

## **EXTORTION AND LOIS LERNER**

I ran for the U.S. Congress in 1998, winning the Republican primary contest but losing to Democrat incumbent Julia Carson in the general election. After the campaign, I received a dreaded letter from the Federal Election Commission notifying me they were auditing my campaign to search for violations. Even though I had been fastidious in following all the rules and had a well regarded CPA who was also a public official as my volunteer campaign treasurer, I was nervous because I had been advised by a close friend who ran two losing campaigns for Congress that the FEC was known to target conservatives even when no wrongdoing was present. Boy, was he right!

For the 25 years I had run my jewelry store to that point, I had always taken a very low salary on a consistent basis and sporadic bonuses when the company could afford it. Shortly after taking a bonus from my own corporation, I loaned my campaign \$25,000. They interpreted this as using corporate funds for my campaign, a violation. That I had operated this way for 25 years was easily proven by showing them the records from my accountants. We may as well have been talking to the walls. Twice they sent out low level operatives to check things out. I well remember my volunteer treasurer, my campaign manager and me almost yelling at these two gentlemen to just look at the evidence. It really felt like Alice In Wonderland with Guilty Verdict First; Trial Later. They were obviously instructed to decide against me so blatantly that we could hardly believe what we were experiencing.

Ultimately, I hired counsel to advise me of my options. They were clear: pay the extortion fine of \$25,000 or go to trial which would likely cost \$100,000+ in legal fees with no guaranteed outcome. I paid...along with a few thousand to the professionals who advised me through the process. It was and is painful to know that you are 100% innocent and realize you have been had by your own government.

Now we find out the infamous (Take the 5<sup>th</sup>) Lois Lerner was in charge of the Enforcement Division of the FEC during this period. Who'da ever thunk? She was the main power behind the suing of the Christian Coalition in the largest FEC suit in history costing them hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees and lost employee hours dealing the harassment. And what is likely the most well-known individual persecution by the FEC, Al Salvi who was running against Dick Durbin for U.S. Senate in 1996 was personally told by Lerner that she would drop the suit if he agreed to never run for office again. Salvi not only refused that Godfather-style offer but also spent the \$100,000+ to fight the FEC to a successful vindication for the loan he made to his campaign, something I could not afford to pursue.

As my friend had advised me in the beginning, the FEC has a history of targeting conservatives with the apparent primary purpose of discouraging them from running for office. And as is similar with the IRS, they are essentially a Gestapo style organization and once they decide you are their mark, your options are to pay up or pony up incredible resources to fight them in court. Few have the disposable income to take the latter course. Thus, this leads me to the dictionary definition of EXTORTION: the crime of obtaining something of value by the abuse of one's office or authority. Yep. That's them.

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