



Illinois Ethics Matters

December 16, 2019

www.inspectorgeneral.illinois.gov

Honesty, Integrity, Service

A newsletter from the Office of Executive Inspector General for the Agencies
of the Illinois Governor

Office of Executive Inspector General

Susan M. Haling
Executive Inspector
General

Neil P. Olson
General Counsel

Fallon Opperman
Deputy Inspector
General & Chief of
Chicago Division

Erin K. Bonales
Director, Hiring &
Employment
Monitoring Division

Christine Benavente
Deputy Inspector
General-Executive
Projects

Claudia P. Ortega
Chief Administrative
Officer

Chicago Office:
69 W. Washington St.
Suite 3400
Chicago, IL 60602
(312) 814-5600

Springfield Office:
607 E. Adams St.
14th Floor
Springfield, IL 62701
(217) 558-5600

Hotline:
(866) 814-1113

TTY:
(888) 261-2734

Gettysburg Address Improperly Loaned by ALPLM: Executive Director Terminated

A recent publicly released report by the OEIG found mismanagement by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) Executive Director, Alan Lowe, based on the loaning of the Gettysburg Address in a manner that did not comport with loan policies or industry practices. The address was loaned to Mercury One, Inc., a nonprofit founded by conservative media personality Glenn Beck, to be used in a “pop-up” museum where it was displayed in Mr. Beck’s office.

The ALPLM possesses one of the five known copies of the Gettysburg Address in Lincoln’s handwriting. The appraised value of this copy is \$20 million, although as a practical matter, it is irreplaceable.

Through its investigation, the OEIG discovered that the Historic Preservation Agency (HPA) Board, which had previously governed the ALPLM, had prohibited the loan of the Gettysburg Address without a unanimously approved exception. Mr. Lowe loaned the Address in contravention of this directive and without addressing the concerns of the ALPLM staff or consulting the Governor’s Office. HPA loan policies required at least three to six months advance notice, a formal written request from the borrower, and a Standard Facility Report form or other written proof that the borrower can adequately care for the loaned object; these requirements are consistent with standard museum practice and how the Address had been loaned in the past to other institutions. Mr. Lowe agreed to the loan of the Address to Mercury One, with only *eight days notice* without a formal written request, and without a Standard Facility Report or complete information about how the Address would be displayed and handled. Additional museum industry practices were not followed and are further detailed in the OEIG’s report.

Subsequent to loaning the Address, Mercury One issued a check for approximately \$50,000 to the ALPLM, and Mr. Lowe joined an advisory board for Mercury One.

In addition to the mismanagement finding, the OEIG also found that Mr. Lowe and Michael Little, the then-Chief Operating Officer, improperly accepted payment for their travel expenses from Mercury One. Lastly, the OEIG found that Mr. Little intentionally interfered with an OEIG revolving door violation investigation when seeking to work for Mercury One after leaving State employment.

The OEIG recommended that the Governor’s Office immediately remove Mr. Lowe as Executive Director, and on September 20, 2019, Mr. Lowe was terminated. Mr. Little had already resigned in lieu of termination because of his mishandling of another historical artifact. The OEIG also recommended that the Governor’s Office appoint members to the vacant ALPLM board. Eleven board members have now been appointed.

A copy of the report, [In re: Alan Lowe and Michael Little \(Case #19-00300\)](#), is available on the OEIG website.

- The OEIG recently released its Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2019. The report is available on its [website](#).