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## San Diego legislators request state investigation of Irvine's Great Park audit

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A group of San Diego legislators wants the State Auditor's Office to investigate Irvine's audit into the Great Park to determine whether it has been conducted appropriately.

The request was spurred by a San Diego company, Gafcon Inc., targeted by the audit.

Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego, in February requested the committee consider for an audit the performance of the Irvine City Council subcommittee overseeing the audit, comprised of council members Jeff Lalloway and Christina Shea.

She said Tuesday she made the request after hearing about the audit saga from Gafcon Inc., a San Diego-based project management firm implicated in the audit. Gafcon recently requested the city of Irvine publicly withdraw preliminary audit findings released in January 2014 and say the company has done no wrong.



The Great Park Balloon is seen through the palm trees of Palm Court at the Great Park in Irvine.

LEONARD ORTIZ, REGISTER PHOTOGRAPHER

"My interest is to provide some platform for a San Diego business that got pulled into this," Gonzalez said. She said it is "unusual" for a business to request a state audit.

In a Feb. 10 letter, she urged the committee to consider the matter without delay, writing: "Given that Irvine's audit continues unabated and that taxpayer monies are being spent with haste and without discretion, I respectfully submit that this issue is time sensitive and merits consideration in the immediate future."

The audit into spending of more than \$200 million on less than one-sixth of the project was initiated in June of 2013. The final report's release has been repeatedly delayed.

Gonzalez said she worked with Gafcon before she was in office, when she was head of the San Diego and Imperial Counties Labor Council. Campaign finance records show the firm gave Gonzalez's campaign committee \$3,900 in late 2012.

The state Joint Legislative Audit Committee was set to consider Gonzalez' request during its 9:30 a.m. meeting Wednesday, but it is now on hold. On Monday, Gonzalez told the committee she had a scheduling conflict and wouldn't be able to attend.

She asked the committee to take on the issue in April instead. Four other San Diego legislators – state Sen. Joel Anderson, R-San Diego, Rep. Brian Maienschein, R-San Diego, state Sen. Marty Block, D-San Diego, state Sen. Ben Hueso, D-San Diego – co-signed her request.

Assemblyman Don Wagner, R-Irvine, said he recently asked Gonzalez to delay the discussion because the investigation into the money spent on the park project is not yet complete.

In a letter sent Monday to the committee, the Orange County District Attorney's Office shared similar reservations.

"We consider this investigation to be pending and will continue to review all available information to determine if any criminal laws have been broken," Senior Assistant District Attorney Michael Lubinski stated.

The office in August requested copies of all audit documents.

"That letter should show the committee and Assemblywoman Gonzalez that an investigation of the Great Park at this time would be completely inappropriate," Lalloway said.

It's unclear if the state audit committee would still take up the request if Irvine's final audit report comes out before its April meeting.

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