

# **Iowa CCI Ethics Complaint against Senator Michael Boussetot**

Filed April 3, 2023 with the Secretary of the Senate

## **THE SENATE**

### **Ethics Complaint Form**

**Re: Senator Michael Boussetot of Ankeny, Iowa.**

We, Barb Kalbach, on behalf of Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (Iowa CCI), 2001 Forest Avenue Des Moines, IA, hereby complain that Senator Michael Boussetot, whose business address is 1007 E Grand Ave, Des Moines, IA 50319, has violated the Senate Code of Ethics in that:

- **The Preamble of Senate Resolution 1 – Senate Code of Ethics (approved February 1, 2023) states:**  
“Every legislator owes a duty to uphold the integrity and honor of the general assembly, to encourage respect for the law and for the general assembly and the members thereof, and to observe the legislative code of ethics.

In doing so, members of the senate have a duty to conduct themselves so as to reflect credit on the general assembly, and to inspire the confidence, respect, and trust of the public, and to strive to avoid both unethical and illegal conduct and the appearance of unethical and illegal conduct.”

- **Complainants’ comments on the Preamble:**

Senator Boussetot has discredited Iowa’s general assembly and broken both the confidence and the trust of the public through his failure to schedule a sub-committee meeting for HF 565.

Senator Boussetot, himself, is [reported in the Cedar Rapids Gazette on Tuesday March, 28 2023](#) stating that “he has not scheduled a subcommittee hearing on the bill... because there is not sufficient time to get the bill passed out of the Senate’s committee on commerce before Friday’s deadline”.

This statement from Senator Boussetot is a discredit to the general assembly and false. He could have scheduled a sub-committee meeting as soon as that day. As further example, [HF 68](#) went from being introduced on January 10, 2023, to being passed by the Senate on January 23, 2023, a mere 13 days. If an entire bill (HF 68) can pass through both the House and the Senate in 13 days, certainly Senator Boussetot could schedule a sub-committee for HF 565 within a week.

His failure to schedule a sub-committee for HF 565 and his outright opposition to participating in the democratic process of the general assembly breaks confidence and trust with the [78% of Iowans who oppose the use of eminent domain](#) for hazardous liquid pipelines.

We allege in this complaint that he broke this trust and confidence with the public because of deep personal, professional and economic ties with Summit Carbon Solutions, a CO2 pipeline company that would profit financially from the proposed projects. [The federal 45Q tax credits will pay out corporations \\$85-60 per ton of carbon sequestered. By claiming that their project has the capacity to](#)

[store up to 12 million tons of carbon dioxide each year, Summit Carbon Solutions will be able to claim over \\$1 billion each year.](#)

- **Section 9 of Senate Resolution 1 – Senate Code of Ethics - states:** “In order to permit the general assembly to function effectively, a senator will sometimes be required to vote on bills and participate in committee work which will affect the senator’s employment and other monetary interests. In making a decision relative to the senator’s activity on given bills or committee work which are subject to the code, the following factors shall be considered:
  - a. Whether a substantial threat to the senator’s independence of judgment has been created by the conflict situation.
  - b. The effect of the senator’s participation on public confidence in the integrity of the legislature.
  - c. The need for the senator’s particular contribution, such as special knowledge of the subject matter, to the effective functioning of the legislature.

A senator with a conflict of interest may participate in floor debate if prior to debate the senator indicates the conflict of interest.”

➤ **Complainants’ comments on Section 9:**

As [noted in the Cedar Rapids Gazette](#), “Bousselot previously worked as managing director and head of external relations for Summit Agriculture Group, of which Summit Carbon Solutions is a subsidiary. The CEO of Summit Agricultural Group is Bruce Rastetter, an Iowa agribusiness leader and donor to Iowa Republican candidates and causes.”

When Bousselot was hired by Summit Agricultural Group, [Rastetter made this statement](#), “We’ve identified strong growth potential both here in the U.S. and internationally in the areas of renewable energy, emerging industries and agriculture investment, the addition of Michael Bousselot to our team expands our capabilities along with our commitment to better connect to investors and capitalize on opportunities with them.”

Senator Bousselot also has long time ties to CO2 pipeline company [Summit Carbon Solutions Senior Policy Advisor Terry Branstad](#). According to a [Des Moines Register article](#) he was appointed Branstad’s chief of staff on August 8, 2015 and served until 2017.

Senator Bousselot as the chair of the sub-committee assigned to HF 565 has significant power over the life of proposed legislation. His personal, professional and economic relationship with Summit Carbon Solutions is a direct conflict of interest and the reason that he has refused to schedule a sub-committee hearing for HF 565 and allow the democratic process to work itself out.

- **Section 9a of Senate Resolution 1 – Senate Code of Ethics - states:** “...In making a decision relative to the senator’s activity on given bills or committee work which are subject to the code, the following factors shall be considered: a. Whether a substantial threat to the senator’s independence of judgment has been created by the conflict situation.”

➤ **Complainants’ comments on Section 9a:**

According to [a 2015 Politico article](#), Summit Agricultural CEO Bruce Rastetter “...emerged as the state’s [Iowa] top Republican donor at both the federal and state level donating nearly half a million and \$1.1 million, respectively, since 2003, according to campaign finance disclosures – sums that are likely a fraction of his total giving to groups that don’t have to disclose their donors”.

In a [2014 Iowa Watch article](#), Rastetter was listed as one of Iowa’s top 10 political donors in both the 2012 and 2014 elections who gives exclusively to the Republican party. “Seven of Iowa’s top 10 political donors gave exclusively to Republicans. They include Iowa Board of Regents President Bruce Rastetter, an Alden area farmer and business owner who was the top Republican donor doling out \$359,540.32 during the two election cycles analyzed.”

The influence of Rastetter’s donations on elections and elected officials is exemplified by his relationship with Summit Carbon Solutions Senior Policy Advisor Terry Branstad whom he [“recruited to run for Governor in 2010 and was his top donor”](#).

Senator Michael Boussetot’s conflict of interest is directly related to the political donations of Bruce Rastetter to the Republican party in Iowa. Since 2021, [Senator Boussetot has received \\$968,020](#) from the Republican party, Summit Agricultural Group CEO Bruce Rastetter and Summit Carbon Solutions Senior Policy Advisor Terry Branstad combined.

- **Section 9b of Senate Resolution 1 – Senate Code of Ethics - states:** “...In making a decision relative to the senator’s activity on given bills or committee work which are subject to the code, the following factors shall be considered: b. The effect of the senator’s participation on public confidence in the integrity of the legislature”
- **Complainants’ comments on Section 9b:**

[According to a recent poll published in the Des Moines Register:](#)

- 78% of Iowans oppose the use of eminent domain for CO2 pipelines.
- 72% of Republicans in Iowa oppose the use of eminent domain for CO2 pipelines.
- 82% of Democrats in Iowa oppose the use of eminent domain for CO2 pipelines.
- 79% of Independents in Iowa oppose the use of eminent domain.

Senator Boussetot’s outright refusal to assign HF 565 to a sub-committee and allow the democratic process to work is an affront the widespread opposition to the use of eminent domain by private CO2 pipeline companies like Summit Carbon Solutions.

- **Action requested by Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement:** We request that the Senate Ethics Committee, upon review of this complaint, do three things:
  1. Urge Senator Jack Whitver (R-Ankeny/Grimes) as the House Majority Leader to advance HF 565.
  2. Hold a public hearing as an attempt to restore confidence and trust in the general assembly.

3. Censure Senator Michael Boussetot (R-Ankeny) and remove him the Senate Commerce Committee as well as all other committee assignments.

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Barb Kalbach (Iowa CCI)

SUBSCRIBED AND AFFIRMED to before me this 3rd day of April 2023.

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Notary Public in and for the State of Iowa