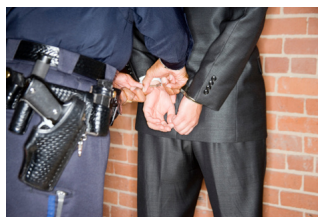


AZ Insider: Senator and Girlfriend Scuffle After Charity Gala

Written by Written by Kathy Shayna Shocket

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"The AZ Insider" with Kathy Shayna Shocket: Get the inside scoop on Arizona's social scene and celebrity news.



This week: Girlfriend went to jail. Senator gets political immunity. The HE SAID/SHE SAID gossip.

Obviously when one of the guests at the "Dancing with the Stars" charity gala in Phoenix put on her fancy dress to get ready for the party, she never imagined herself wearing the ritzy garb inside a Phoenix jail. (Not to mention that the jewelry ultimately adorning her attire that night would be a pair of handcuffs.) But a Phoenix jail cell is where **Aubry Ballard** ended up Friday night after that fundraiser for the National Kidney Foundation of Arizona. She and boyfriend, Arizona Senate Majority Leader **Scott Bundgaard**, were both handcuffed after their violent scuffle in the car on the ride home. (He was one of the featured dancers in the competition who was paired up with professional Fred Astaire ballroom dancers and vied for donated dollars for the charity and a winning dance title.)



Senator Scott Bundgaard and Aubry Ballard

A concerned passerby on the highway called 911 to report the two that were fighting in the car stopped alongside the highway. Basically, it's become a he said/she said story now about who was at fault for the bruises on both of them. Bundgaard says Ballard went into a jealous rage because of the way she perceived him dancing with his dance partner in the competition and punched him in the face, threw his clothes out of the car and tried to flee with the car. Ballard denies the accusations and says it's been one of the worst experiences of her life and is humiliating to see her mug shot in the media.



Aubry Ballard

In between the accusations, the facts are that she spent the night in jail and he was given legislative immunity. The domestic violence incident has now sparked several controversies. Domestic violence advocates and some legal critics who are questioning how the ancient law was interpreted and feel the senator shouldn't have been given immunity.

And then there's Bundgaard himself, who is saying that he is not above the law and didn't directly request the immunity. He was simply informing the officials of his legislative status. The police have a different version than Bundgaards. To make matters worse, he spontaneously phoned into the popular conservative **Barry Young** talk show on KFYI radio, during which Young and his co-host **Michele Larson** were discussing the incident. Bundgaard called in to explain himself and that he merely wanted investigators to know he was a senator and not "just an idiot on the side of the road."



Senator Scott Bundgaard

Bundgaard has also criticized *The Arizona Republic* newspaper for their story on the scandal. He even gave a statement to KTAR Radio explaining himself and highlighting his efforts to try and raise money for the charity. Some Republicans claim Bundgaard is being railroaded in the spotlight especially by *The Arizona Republic* and others to push Bundgaard's political proposals off-track.

(FYI: The law says lawmakers are "privileged from arrest in all cases except treason, felony and breach of the peace and they shall not be

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subject to any civil process during the session of the Legislature, nor for 15 days before the commencement of each session.")

***New Update:** The investigating officer on this case has requested that a domestic-violence assault charge be pursued against Bundgaard once the Legislature is out of session. Stay tuned.



Senator Scott Bundgaard dancing with partner

The Charity Gossip Fallout?

It's unfortunate that this is how a fundraising gala party makes headlines. In this unpredictable economy and charitable galas competing for ticket sales and publicity for their events, it's a shame that this domestic dispute is producing "encores" of stories attached to the gala for the Phoenix charity version of "Dancing with the Stars."

Usually most of the gossip I hear surrounding this annual event is about who should have won, that so and so was a better dancer, who looked better in their dance costume, etc. It's actually the same sort of typical controversial gossip and strong opinions you'll hear about the actual "Dancing with the Stars" TV show.

I hope that in the long run this incident, that may continue to grow because of the legalities involved, won't remain synonymous with the Kidney Foundation's annual fundraising dinner. And perhaps I can selfishly take this opportunity to remind everyone that organ donation is a gift of life. And happy Kidney birthday to one of my great friends whose husband gave her his kidney seven years ago. And hugs and kisses to one of my other healthy generous friends who just donated her kidney to her brother two weeks ago.



Kathy Shayna Shocket is a Phoenix based writer. If you have a good item for The AZ Insider, you can email her at redcarpetgirl@aol.com.