

To the Legislative Inspector General and the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee,

We are writing on behalf of community groups, families, and concerned residents from across Ohio to express our strong support for the ethics complaint filed by Washington County for Safe Drinking Water. This is not about politics. It is about whether Ohio's ethics laws are being followed when powerful financial interests are involved. Communities across our state depend on clean water, healthy land, and honest government. When those are put at risk in one place, they are put at risk everywhere.

Washington County has long been a pro-industry community. For generations, oil and gas, manufacturing, and heavy industry have been part of its identity, even through tragedies like the 1994 Shell Chemical Plant explosion and the 2023 Eramet Furnace collapse. Many families there, like families throughout Ohio, have built their livelihoods in these industries. But Washington County also knows what happens when safety and accountability fail. The DuPont C8/PFAS contamination of drinking water is a painful reminder of what it means when communities are told they are safe and later learn they were not. Now radioactive and chemically contaminated oil and gas waste, known to contain heavy metals and PFAS, is being injected near those same drinking water sources. This should concern every Ohioan.

That is why the allegations in this ethics complaint matter far beyond one county. Senator Brian Chavez represents the 30th district, which includes Washington County. He is the former CEO of an injection well company. The complaint alleges that his family still profits from injection wells near Washington County's aquifers and that he is using his position as the Senate Energy Committee Chairman to advance policies that benefit those interests while weakening oversight. The complaint alleges Chavez's conflicts of interest regarding undisclosed business entities and fast-tracking legislation that could benefit these interests. When public officials with financial ties to an industry shape laws that directly benefit that industry, it undermines public trust across the entire state.

People across Ohio and across the political spectrum agree on one basic principle. Public officials must follow the law and be honest about their financial interests when making decisions that affect public health, environmental safety, and the future of our communities.

We represent parents, grandparents, farmers, factory workers, teachers, nurses, business owners, and retirees from many parts of Ohio. We do not have lobbyists or corporate attorneys. What we do have is a shared belief that Ohio's ethics laws matter and that they must be enforced fairly, no matter who is involved.

We respectfully ask you to investigate this complaint fully and to take action if the facts support it. No one should be allowed to use public office for private gain while hiding conflicts of interest from the people they serve.

Please help restore confidence that Ohio's government still works for its citizens.

Sincerely,

Washington County for Safe Drinking Water

Buckeye Environmental Network

Between the Waters

Athens County's Future Action Network (ACFAN)

Concerned Ohio River Residents

FaCT: Faith Communities Together for a Sustainable Future

FreshWater Accountability Project

Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action

Ohio Valley Allies

Ohio Valley Environmental Advocates

Save Ohio Parks

Sierra Club Ohio Chapter

Third Act Ohio