

A former Ohio politician was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison for orchestrating the First Energy \$60 million scandal. A former charter school owner-operator is, as of yet, off scot-free for a \$100 million scandal. (The actual amount may have been as much as \$500 million.)

It is a matter of fact that some folks are punished for criminal activities while others dodge punishment. A lot of politicians were involved in the \$60 million First Energy scandal. A few were convicted and are paying the price. How is it that so many politicians and their lobbyist friends were involved in the First Energy scandal but only a few were brought to justice?

The Attorney General in a flurry of media hype recently “went after” First Energy regarding the First Energy scandal. In a quiet (without a press conference) settlement agreement, the state settled the criminal matter for \$20 million; case closed and some principal parties in the scandal left off the hook.

Regarding high profile crimes in Ohio politics, the ECOT Man, Bill Lager is still off the hook.

Mr. Lager started an online charter school. He fed the campaign coffers of numerous politicians that maintained control of the legislature and statewide offices. (Many of those politicians are still in control of Ohio government in some form or other.)

The first year of operation, ECOT overcharged the state by \$1 million but ECOT was required to pay it back; however, in the meantime, the ECOT Man had lined the campaign coffers of numerous politicians. In a mysterious maneuver, after repaying the stolen funds that first year, the Ohio Department of Education signed an agreement with the ECOT Man that allowed him to monitor his own student enrollment. How bizarre is that? Cook the books, pay back the theft, and then negotiate an agreement with the state to cook the books in the future.

After about 15 years, for some unknown reason, the Ohio Department of Education decided to check the reported ECOT student enrollment against the actual enrollment. The student audit by the state showed that in one year alone, ECOT overcharged the state \$60 million. (The First Energy scandal coincidentally involved \$60 million.) What would one guess the ECOT overcharge was each of the preceding 14 years?

When ECOT was required to pay back the state for the stolen funds, ECOT was forced by its sponsor to close. But the saga continues. The state has been in court for several years attempting to collect back a portion of the stolen funds. It doesn't seem that the state is being very aggressive in collecting the stolen funds from Mr. Lager. Possibly, if the ECOT Man is pushed too hard he might provide some interesting revelations about how he was able to manipulate state officials.

Why is the state not aggressively pursuing repayment for the ECOT scandal? During an ECOT graduation event a current statewide official was honored with an honorary diploma (the only one ever granted). On that occasion, an ECOT official credited the honoree, saying, without him there would be no ECOT. The laudatory statement ties the honoree and no doubt his colleagues to the ECOT scandal.

Why did the state quietly settle a major criminal charge against First Energy for a paltry \$20 million? Why is the state not aggressively pursuing the ECOT money stolen from the state? Why are Ohio citizens not outraged by the egregious antics of state officials?