

## Michigan Governor Uses Pardon for Connected Lawyer

Written by GBP Staff  
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LANSING – According to the [Lansing State Journal](#) on Friday, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder used his pardon powers to erase the drunken driving conviction of a politically connected lawyer who was appointed to a state economic board in 2011.

Snyder followed the recommendation of the Michigan parole board and pardoned Alan Gocha Jr. in December, one of only 11 pardons out of roughly 750 applications since the governor took office.

Gocha applied in April 2012, less than four years after pleading guilty to driving while impaired in Oakland County's Bloomfield Township. An agent conducted interviews and checked records before the file "was put on the backburner," said Russ Marlan, a deputy director at the Corrections Department. But the board the next year encouraged Gocha to apply again, he said.

One of Gocha's references was Bob LaBrant, a Republican strategist who is the Chamber of Commerce's former lawyer and a Snyder appointee on the Michigan Employment Relations Commission.

Gocha gave \$26,500 to the chamber's political action committee from 2011 through 2013. He was general counsel for 5-hour Energy's parent company, Innovation Ventures, until 2010 when the legal department became a stand-alone firm.

The primary client is Innovation Ventures, based in Farmington Hills. Records show Gocha's firm also is the agent for ETC Capital, a private equity firm backed by 5-hour Energy's billionaire founder, Manoj Bhargava.

ETC Capital last August gave \$2.5 million to the Republican Governors Association, joining conservative billionaires Sheldon Adelson and David Koch on the list of top five donors to the group that worked to elect Snyder and other Republican governors, according to an analysis by

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the Washington-based Center for Public Integrity. That same day, the RGA paid \$3.2 million to a media company to place ads backing Snyder's re-election.

Eight weeks after ETC Capital gave \$275,000 to the RGA in October 2013, the group gave \$276,000 to the Michigan Republican Party.

"I had no idea that (Bhargava) was politically active. I had no idea that Gocha was politically active," said Marlan.

Gocha was "just another person" and received no special treatment, Marlan said.