

# DAKOTA RESOURCE COUNCIL

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## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### **DRC members challenge false retorts from PSC commissioners and candidate**

*DRC members are hard working folks joining together to protect livelihoods*

BISMARCK, N.D. --- Members of Dakota Resource Council, a North Dakota community-based organization, challenged several politicians to have an honest conversation about conflict of interest in the North Dakota Public Service Commission. DRC members are disappointed in the false accusations Commissioners Kevin Cramer and Brian Kalk and PSC candidate Randy Christmann have recently directed at DRC through the media.

DRC is a non-partisan, member-led organization based on bedrock North Dakota values.

Don Nelson, a DRC member and rancher near Keene, said, “DRC helps make sure red-blooded Americans like you and I can successfully stand up for our farms, businesses, and quality of life when big corporations try to run roughshod over regular people.”

Recently, DRC members and the PSC have disagreed about a proposed coal mine and plant near South Heart. Area landowners overwhelmingly oppose the mine and plant. Meanwhile, the two commissioners have accepted over \$16,000 from executives of South Heart Mining Company, whose coal mine permit is pending at the PSC. When notified last summer that the contributions violated federal law, Kalk and Cramer chose to ignore the problem.

That’s when DRC members decided to bring greater accountability to the process. The group joined with the Dacotah Chapter of the Sierra Club to file a lawsuit May 31, 2012 to make sure commissioners followed the federal law that prohibits such contributions.

Unfortunately, Cramer, Kalk and Christmann have side-stepped the problem by falsely calling DRC “radical,” “militant” and “partisan.” DRC members are stepping forward to talk about what the group means to them and why they joined together.

Wayne Fisher, DRC member and farmer near South Heart, said, “I’d think most people would agree that those of us who live and work here really should have a strong voice in what happens here. My family has earned a living in farming here for generations. We made it clear that what we’ve built would be wrecked by a strip mine and coal plant. To allow coal company CEOs to waltz in from out of state and give money to commissioners who are ruling on their permit, is just not right.”

White Earth farmer and DRC member Brenda Jorgenson said, “As members of DRC we have a fighting chance to protect our ranches and businesses. That’s basic joining together with your neighbors to get good things done. Sometimes that is necessary and you can’t get more American than that.”

“Who else can you turn to?” Jorgenson said. “Pulling us together, via DRC, has given us a resource that is not available anywhere else. Not in government and not in the entities listed as industry leaders.”

DRC vice chair Linda Weiss, a landowner near Belfield, said, “The federal law on contributions from coal companies is really clear. The PSC commissioners obviously violated the law.”

Federal surfacing mining law states that state regulators cannot “solicit or accept” anything of monetary value “from a coal company which...conducts or is seeking to conduct, operations or activities that are regulated by the State Regulatory Authority.”

“Since we filed the lawsuit,” Weiss said, “the commissioners have been thumbing their noses at the law and at the public. We want more accountability and transparency. In March 2012, the State Integrity Investigation study gave North Dakota a grade of “F” and put it at high risk for corruption. Being in DRC is a course in civics where one can learn of other energy projects that add to a community, not take away.”

“The most disappointing response is PSC candidate Randy Christmann’s false accusation that DRC has contributed to his opponent’s campaign,” said DRC Board member Terrence Kardong of Richardton. “DRC is a non-partisan group and does not endorse or contribute to any candidate. We work on issues that are important to people in North Dakota. We should expect candidates for office like Christmann to be ethical.”

Kardong said, “DRC members support abundant, reliable energy and good paying jobs, productive farms and ranches, profitable businesses and a decent place to live. It is unfortunate that some politicians spend so much time trying to wiggle out of their responsibilities rather than working with the hard working people of this state to find common sense solutions. We look forward to the day when the North Dakota PSC can

again regulate coal surface mining according to the law and for the good of the people of our state.”

Nelson said, “DRC got started in the 1970s when farmers and ranchers came together to protect themselves and their livelihoods. It worked. And, now it is time for us to come together again. We can develop our resources and have a good life, too. It shouldn’t be that difficult to figure out.”

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