrated time and time again that they are willing to place profits over safety and the environment. This holds true especially for the Oil and Gas Industry. In both, our state and in the Gulf of Mexico, Enbridge and BP respectively, we have seen the results of corporate indifference.

Heidi Grether managed the overall direction of external relations engagement and staff for BP in Mississippi for the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill response. This included community relations, media relations as well as communications and government relations. She supervised all aspects of state outreach, with state and local government officials, community and business organizations, and local media. This means she is quite deft at spinning a negative situation into a positive outcome for her benefactors. The people of the State of Michigan can ill-afford a corporate insider who may be willing to place economics over our health and safety.

Therefore, I am requesting that in consideration of this appoint you as a committee disapprove the nomination of C. Heidi Grether to the office of Director of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. We simply cannot be sure that her previous responsibilities to her corporate constituencies will not take precedent over the general welfare of the people of the state of Michigan. While there may not be any indiscretions, should anything happen, we must avoid the appearance of impropriety. A word to the wise, should be sufficient.

Albert Einstein was once called a wise person, and he asked why the person thought he was a wise person. The response was because he could solve problems. Einstein said, "A clever person solves a problem. A wise person avoids it." The implication here is that Einstein felt he was not wise but might be considered clever. Let us as the people of the State of Michigan try to be proactive and avoid problems, rather than be retroactive and have to solve them. Placing a person with a record coming in after the fact is not what is needed here, let us find a person who can identify problems before they happen and avoid them in the first place.