

In case you missed it: below are articles in regards to State Rep ST Bolden and comments from constituents highlighted.

Wilmington council president hires Rep. Bolden as receptionist, denies political favor

Christina Jedra, The News Journal Published 3:41 p.m. ET Jan. 25, 2018 | Updated 8:20 p.m. ET **Jan. 27, 2018**



Visitors to Wilmington City Council's office will soon see a familiar face behind the front desk: state Rep. Stephanie T. Bolden.

Council President Hanifa Shabazz hired the state legislator, who represents much of Wilmington, as a part-time receptionist. Bolden starts on Monday.

"As a senior, I'm looking for a part-time job to subsidize my income," she said.

Bolden, 71, said she needs some extra money after a fire tore through one of her properties. The row home at 610 E. 11th St., a property used by the Delaware Black Caucus, was damaged after an adjoining [vacant property ignited in August](#), Bolden said.

The damage is not covered by insurance, she said, and now she must pay for her property's reconstruction.

Bolden makes just under \$50,000 annually as a state legislator, according to state salary data. A state public disclosure form shows she also receives social security checks, a state school retirement pension and a Wilmington pension for her service as a city councilwoman.

She will work 20 hours a week at \$16 an hour, said Council Communications Director Antoine Oakley.

Shabazz said the new hire is part of a reorganization of council staff roles and functions that will make the office more efficient.

The council's current receptionist, Administrative Assistant Sylvia Lewis-Harris, has been transferred to an administrative support role, which freed up the reception job, Shabazz said.



Rep. Stephanie T. Bolden, D-Wilmington East, addresses the Delaware House. (Photo: Jason Minto, *The News Journal*)

Instead of creating a new full-time position, which would require a budget amendment, Shabazz opted to create two part-time jobs.

With some senior staff and half of the council members new to their positions as of last year, Shabazz said she wanted someone with experience.

"For the efficiency of the office, I needed to put someone there who already knew what they were doing," Shabazz said. "I needed some expertise especially when it came to answering constituency service issues."

She added: "She fills what I need; I fill what she needed. It was a win-win."

Councilman Bob Williams said the arrangement "doesn't pass the smell test."

"I like Stephanie. I think Stephanie is a great woman, but to gift a position to a political ally is just wrong," the District 7 representative said. "It's just one more hand washing the other."

There were other potential candidates who "could use *a* job, not a third job," Williams said.

"How does that serve our constituency?" he said. "It's a bad look."

Williams added that with several controversies in council last year – including when [Shabazz granted \\$40,000 to her predecessor](#) – he wants the council to avoid any "shades of impropriety."

"I'd be walking on eggshells if I were the council president," he said.

Shabazz said the idea that she would shift positions around to create a job for a friend is "far-fetched." She said she just wanted to hire someone who already knew about city operations.

"I'm a major advocate of workforce development," she said. "But I also have an office to run. ... I could not afford the learning curve."

The job was not posted because "limited service" jobs don't need to be, Shabazz said.

"It was in my purview to do it," she said.



Wilmington City Council President Hanifa Shabazz (Photo: William Bretzger, *The News Journal*)

Shabazz said she solicited referrals from council members for the job. There were two, she said, but "one didn't come through, and one wasn't timely."

The president said she feels good about her choice.

"You know when you call the office, you'll have someone who will be able to answer your questions and provide a good service to you," she said.

Williams said he was never solicited for receptionist suggestions, and he doesn't believe the office needs any more help.

"For 13 employees to have a staff seven, plus two interns, I think we're adequately staffed," he said.

Bolden served five terms on Wilmington City Council and was the first woman to be the body's president pro tempore. She said she is looking forward to being a resource to council members and constituents who call and visit the office.

"I'm very excited about it," she said. "I think I can be a real asset to guide the questions or concerns constituents have to the right people and maybe being able to answer some for some council members."

A former teacher, Bolden has a bachelor's degree in business education and a master's degree in urban education. But she said she's not too important to answer phones and make copies.

"I don't think anyone is overqualified for a job that deals with public service. It's another way to give back. That's the way I look at it," said Bolden, who worked at the Boscov's department store during her council days. "I love working with people."

She doesn't see a conflict in working for two levels of government at the same time, noting that other state legislators work for government agencies.

And she said it won't be a problem answering to city-level officials.

"I'm there to listen. They're my bosses," she said. "Whatever they need, I'll be there for."

Wilmington Democratic City Committee Chair Cassandra Marshall said in a statement Friday night that there should have been a "formal, open process" to fill the receptionist position.

"At a time in Wilmington when so many – young people especially – are looking to find work and jumpstart their careers, a more prudent course of action for Council would be to find a Wilmingtonian who could benefit from the excellent experience this position with Council offers," she said.

Marshall said the party's executive committee is urging Shabazz to reconsider the appointment.

"Let Rep. Bolden focus on the wonderful work she does on behalf of her constituents while giving a deserving Wilmingtonian a chance to start an impactful career in public services."

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You know what? I'm not even going to finish reading all of this article. This Shabazz woman is a real operator. Who the hell does she think she is kidding???? Stand by for more on this woman, as I am sure this is not the last of it.

Dammmmmmnnn, this situation shows Delaware's self serving political system at it's best. Shabazz, hiring a friend at a higher than normal hourly wage to an unpublished job. Shabazz's continued arrogance and denials. Boulden's using the political system to set herself nicely at the teats of government employment. State rep job, state school system pension, Wilmington city council pension and now another job with the City. SMH at the BS politicians get away with.

DELAWARE WAY 5 Government checks SS, 2 retirements, legislator pay, now part time city council, because she needs the money because she was too dumb to have insurance

Wilmington.

No collusion here, just our council president doing her normal dishonest job. People in Wilmington voted for her, and she has proven how dishonest she was on day one with her 40,000 present to the outgoing council president.

Your tax dollars at work...

So let me understand how it is that with salaries, pensions and Social Security the good Representative can't live on \$100,000.00 a year. I'm sure there are many qualified citizens with adequate experience and a real need for employment as a receptionist to handle this job.

Jaehn Dennis ·

This is sad and shameful yes surely there is someone out there that is in need of work and can do the job. This has all the makings of the shady inside crab I expect from this woman. Shame on the State Rep looking out for herself. I am sick of this self serving behavior from our elected representatives-- Voters Please pay Attention.

Stop giving politicians second jobs- Editorial

The News Journal Editorial Board Published **Jan. 29, 2018**



(Photo: Saquan Stimpson, SAQUAN STIMPSON/SPECIAL TO THE NEWS JOURNAL)

Yet another Delaware politician is poised to get a second job on the taxpayer dime. But there is a silver lining to this story: At least some political leaders are starting to push back.

Wilmington City Council President Hanifa Shabazz is hiring state Rep. Stephanie T. Bolden, D-Wilmington, to work as a receptionist. Bolden will work 20 hours a week at \$16 an hour, bolstering her \$50,000 General Assembly salary.

Read the story: [Wilmington council president hires Rep. Bolden as receptionist](#)

Shabazz calls the hire a "win-win," because council needs a secretary and Bolden needs supplementary income after a fire burned down a property she owns.

We're sympathetic to Bolden's situation, but public officials shouldn't get government jobs just because they need the money. There are plenty of Wilmingtonians who could use employment. To those in search of work, how could this hire not seem like favoritism or patronage?

OPINION: [Show restraint on government spending](#)

None of this is to say Bolden isn't qualified for the job; the interpersonal skills that get her elected would likely serve her well in the position.

It is a matter of principle. We have consistently said [elected officials shouldn't get taxpayer jobs](#).

It was wrong, for example, when former Sen. Patricia Blevins got an \$84,000-a-year job in the state animal welfare office after losing her seat. And it was wrong when former Rep. Mike Barbieri left his seat for a \$144,000 position running the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

In an encouraging sign, some Democratic political leaders are beginning to publicly call out these conflicts of interest.

In a statement issued after The News Journal reported on Bolden's hire, the Democratic Party's Wilmington City Committee Chair Cassandra Marshall called on Bolden and the council to "reconsider," saying there should have been a "formal, open process" to fill the job.

"At a time in Wilmington when so many — young people especially — are looking to find work and jumpstart their careers, a more prudent course of action for Council would be to

find a Wilmingtonian who could benefit from the excellent experience this position with Council offers," Marshall said.

Good for her.

Marshall is a leader among the relative political newcomers who swept into the long-ossified city Democratic Party apparatus last year. They wanted to challenge the party's old guard to think differently.

Giving government jobs to elected officials is a certainly one instance where that challenge is necessary. Whatever their intentions, appointing former colleagues to taxpayer-funded jobs undermines the public's trust in the efficiency and integrity of government.

Statements like Marshall's are the first step toward erasing this distasteful patronage politics.

The News Journal's editorial opinions are decided by its editorial board, which is separate from the news staff.

To those in search of work, this kind of activity doesn't seem like favoritism or patronage, it seems like conspiracy and criminal activity. And in fact, that's just what it is. The editorial is correct in pointing out that any award of employment should not take into account the needs of Ms. Boulden at all. Her property fire and resulting expenses, while unfortunate are not the city's problem or a proper consideration for employment. Ms. Boulden needs to be immediately informed that she has no job with the city.

Jaehn Dennis ·

This is morally and ethically wrong. Our leaders/lawmakers are not leading at all.

Rep. Bolden sues Wilmington, blames city for fire that damaged property

Christina Jedra, The News Journal Published

Feb. 5, 2018



State Rep. Stephanie T. Bolden is suing the city of Wilmington for at least \$75,000 in relation to a fire that damaged one of her properties last year, according to a lawsuit filed in federal court last month.

Bolden alleges the city acted negligently in handling a vacant home it owns which shares a wall with her property in the east side neighborhood.

On Aug. 7, 2017, [a fire started in the city-owned property](#), located at 608 East 11th St., and the blaze caused "substantial damage" to Bolden's property at 610 East 11th St., the lawsuit states.

"Over several years, (Bolden) complained repeatedly to the city about the city property including that the city property had been boarded up, vacant, and in severe disrepair for many years and that vagrants, drug users, and other non-resident transient individuals regularly occupied the property," the lawsuit states.

RELATED: [Wilmington council president hires Rep. Bolden as receptionist](#)

The city failed to secure the property, respond to Bolden's complaints, or repair and maintain the property "to prevent the fire from occurring," the lawsuit states.

The fire caused \$75,000 worth of damage to Bolden's property, the lawsuit states. The location was Bolden's childhood home and has more recently been the headquarters for the Delaware Black Caucus.

Bolden's attorney, Geena Khomenko George of the Losco & Marconi firm, argues in the lawsuit that the city's lack of action was a violation of Bolden's constitutional right "to be free from governmental deprivation of her property without due process of law."

In addition to the \$75,000 in damages, the state representative is seeking compensatory damages, coverage of attorney's fees and court costs and "further relief as this court deems appropriate," the lawsuit states.

Bolden and her lawyer declined to comment.

RELATED: [Bus riders clash with DART over elimination of Rodney Square stops](#)

John Rago, the mayor's deputy chief of staff for policy and communications, said in a statement that the city has reviewed Bolden's complaint and will respond to it in court.

The lawsuit was filed Jan. 9, records show, weeks before Bolden became a part-time receptionist for Wilmington City Council.



Wilmington City Council President, Hanifa Shabazz speaks at a press conference where long vacant buildings at 50 and 52 East 22nd Street were demolished Monday morning to make way for affordable housing for first-time homeowners. (Photo: Suchat Pederson, The News Journal-USA TODAY NETWORK)

Bolden's first day behind council's front desk was scheduled for Jan. 29, Council President Hanifa Shabazz said last month. Now Bolden will sit across the hall from the mayor of the city she is suing on the ninth floor of the Louis L. Redding City/County Building.

Shabazz did not respond to a request for comment.

The 71-year-old state legislator said last month that she took the reception job because she wanted to "subsidize" her income after the fire.

The property damage was not covered by insurance, she said.

Bolden makes just under \$50,000 annually as a state legislator, according to state salary data. She also receives social security checks, a state school retirement pension and a Wilmington pension for her service as a city councilwoman, according to a state public disclosure form.

The hire attracted criticism from city residents and Democratic Party members who said it appeared to be a political favor and that the job should have gone to an unemployed Wilmingtonian.

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LMFAO at the absurdity of this situation. Another brilliant move by Shabass with her hiring her 71 year old friend who it appears played her. If they fire her from the receptionist job she'll sue for wrongful termination. I thought Mayor Dennis showed some ineptitude and shady dealings but Shabass is taking it to a whole new level.

Well, yet another reason that the City of Wilmington needs to address their 'rules' for employees. Here's a State Rep, that has at least one (maybe more?) investment (vacant) property, yet doesn't keep any insurance coverage on it (them), gets gifted a job for the City Council President. And now wants to sue the City for damages to her uninsured, vacant, property. Hmm, sounds like it's time to 'fire' (pun fully intended) Mrs. Bolden from ALL of her taxpayer paid and supported State & City jobs. Oh, might want to look into getting some property insurance too!

Mind you, this is after the city hired her for a part-time position to pay for the fire damage to the townhouse, which obviously did not have fire insurance, she currently collects 5 checks from the government but that is not enough. How many properties does this poor woman own? She needs to get smart and buy insurance.

The lawsuit was filed before her buddy Shabass hired her.

Jaehn Dennis · Wilmington, Delaware

This is sad and shamefully wrong. Shame on you State Rep Bolden, you are the one that supposed to set the example for your constituents; you have lead some many years and have set not one example as far as I am concern from what I have read in days. First you take an unposted position for Your own gain, knowing well it was not the right approach to the job. Regardless how you needed the money. You as a lawmaker have an uninsured vacant property in the city where you were an elected city councilwoman made financial laws that has affected those that are struggling and you accepted a job without a concern or care for those you ask to vote for you. Shame on you. Then you attend meetings expressing to these constituents about doing the right thing; Shame on you Stephanie T. Bolden; you smell. I am sick and tired of Our elected officials failing to do their job and seek to look out for their own greedy selves. Those in the 2nd Representative District need to look long and hard In September and November if no one challenges her vote/write NONE OF THE ABOVE! This mess has to stop.....

Bolden, well, she certainly is that!

She sure isn't shy living off the dole either. Has to be close to a record for dipping. She's a re-dipper.

I suggest that for the City to pay for this it would be appropriate to reduce the workforce by one position - it would just happen to be one Ms. Bolden has!

ONCE AGAIN,[AND ONE TOO MANY] I WILL SAY,YOU CAN NOT WRITE THIS STUFF.WAS SHE BEING ASKED TO PAY,THE YEARLY VACANCY FEE,SHE WAS PART AND PARCEL,IN PASSING SAID LEGISLATION.THIS CITY GOVERNMENT,BOTH COUNCIL AND MAYORS OFFICES,ARE THE LAUGHING STOCK,OF US WILMINGTONIANS.THERE ALL CROOKS AND DOUBLE SELF SERVING SERVANT BUMS.