

# Brent Swadley



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Swadley's Restaurant Group \* 6608 N Western Avenue \*#1668 \* Oklahoma City, OK 73116

October 3, 2024

Letter to the Editor & Oklahomans:

Nearly three decades ago, my family started a humble barbecue stand in a Walmart parking lot. It has grown to eight successful restaurants under the proud Swadley's BBQ family-owned and operated restaurants that we are honored to run today. This dream, rooted in Christian faith and a strong work ethic, was born from a simple desire: to serve our community with integrity and great food. For example, we honor the sabbath and close our restaurants on Sunday so our employees can spend time with their families. Our commitment to these values has never wavered, even in the face of recent accusations.

Due to the politically charged times in which we live, our family's reputation and business are under attack. However, our family knows the truth will be revealed because of the same unwavering Christian faith that built Swadley's BBQ and the loyal customers who made it the remarkable success it is today.

We felt a deep sense of pride and responsibility when selected to renovate and enhance six restaurants within Oklahoma's state parks. Still, we hesitated at the intimidating size of this task. Our family had never done it before, so we relied on the state for their guidance.

The challenges we faced were significant, from adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic restraints, supply-chain issues, the rising cost of building materials, to navigating the difficulties of a large-scale project in rural areas under a government management team with strenuous timelines and the constant changes that were requested by the Department of Tourism.

Governor Stitt, Lt. Governor Pinnell, and tourism's then-executive director, Jerry Winchester, inherited a neglect problem from previous administrations. During construction, we uncovered years of rot and wear and tear on the facilities, which led to constant changes in the size and scope of the project. We all had the best intentions and wanted the same thing—to make our state parks the most beautiful and delicious dining destinations for in-state and out-of-state tourists.

However, personal political conflicts apparently entered the arena. Governor Stitt and Lt. Governor Pinnell were up for reelection, perfect timing for a political storm as the former district attorney, who we believe had a beef with the governor, was leaving office. Now, the state attorney general, said to be planning to run for governor of our great state, has gotten involved and is pushing a false, politically motivated narrative accusing us of purposely misleading the government. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The truth is, as the project's magnitude increased, and constantly changes, the state's payments ceased. For the final eight months, we continued building and funding the renovation of the state park restaurants out of our family's own pocket, not knowing the State Department of Tourism's junior administration was purposefully withholding payment. There are two witnesses who confirm that was the state's intent.

That is not how one conducts business – and certainly should not be how a government entity conducts business. We forged ahead because we were obligated to finish what we started. We did it for Oklahoma; we did it for you!

Swadley's BBQ remains a pawn in this political gamesmanship — and far worse than that, our customers are being lied to by officials for their political gain. The attorney general is using the state's disorganization to cause political damage to the current administration which oversaw and approved our work. The state owes our family millions of dollars for the work we self-funded and legal fees incurred to defend myself.

Can you imagine how difficult it is not to be able to scream from the rooftop your side of the story? To have criminal charges when you have never been interviewed by the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation? Due to litigation, I have been reluctant to speak out.

This letter encourages you to delve into court filings, especially recent court actions which reveal the real AG.

AG Gentner Drummond has made it unnecessarily expensive for me to defend myself and my company. While I have been awaiting trial where I expect to clear my good name, the AG filed an unmeritorious civil suit in the name of the State Tourism Department seeking millions of dollars in damages from us. Then this summer, AG Drummond sought to disqualify my legal team in the civil suit after they had worked on the civil case for over two years. The day before the court was to rule on the AG's disqualification motion, Drummond withdrew it, making all the work my legal team had done to fight the motion worthless. A few days later, he refiled the motion. Then again, Drummond withdrew *that* motion the day before the judge could rule on it. This additional, unnecessary legal work I was paying for went out the window. The AG was just trying to prevent my lawyers from using information they legally had gained to defend me in the criminal case against me in the civil case against my company.

In the America I know and love, you are innocent until proven guilty. When information reinforces innocence, why would you not want that truth to be shared? As a state attorney general, at minimum, you are to ensure a fair trial, share all evidence, and stand for justice.

We have learned that AG Drummond has trashed me in public forums, where he stood in front of a room of hundreds of people on at least two recent occasions and wrongfully spoke about the Swadley case, telling the crowd I was going to 'do some time.' This is not only unfair, but I am also told it runs against legal ethics rules because it might potentially taint the jury in my criminal case.

It is our opinion that Drummond is bullying a hard-working citizen (and his employees) while selfishly using his office to bolster his political ambitions – and all on Oklahoma taxpayers' dime.

Despite all these legal hurdles and political gamesmanship, our dedication to contributing positively to the great state of Oklahoma has always been our priority. This same dedication fuels our current efforts to address concerns and ensure transparency and accountability. I hope our government shares in this effort and invests its resources responsibly to thoroughly evaluate every factor and individual that led to the political crumbling of such a successful project for the state parks of Oklahoma.

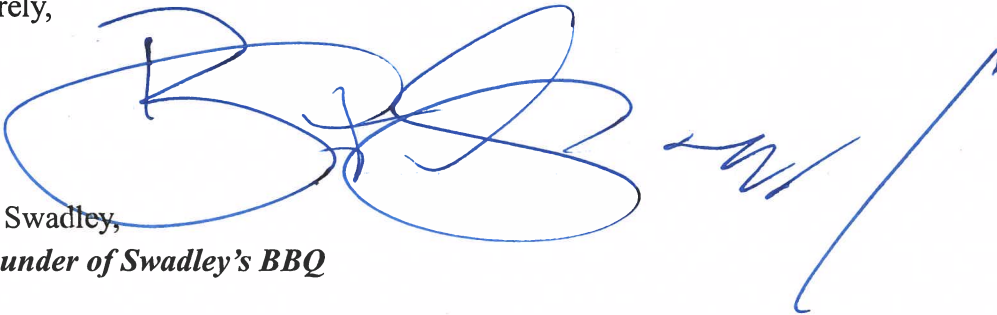
As a proud Oklahoman, I stand by our Swadley's Foggy Bottom Kitchen work and noble intentions that drive our family and hard-working crews. Our growth from a small family food stand to a local staple is a testament to our unwavering dedication to hard work, community, honesty, and integrity. If I had a crystal ball, as much as I love this state, I would have never agreed to help the State Tourism Department clean up the restaurants in our state parks. This endeavor has had a terribly detrimental impact to our family – financially and emotionally. But it will not ever break us spiritually.

These are certainly some of our darkest days. We never could have imagined going from running a successful family-owned Christian-based BBQ restaurant to being a political pawn in the game of government. God knows the truth, and we trust it will come to light.

We are deeply grateful for the support of our customers and community, and we pledge to continue serving them with the same values that have defined us from the beginning.

Being a Christian does not mean being perfect. I will be the first to admit that we all have flaws. My late father would always say, 'Today's a new day; let's make fewer mistakes than yesterday.' I'm trying, Dad.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brent Swadley', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Brent Swadley,  
*Co-founder of Swadley's BBQ*

***“Guided by faith, united by family, and served with integrity:  
that’s the Swadley’s promise.”***