

“Just a Volunteer” No Excuse for Fatal Inattention of Board Chair

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NPQ has [previously written](#) about the Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Center, which went under in 2013 after 45 years of operation after it had stopped reimbursing the state for workers' unemployment benefits. In doing so, we mentioned that Ronald L. Walker II had been president of its board for an extended period of time.

“RoxComp” is said to owe \$761,400 to the state, of which \$46,700 dates to Walker’s time as president of the board, according to RoxComp’s court-appointed receiver. The irony is that Walker, as Governor Charlie Baker’s new Labor Secretary, oversees the state Department of Unemployment Assistance, which is owed the largest portion of this money.

“As volunteer chairman of the RoxComp board, Ron Walker’s role was focused on oversight and planning, not the day-to-day transactions of the health center, which received a clean bill of fiscal health from independent auditors just prior to his stepping down from the board,” said Ann Dufresne, communications director for the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. But citations began when Walker was still present in 2011. (Audits, of course, are insufficient to guarantee fiscal soundness.)

Not only did the federal Bureau of Primary Health Care find the health center to be out of compliance with 13 of 19 program requirements, but it expressed concern with the relationship between RoxComp and Walker’s for-profit management consulting company (another ironic note). Next Street Financial charged RoxComp nearly \$250,000. During two of those years, when Walker was on the board and the health center was contracted with his management consulting program, the center did not pay its unemployment fees.

Walker has refused to release the contracts Next Street had with RoxComp. When asked whether RoxComp should compensate the state’s unemployment office for its losses, Walker offered no opinion, saying that the issue would probably be “decided by the courts.”—Ruth McCambridge