

Tomicita Woodie accuses Zuni governor of multiple abuses of power

Written by By Beth Blakeman Managing Editor
Friday, 27 August 2021 07:42



Gallup attorney David Jordan filed a suit against the Zuni Pueblo on behalf of Tomicita Woodie Aug. 9.

The complaint, which specifically mentions Zuni Gov. Val R. Panteah, alleges that Panteah engaged in multiple abuses of his authority as governor.

The allegations stem from a grievance that Woodie filed Jan. 12.

“I have been targeted by Governor Panteah for vicious retaliation because I filed a grievance against him,” Woodie said.

In her complaint, Woodie alleged that Panteah created a hostile work environment for her by threatening her job. The threats related to the Hazard Pay for employees of the Pueblo of Zuni.

Woodie was concerned that Panteah was pressuring her to immediately release funds without following the appropriate protocols and regulations.

The Zuni Council wanted to hire an outside investigator to determine the veracity of Woodie’s claims. She said that was the moment that the governor began working to silence her.

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She said an email was sent to the entire governmental staff on June 2 accusing her of acting improperly with regard to her handling of Hazard Pay.

“Gov. Panteah panicked at the idea of an outside investigator looking into the toxic environment that he had created,” Woodie said. “I just wanted the Council and the Zuni people to know the truth.”

Woodie said she welcomed the scrutiny.

In his release to the media, Jordan said Panteah ultimately informed his client’s supervisor Charles England that he must fire Woodie or be fired himself. England terminated Woodie’s employment.

Woodie said that anyone supporting the investigation of her grievance has reason to fear termination. Additionally, she is concerned that the Tribal Court will become a target of intimidation since the lawsuit was filed.

Jordan, who is a member of several Tribal bars, expects the Zuni Pueblo to file a motion to dismiss the case under sovereign immunity.

He explained that sovereign immunity is a concept that was carried over from England — that you can’t sue the king.

“In just about every case like this I’ve ever done, you have to establish how you are getting around sovereign immunity,” he said.

The *Sun* reached out to the Zuni Tribal Courts. There was no response by press time.

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