



Monroe County Legislature

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President Yversha Roman
39 W. Main St.
County Office Building 410
Rochester, NY 14614

President Roman,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the reappointment of Scott Nasca for a third term on the Monroe County Water Authority (MCWA) Board of Directors, and to respectfully urge you to reconsider submitting his name to the Legislature for approval.

To understand the reasoning behind this opposition, we must revisit events from 1996. At that time, Republicans were accused of stacking the MCWA board with the intent to remove longtime director Paul Bringewatt, a highly regarded Democrat. Bringewatt was replaced by John Stanwix, a former County Legislator and Republican Chairman. A decade later, Stanwix faced criminal charges related to pension padding and was further accused of conflicts of interest and cutting secret deals for MCWA allies. In response to this, the late Democratic Legislator Paul Haney remarked to the *Democrat and Chronicle*, “It’s probably the worst scandal I’ve seen in any local governmental body in 20 years.”

This scandal shone a light on the structural problems within the MCWA board. State law requires that no more than five of the seven board members belong to the same political party, but that did not result in the appointment of any Democrats. As former Democratic Legislator Travis Heider explained in an opinion piece, “However, in full compliance with the letter of the law and complete violation of its spirit, Republicans instead appoint their ideological counterparts from the Conservative Party.”

A Monroe County grand jury investigated the issues surrounding the MCWA and issued the following recommendations that were made public in 2009:

1. **Appointment process:** The Legislature’s Majority Leader should make three appointments, the Minority Leader two, and both the County Executive and Mayor should have one appointment each.
2. **Geographic diversity:** A process should be developed to attract qualified candidates and ensure geographic diversity across service areas.
3. **Term limits:** Board members should be limited to two consecutive five-year terms.

This brings us to Mr. Nasca. His original appointment occurred during a time when Republicans maintained an iron grip on the MCWA board, excluding Democratic representation. His ties to the Conservative Party, where he serves as Executive Vice-Chair of the Monroe County Conservative Party and as a member of the New York State Conservative Party Executive Committee, underscore the political nature of his appointment. Regardless of his other qualifications, it is clear that Mr. Nasca was appointed due to his political connections, not solely on merit.

While I acknowledge your pending submission of two Democrats for appointment to the MCWA board, the reappointment of Mr. Nasca would not reflect voter registration in this county, or the spirit of state law, through at least 2026. Both our Democratic predecessors and a grand jury have advocated for a more balanced and representative board, and appointing someone who is not a Conservative, a party that makes up less than 2% of voter registration, would better reflect those recommendations.

You have indicated that your rationale for Mr. Nasca's reappointment is to maintain continuity on the board and demonstrate bipartisanship. However, given the historical context of this board's makeup and the wide pool of qualified, ideologically diverse candidates available, these reasons seem insufficient. There is also concern that this reappointment may be influenced by political considerations, particularly a desire for a cross-endorsement from the Conservative Party in a future election, or an attempt to deny such an endorsement to a Republican challenger.

For the first time in decades, Democrats hold a majority in the Monroe County Legislature, and we achieved this by promising our constituents that we would not engage in the same kind of politics as those we replaced. Fulfilling that promise means making decisions based on merit, fairness, and transparency.

In that spirit, I strongly urge you not to submit Mr. Nasca's reappointment for consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel Barnhart".

Rachel Barnhart – Legislator District 17