

TOP HIT: NOEM'S GOVERNORSHIP HAS BEEN PLAGUED BY ACCUSATIONS OF NEPOTISM AND CORRUPTION

Highlights:

- Kristi Noem interfered to get daughter a real estate appraisal license, per legislative report and Government Accountability Board.
 - Noem met with a state employee after her daughter failed to secure a real estate appraisal license.
 - The state employee who oversaw appraisal license for Noem's daughter was pushed into retirement.
 - Following reporting of the meeting, South Dakota Democratic Party accused Noem of abusing her position.
 - The attorney general referred complaint over Noem's meeting to the Government Accountability Board.
 - Bren testified that Noem's daughter received an appraisal license outside of normal protocol and that she felt intimidated by Governor Noem.
 - Noem's daughter turned in her real estate appraiser license amid controversy.
 - A draft legislative investigation report found Noem's daughter for special treatment.
 - The Government Accountability Board said Noem may have "engaged in misconduct" when she intervened in daughter's application for appraisal license.
- Kristi Noem employed her daughter in a salaried position on her transition team despite having no degree or experience, and she hired her son-in-law to work in her administration.
 - Noem hired her daughter, Kennedy Noem, onto the transition team.
 - Noem hired her son-in-law to work in her administration.

Noem Interfered To Get Her Daughter A Real Estate Appraisal License, Per Legislative Report And Government Accountability Board

NOEM MET WITH A STATE EMPLOYEE AFTER HER DAUGHTER FAILED TO SECURE A REAL ESTATE APPRAISAL LICENSE

Noem Met With A State Employee Who Ran Real Estate Appraisal Agency Days After Daughter's Application Was Denied. According to the Associated Press, "Just days after a South Dakota agency moved to deny her daughter's application to become a certified real estate appraiser, Gov. Kristi Noem summoned to her office the state employee who ran the agency, the woman's direct supervisor and the state labor secretary. Noem's daughter attended too." [Associated Press, [9/27/21](#)]

Noem's Daughter Subsequently Received Her Appraisal License

Four Months After The Meeting At Her Mother's Office, Noem's Daughter Received Her Appraisal Certification. According to the Associated Press, "Kassidy Peters, then 26, ultimately obtained the certification in November 2020, four months after the meeting at her mother's office." [Associated Press, [9/27/21](#)]

STATE EMPLOYEE WHO OVERSAW APPRAISAL LICENSE WAS PUSHED INTO RETIREMENT

A Week After Peters Received Her License, Noem's Labor Secretary Demanded Bren's Retirement. According to the Associated Press, "Kassidy Peters, then 26, ultimately obtained the certification in November 2020, four months after the meeting at her mother's office. A week after that, the labor secretary called the agency head, Sherry Bren, to demand her retirement, according to an age discrimination complaint Bren filed against the department." [Associated Press, [9/27/21](#)]

Bren Withdrew Her Age Discrimination Complaint After The State Paid Her \$200,000

Bren Was Paid \$200,000 By The State To Withdraw Her Complaint Of Age Discrimination. According to the Associated Press, "A week after that, the labor secretary called the agency head, Sherry Bren, to demand her retirement,

according to an age discrimination complaint Bren filed against the department. Bren, 70, ultimately left her job this past March after the state paid her \$200,000 to withdraw the complaint.” [Associated Press, [9/27/21](#)]

FOLLOWING REPORTING OF THE MEETING, SOUTH DAKOTA DEMOCRATIC PARTY ACCUSED NOEM OF ABUSING HER POSITION

South Dakota Democratic Party: Noem Abused Her Position To Help Her Daughter Become An Appraiser After Associated Press Report Released. According to a press release from the South Dakota Democratic Party, “As reported by the Associated Press, Kristi Noem abused her position to help her daughter become an appraiser. [...] ‘I’ve never seen a clearer case of nepotism. Again and again, we’ve seen Kristi Noem prioritize her own interests over what’s best for South Dakota. Kristi Noem abused her power, and South Dakotans deserve better. After a breach of public trust like this, Kristi Noem has demonstrated she isn’t up to the task of leading our great state with the integrity South Dakotans expect and deserve,’ said South Dakota House Democratic Leader Jamie Smith.” [South Dakota Democratic Party Press Release, 9/27/21]

Noem’s Office Denied Any Wrongdoing

Noem Spokesman Said Associated Press Disparaged Her Daughter In Order To Attack Governor. According to the Associated Press, “‘The Associated Press is disparaging the Governor’s daughter in order to attack the Governor politically – no wonder Americans’ trust in the media is at an all-time low,’ spokesman Ian Fury said.” [Associated Press, [9/27/21](#)]

ATTORNEY GENERAL REFERRED COMPLAINT OVER NOEM’S MEETING TO GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

Attorney General Referred Complaint About Noem’s Actions To Help Daughter Secure State Appraisers License To South Dakota Government Accountability Board. According to the Argus Leader, “A panel of South Dakota judges will review allegations about Gov. Kristi Noem abused her office to help a family member obtain a state appraisers license. The Attorney General’s Office on Wednesday announced it was referring the complaint to the South Dakota Government Accountability, which will investigate the matter and determine if any misconduct occurred. ‘In response to questions and concerns from a number of legislators and citizens who reached out to me, I have referred the issue to the Government Accountability Board,’ Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg said in a statement provided to the Argus Leader Wednesday. The allegations center around a meeting Noem had with officials with the Department of Labor and Regulation after the agency had recommended denying Noem’s daughter, Cassidy Peters, a real estate appraisers license, according to initial reporting by the Associated Press in late September.” [Argus Leader, 10/7/21]

BREN TESTIFIED THAT NOEM’S DAUGHTER RECEIVED AN APPRAISAL LICENSE OUTSIDE OF NORMAL PROTOCOL AND THAT SHE FELT INTIMIDATED BY THE GOVERNOR

Bren Testified That Path Of Cassidy Peters To Become State-Certified Residential Appraiser Was “Outside Of Recognized Upgrade Procedures.” According to the Argus Leader, “The former head of the South Dakota’s appraisers program, Sherry Bren, told the Legislature’s Government Operations and Audit Committee at the Capitol that the path of Cassidy Peters, the governor’s daughter, to becoming a state-certified residential appraiser was not routine and was outside of normal protocol. ‘It was outside of the recognized upgrade procedures,’ Bren, 71, said of a stipulation agreement created for Peters in summer 2020 following a closed-door meeting at the Governor’s Mansion that she attended along with Noem, Peters and Labor Secretary Marcia Hultman.” [Argus Leader, 12/16/21]

Bren Testified She Felt “Intimidated” During Meeting With Noem And Peters. According to the Argus Leader, “Bren, who received a \$200,000 settlement to withdraw a wrongful termination complaint against the state prior to her retirement in March 2021, told lawmakers that her recollection of what took place during a July 27, 2020, meeting at the governor’s mansion was ‘foggy.’ But she felt ‘intimidated’ during the meeting and that she hadn’t anticipated Peters’ presence there.” [Argus Leader, 12/16/21]

Bren Testified She Was “Forced” To Retire After Meeting With Noem And Peters. According to the Argus Leader, “She also said she was ‘forced’ to retire following the meeting, though she declined to provide details beyond that she felt discriminated against based on her age. She cited a non-disparagement clause included in her settlement with the Department of Labor and Regulation for being apprehensive.” [Argus Leader, 12/16/21]

NOEM'S DAUGHTER TURNED IN REAL ESTATE APPRAISER LICENSE AMID CONTROVERSY

Kassidy Peters Turned In Her Real Estate Appraiser License, Said Legislative Inquiry Into The Matter Had “Successfully Destroyed My Business.” According to the Washington Post, “The daughter of South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem said Tuesday that she would turn in her real estate appraiser license and exit the business by the end of the year amid continuing scrutiny over whether her mother intervened in her licensing. In a letter to the South Dakota Department of Labor, Kassidy Peters, Noem's daughter, insisted that neither she nor her mother had done anything wrong but said that a legislative inquiry into the matter had ‘successfully destroyed my business.’ ‘It is clear that none of this will stop until my reputation and that of my young family are destroyed,’ Peters wrote. ‘The entire inquiry and media pressure has done irreparable damage to my business.’” [Washington Post, [11/17/21](#)]

DRAFT LEGISLATIVE INVESTIGATION REPORT FOUND NOEM'S DAUGHTER GOT SPECIAL TREATMENT

A Five-Page Draft Report From South Dakota Legislative Panel Found Noem's Daughter Received Preferential Treatment In Real Estate Appraiser Licensing Program. According to the Argus Leader, “A daughter of Gov. Kristi Noem received preferential treatment as she progressed through a real estate appraiser licensing program administered by the state. That's one of the takeaways from a five-page draft report slated to be adopted this week by a legislative panel that spent months vetting allegations of abuse of power against the governor and bottlenecks in the South Dakota Department of Labor Appraiser Certification Program.” [Argus Leader, [5/17/22](#)]

Five-Page Draft Report From South Dakota Legislative Panel Noted Noem's Daughter Had Struggled To Obtain Certification Before The Meeting At The Governor's Mansion. According to the Argus Leader, “The report outlines findings of facts compiled by the committee during a series of meetings that included formal testimony from Labor Secretary Marcia Hultman as well as the former director of the appraiser program, Sherry Bren. [...] According to the report, Peters had been struggling to obtain certification in spring 2020 when ‘an agreed disposition’ had outlined additional training work necessary for her to obtain her appraiser's license. That when Noem's cabinet began involving itself in Peters’ path to certification. [...] Still, a pending denial notice was sent to Peters on July 20. A week later, Bren was ordered to attend the meeting at the Governor's Mansion and to bring with her examples of specific errors found in Peters' work product, criteria used to determine the errors and ‘specific training/next steps are recommended for Kassidy, so she is able to pass?’ the report reads. Less than two weeks later, a ‘stipulation agreement’ was entered into between DLR and Peters outlining those next steps and the pending notice of denial was rescinded.” [Argus Leader, [5/17/22](#)]

Noem's Daughter Was Given A Third Chance To Pass The Real Estate Appraiser Licensing Certification Rather Than Waiting The Required Six Months To Reapply. According to the Argus Leader, “‘A week later, Bren was ordered to attend the meeting at the Governor's Mansion and to bring with her examples of specific errors found in Peters’ work product, criteria used to determine the errors and ‘specific training/next steps are recommended for Kassidy, so she is able to pass?’ the report reads. Less than two weeks later, a ‘stipulation agreement’ was entered into between DLR and Peters outlining those next steps and the pending notice of denial was rescinded. The stipulation agreement, in essence, gave Kassidy Peters a third chance to pass the level of certification she was trying to attain,’ the report reads. ‘This is outside of the requirements. Kassidy Peters should have waited the required six months and reapplied for this level.’” [Argus Leader, [5/17/22](#)]

Noem Refuted Legislative Investigation Report That Said Her Daughter Got Preferential Treatment

Noem Denied Daughter Received Special Treatment Following New Legislative Investigation Report. According to Dakota News Now, “Gov. Kristi Noem is denying her daughter received special treatment acquiring her state appraisal license despite a new legislative investigation report suggesting otherwise. Noem responded to the report on Wednesday, saying her daughter, Kassidy Peters, “followed the same process as other applicants.’ ‘For 10 years I have been working to fix the broken appraiser program in South Dakota,’ Noem said in a statement to Dakota News Now. ‘I introduced legislation when I was in Congress, and I continued to address our appraiser shortage issue as Governor. Kassidy followed the same process as other applicants did to obtain her license. She did not receive preferential treatment. And the legislature found no wrongdoing in their review, which concluded in December.’” [Dakota News Now, [5/18/22](#)]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD SAID NOEM MAY HAVE “ENGAGED IN MISCONDUCT” WHEN SHE INTERVENED IN DAUGHTER'S APPLICATION FOR APPRAISAL LICENSE

South Dakota Ethics Board Said It Had Sufficient Information That Noem May Have “Engaged In Misconduct” When She Intervened In Her Daughter’s Application For A Real Estate License. According to the Associated Press, “A South Dakota ethics board on Monday said it found sufficient information that Gov. Kristi Noem may have ‘engaged in misconduct’ when she intervened in her daughter’s application for a real estate appraiser license, and it referred a separate complaint over her state airplane use to the state’s attorney general for investigation.” [Associated Press, [8/22/22](#)]

Government Accountability Board Determined “Appropriate Action” Could Be Taken Against Noem for Role In Daughter’s Appraiser Licensure But Didn’t Specify Action. According to the Associated Press, “The three retired judges on the Government Accountability Board determined that ‘appropriate action’ could be taken against Noem for her role in her daughter’s appraiser licensure, though it didn’t specify the action.” [Associated Press, [8/22/22](#)]

Ethics Board Dismissed Ravensborg’s Allegations That Noem Misused State Funds In Her Daughter’s Appraiser Licensure

Ethics Board Dismissed Ravensborg’s Allegations That Noem Misused State Funds In Her Daughter’s Appraiser Licensure. According to the Associated Press, “After meeting in a closed-door session for one hour Monday, the board voted unanimously to invoke procedures that allow for a contested case hearing to give Noem, who has denied wrongdoing, a chance to publicly defend herself against allegations of ‘misconduct’ related to ‘conflicts of interest’ and ‘malfeasance.’ The board also dismissed Ravensborg’s allegations that Noem misused state funds in the episode. However, the retired judges left it unclear how they will proceed.” [Associated Press, [8/22/22](#)]

Ethics Board Chair Said Complaint Was “Partially Dismissed And Partially Closed” But Could Be Reopened

Ethics Board Chair Said Complaint Was “Partially Dismissed And Partially Closed” But That It Could Be Reopened. According to the Associated Press, “Lori Wilbur, the board chair, said the complaint was ‘partially dismissed and partially closed,’ but added that the complaint could be reopened. She declined to discuss what would cause the board to reopen the complaint.” [Associated Press, [8/22/22](#)]

Ethics Board Found Evidence Noem Interfered With State Agency, But Did Not Disclose “Appropriate Action” That It Took

South Dakota Ethics Board Did Not Publicly Disclose “Appropriate Action” It Took After Finding Evidence Noem Interfered With State Agency To Influence Daughter’s Real Estate Appraiser License Application. According to the Associated Press, “South Dakota’s ethics board won’t publicly disclose the ‘appropriate action’ it took after finding evidence Gov. Kristi Noem intervened with a state agency to influence her daughter’s application for a real estate appraiser license, a lawyer for the board told The Associated Press. The state’s Government Accountability Board was created to provide a check on any misconduct by state officials, and the question of whether to discipline the Republican governor presented its first major test. A lawyer hired by the board, Mark Haigh, responded to an open records request by telling the AP this week that the board’s response would remain ‘confidential.’” [Associated Press, [9/20/22](#)]

Noem Said It Was “Very Clear” That Her Daughter Never Received Special Treatment

Noem Said It Was “Very Clear My Daughter Never Once Received Special Treatment” In Gubernatorial Debate. According to the Associated Press, “‘This matter is closed and it is something that is very clear my daughter never once received special treatment,’ Noem said, adding that she had followed the law and precedent in her use of the state plane.” [Associated Press, [10/1/22](#)]

Noem Employed Her Daughter In A Salaried Position On Her Transition Team Despite No Degree Or Experience, Hired Son-In-Law To Work In Administration

NOEM HIRED DAUGHTER KENNEDY NOEM ONTO TRANSITION TEAM

Noem Hired Daughter Kennedy Noem, Who At The Time Was Majoring In Political Science At South Dakota State University, Onto Transition Team For Over \$40,000 Per Year. According to the Dakota Free Press, “Kennedy Noem is a senior at South Dakota State University majoring in political science and minoring in economics. She hasn’t even finished her liberal arts degree, and she’s already doing a job that makes over forty grand a year... working for her mom’s transition team. According to Open.SD.Gov, for helping ‘develop policy proposals for the upcoming legislative session, prepare Governor-elect Noem’s budget proposal, and identify and screen candidates for the Governor’s Cabinet and Staff,’ Kennedy Noem is getting an annual salary of \$40,716.” [Dakota Free Press, [11/25/18](#)]

South Dakota Democratic Party Blasted Noem For Hiring Her Daughter Into A Taxpayer-Funded Role Despite Her Not Having A Degree Or Any Government Experience. According to a press release from the South Dakota Democratic Party, “South Dakota Democratic Party Executive Director Sam Parkinson released the following statement in response to the Governor-elect Kristi Noem hiring her own daughter, who does not have a degree or any government experience, to a taxpayer-funded position on her transition team paying the equivalent of over \$40,000 per year: ‘Kristi Noem’s transition team shows how she intends to govern: in the interests of her own family and the special interests who supported her campaign, not in the interest of average South Dakotans. Not only did she hire a long-time lobbyist as the head of her transition team, she also hired her own daughter to a taxpayer-funded position within the transition team. In contrast to Governor-elect Noem, Democrats believe we need to do more to reduce the power of special interests in Pierre, and make sure our state government works for everyone, not just big-money special interests or the family and friends of elected officials.’” [South Dakota Democratic Party Press Release, 11/26/18]

Republican Lawmakers Attempted To Stop State Officials From Hiring Relatives Following Noem’s Hiring Of Her Daughter, But Bill Was Blocked In Committee

Republican Lawmakers Moved To Block State Officials From Hiring Relatives After Noem Hired Her Daughter. According to the Rapid City Journal, “Republican lawmakers say they’re seeking to block state officials from hiring relatives after Republican Gov. Kristi Noem’s daughter landed a job in her mother’s administration. Republican Sen. Stace Nelson, the bill’s primary sponsor, said in a statement that outraged state residents contacted him after Kennedy Noem was hired. Noem announced in December that her daughter would be a policy analyst in the governor’s office. Her starting annual pay is listed at \$50,000 on the state website open.sd.gov.” [Rapid City Journal, 1/7/19]

South Dakota Senate Panel Rejected Bill That Sought To Block State Officials From Hiring Relatives. According to the Associated Press, “A South Dakota Senate panel has rejected a bill that sought to block state officials from hiring relatives. The Senate State Affairs Committee voted unanimously Wednesday against the measure. The proposal came after Gov. Kristi Noem announced in December that her daughter would be a policy analyst in the governor’s office.” [Associated Press, 1/23/19]

Noem Defended Decision To Hire Daughter

Noem Said State Officials Should Be Able To Hire Whoever They Want “Regardless Of Name” After Hiring Daughter. According to the Associated Press, “The Senate State Affairs Committee plans to take up a bill Wednesday seeking to bar state officials from hiring relatives. The proposal comes after Noem announced in December that her daughter would be a policy analyst in the governor’s office. Republican Sen. Stace Nelson, the bill’s sponsor, said in an earlier statement that outraged residents contacted him after the hiring. He said state employment should be based on merit, not on ‘political family power.’ Noem spokeswoman Kristin Wileman said the governor should be able to develop a team who will deliver results for the state ‘regardless of their last name.’” [Associated Press, 1/18/19]

Kennedy Noem Left The Governor’s Office In July 2020 To Pursue MBA

July 2020: Kennedy Noem Left The Governor’s Office To Move To Tennessee And Pursue An MBA. According to South Dakota War College, “Governor Noem apparently lost one of her most valued advisors today, as Kennedy Noem spent her last day at the State Capital, announced this evening that she’s moving to Tennessee in a few weeks to pursue her MBA: Congratulations to Kennedy!” South Dakota War College included a Facebook post from Noem’s daughter announcing her departure. [South Dakota War College, [7/30/20](#)]

NOEM HIRED HER SON-IN-LAW TO WORK IN ADMINISTRATION

Kyle Peters, Who At The Time Was Engaged To Noem's Daughter, Started Work In The Governor's Office Of Economic Development. According to the Dakota Free Press, "Future Noem son-in-law Kyle Peters is sticking close to the family. After maybe a month working as finance officer and Legislative liaison for new State Treasurer Josh Haeder, Peters has moved over to work in the Governor's Office of Economic Development. Hmmm maybe you only get to marry one of the Noem girls if Mom gets to keep an eye on you all day long. Peters has already earned a raise from his January salary of \$53,000 to a current listing on Open.SD.gov." [Dakota Free Press, 2/7/19]

Kyle Peters Got 5% Raise On Top Of Standard 2% Raise After Kennedy Noem Departed Government Position. According to the Dakota Free Press, "Speaking of nepotism, Governor Kristi Noem's son-in-law appears to have just gotten a raise. Last week, on noting the departure of Noem's daughter Kennedy from her 'policy analyst' sinecure in Pierre for graduate school in Tennessee, I checked the salary of Kennedy's brother-in-law, Kyle Peters. Open.sd.gov listed hunky Kyle's salary in the Governor's Office of Economic Development at \$60,377.63. That's the figure we expected from the 2% raise all state employees got on July 1. Evidently Kennedy's departure has freed up cash to sprinkle some more grandbaby incentives on Kyle [...] Whatever Kyle is doing, he must have done 5% more of it in July, because he's getting 5% more in his paycheck now than he was after last month's 2% raise." [Dakota Free Press, 8/9/20]