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Revisionist History & Cognitive Bias in the Media - John W. Casella, Chairman & CEO

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Revisionist History & Cognitive Bias in the Media

To the Editor:

Cheryl Jensen's recent letter to the editor underscores how revisionist history and cognitive bias drives so much of what we consume from today's media.

Jensen cites a right-to-know request in which emails show a back-and-forth exchange that is not only common in legislative proceedings, but an important part of the democratic process. In Jensen's mind, like so many others who allow their bias to guide them when they seek out information, this shows collusion and merits an ethics inquiry.

There are likely hundreds of email exchanges that occurred with other businesses, individuals, and activist groups that are conveniently left out, because that reality is far from what Jensen and others want so desperately to make people believe. The more people they can bring into their echo chamber, the more their bias can become the reality of others, weaponized in legislative proceedings, and repeated in the media.

As was the case with previous landfill siting bills that have been brought forward in New Hampshire, Casella determined that it was appropriate to weigh in on SB 61. There is nothing unusual or nefarious about a company weighing in on New Hampshire laws that will impact the very service that it is devoted to providing to New Hampshire residents.

What made SB 61 different than its predecessor bills is that the latter were written by activist groups and were specifically focused on stopping Casella's proposed Granite State Landfill project. § was a bipartisan effort that resulted from the combining of two landfill siting bills that were pre

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in New Hampshire and had the broad support of myriad stakeholders.

Make no mistake, this bill did nothing to make siting the Granite State Landfill easier for Casella. The bill would have achieved much of what was being sought by previous bills and, ironically, what is now being requested by these same activist groups in the ongoing rulemaking process.

What SB 61 didn't do was weaponize the legislature and directly target a single project, and that's why those who have sought to use the New Hampshire legislature as a mechanism to stop the proposed Granite State Landfill decided to make public claims of collusion and unethical conduct. Jensen goes on to cite more revised history believing in her mind that there is a pattern of behavior, conveniently leaving out all the items that don't meet her narrative of collusion.

The claims are baseless and show that these groups are willing to resort to ad hominem attacks on regulatory agencies, companies, and private citizens alike to kill balanced advancements in siting criteria if it means that they don't specifically meet their goal of stopping this single project.

Casella works with regulatory agencies at local, state, and federal levels in every state in which it operates. In exactly zero states, could anyone categorize the relationships as "cozy" with a straight face. Oftentimes it is amicable and friendly, on rare occasions it is contentious, or even adversarial. But it is always professional and courteous. Jensen and others like to use both sides of this professional relationship as it suits their narrative, which is the biggest indicator of their cognitive bias and reliance on revisionist history. On the rare occasion that Casella receives a regulatory violation they call it operational incompetence, and then when the regulators lean on industry expertise to help answer questions in rulemaking, they call it collusion.

We hope that the balanced and logical residents of New Hampshire can see this kind of weaponization of the legislature and media for what it really is.

In the meantime, we will continue to provide outstanding service to the more than 50,000 New Hampshire businesses and residents who rely upon us to protect human health and the environment, and we will continue to answer to, and work with, the regulatory agencies who oversee that process regardless of how others wish to spin it.

John W. Casella, Chairman & CEO

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