The Buffalo News/Saturday, May 12, 2018

WASHINGTON NEWS

Trump's fixer offered lawyer help in case with Schneiderman

By Alan Feuer

NEW YORK TIMES

NEW YORK - A lawyer who says he once represented two women who claimed that former New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman had "sexually victimized" them several years ago asserted Friday that he discussed their claims in 2013 with an unlikely person: Michael Cohen, Donald Trump's longtime lawyer and fixer.

The lawyer for the women, Peter J. Gleason, offered his surprising account in a letter submitted to Kimba M. Wood, the Manhattan federal judge who is overseeing an ongoing investigation into Cohen. In the letter, Gleason asked Wood for an order to protect any records Cohen might have concerning their discussion of the women – a step he felt was needed after federal agents seized boxes of documents in a series of raids on Cohen's office, apartment and hotel room last month.

"The extent of Mr. Cohen's memorializing any of our communications is unknown," Gleason wrote. "However, these two women's confidentiality, as victims of a sexual assault, should be superior to that of any unrelated subpoena.

In an interview shortly after his letter was filed, Gleason - without offering details or corroborating evidence of his account - said that during their conversation five years ago, Cohen told him that if Trump, who was thinking of running for New York governor at the time, were to be elected, he would help bring to light the women's accusations against Schneiderman.

A deep animus had existed between the two men, prompted by a \$40 million civil fraud lawsuit Schneiderman filed against Trump's for-profit educational venture, Trump University, in August 2013.

The filing of Gleason's letter marked an extraordinary convergence of two of the moment's most explosive news stories: the abrupt demise of Schneiderman, who quit his job Monday amid allegations that he had physically assaulted four former girlfriends, and the case of Cohen, who is under investigation for potentially having broken the law by trying to suppress negative coverage of Trump in the run-up to the 2016 election

The letter also shed new light on the simmering feud between Trump and Schneiderman, one that was inflamed anew this week as several of Trump's supporters took to social media to revel in Schneiderman's down-

As for Gleason, he is a well-known figure in New York's legal and political circles. A former firefighter, he mounted a failed campaign for City Council in 2003 and last year briefly sought to challenge the Manhattan district attorney, Cyrus R. Vance Jr., as a writein candidate. In his legal practice, Gleason has shown a penchant for involving himself in salacious, tabloidready cases. In 2012, for instance, he represented Anna Gristina, the Soccer Mom Madam, who was accused



According to a Manhattan lawyer for two women, Michael Cohen, a longtime lawyer for Donald Trump, promised help in his dispute with former New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman.

of running a brothel on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

In his interview Friday, Gleason also said he had told several elected officials of his concerns about Schneiderman's abusive behavior nearly five years ago, but was rebuffed.

"The highest levels of our state and city government were well aware of Eric Schneiderman," he said.

Gleason refused to identify the officials, and noted that the women he represented were not among the four who came forward this week in an article in the New Yorker that prompted Schneiderman's resignation.

A spokesman for the law firm of Clayman & Rosenberg, which is representing Schneiderman, declined to comment. Lawyers for Cohen did not return a call seeking comment.

In his letter, Gleason said that after his attempts to assist the women fell on deaf ears, he decided to take their accusations against Schneiderman to Steve Dunleavy, a former columnist for the New York Post. According to the letter, Dunleavy "offered to discuss the matter with Donald Trump."

Within a day of speaking with Dunleavy, Gleason said, he received a phone call from Cohen.

"In the conversation," Gleason recalled, "I said, 'Listen, I'm looking for somebody to help.' At the time, Trump was considering running for governor. And Cohen said, 'If Trump runs and wins, you'll have an ally for bringing these women forward."

Gleason added, "I'm no fan of Michael Cohen, but he was sympathetic.'

At that point, Trump and Schneiderman were warring over Trump University in a legal battle bitter enough that Trump eventually filed a complaint against Schneiderman with New York state's ethics watchdog agency.

Liberals, conservatives agree on overturning Citizens Ŭnited

BY ASHLEY BALCERZAK CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY

WASHINGTON - Liberals and conservatives overwhelmingly support a constitutional amendment that would effectively overturn the Supreme Court's seminal campaign finance decision in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, according to a new study from the University of Maryland and nonpartisan research group Voice of the People.

Three-fourths of survey respondents - including 66 per-

action on money in politics that fell short of a constitutional amendment, such as a bill that required corporations and unions to report campaign spending to shareholders, members and the public in addition to disclosures they file with the Federal Election Commission.

A recent Center for Public Integrity analysis found that Congress has little appetite for passing laws addressing campaign cash: Of more than two

introduced early in the current congressional session, lawmakers have not conducted a single formal hearing or vote on any of them.

Less than half of those surveyed consider an anti-Citizens United amendment to be an attack on free speech.

More than four out of five agree with the statement that "the rich should not have more influence just because they have more money."



cent of Republicans and 85 percent of Democrats – said they supported a constitutional amendment outlawing Citizens United.

The study also indicates that most Americans - 88 percent overall - want to reduce the influence large campaign donors wield over lawmakers at a time when a single congressional election may cost tens of millions of dollars.

That most Republican and Democratic voters want to amend the U.S. Constitution to limit big money's role in politics is notable because it's the "most drastic step that can be taken," said Steven Kull, director of the University of Maryland School of Public Policy's Program for Public Consultation, which conducted the studv.

The 2010 Citizens United decision specifically allowed corporations, unions and certain nonprofits to raise and spend unlimited amounts of money to advocate for and against political candidates.

It also gave rise to super PACs - lightly regulated political committees that have become major weapons in both state and federal politics.

Candidates and political parties, meanwhile, may by law only accept limited contributions.

Overturning Citizens United has been many liberals' dream for years, although it's highly unlikely to happen.

The traditional route for amending the Constitution requires a vote of two-thirds of both the House and Senate, followed by ratification by three-fourths of state legislatures.

The Constitution was last amended in 1992.

Most survey respondents also support congressional

