



Burke: Former Trek officials had 'an ax to grind'

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PORT WASHINGTON -- Mary Burke on Thursday said she stands by her performance record at Trek Bicycle and called former Trek COO Tom Albers a liar with "an ax to grind."

Burke linked claims this week by Albers and former Trek employee Gary Ellerman that she had been fired by Trek to what she called Gov. Scott Walker's efforts to attack the Wisconsin bicycle manufacturer founded by Burke's family.

"These are complete lies, fabrications," Burke told reporters at a campaign stop at Molded Dimensions manufacturing facility.

"Tom (Albers) has an ax to grind, Gary Ellerman has an ax to grind, and it just shows Scott Walker is not going to stop at anything. He is a career politician who will do anything to win an election, including lies, smears and dragging a great Wisconsin company through the mud."

Burke said of Albers, "He was asked to leave at one point, and in fact, went to work for one of Trek's competitors.

"The fact is, my track record is that I created six companies in less than five years," said Burke. "I grew sales from \$3 million to over \$50 million, and I did all this before I was 35 years old. Trek's international operations, its European operations have been a source of strength and I stand by my performance and my success in its operation."

Burke defended her decision to leave Trek after managing its overseas operations.

"That was a decision on how we could continue to improve operations," she said. "We didn't need to have that position; we had two people who then reported directly to the U.S. That's how companies get better and stay competitive. It was a lot of work to get all those offices -- seven offices -- up and running in a short period of time. Once they're up and running and they're established, certainly there's different structures that will work better."

Burke said she suspects the Walker campaign was behind the release of statements by Albers and Ellerman less than a week before the election.

"These are two individuals who have come out of the woodwork, obviously big Republican supporters of Scott Walker's, this type of lies and allegations, frankly, shouldn't be part of politics," Burke said. "To have this come six days before the election is purely intent by Governor Walker to try to take away from the issues and to distract voters."

"Governor Walker earlier in his campaign chose to drag Trek through the mud, and this is just one more attempt to do that," Burke added.

Walker's campaign said it played no role in the story.

"In the final days of the campaign Governor Walker is traveling across the state on his 'Continuing Wisconsin's Comeback' Bus Tour sharing his second-term plan for Wisconsin," said campaign spokeswoman Alleigh Marre. "We're confident that voters will want to continue moving forward with Governor Walker's plan and positive vision for the future instead of Mary Burke's divisive, negative, and aggressive rhetoric and plagiarized jobs plan that would move Wisconsin backward."

- *By Kay Nolan*
For WisPolitics.com