



Corruption Chronicles

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March 31, 2006

Billion Dollar Airport Security Waste

The U.S. government has spent nearly \$1 billion dollars on airport security equipment that doesn't work, therefore preventing Transportation Security Administration (TSA) agents from doing their job of protecting the country. Examples include radios that lack enough frequency to cover the entire airport and malfunctioning closed-circuit televisions and telephones.

The government paid world-renowned information technology giant Unisys \$834 million for the outdated and defective equipment and now the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General is recommending terminating the contract. The Inspector General issued the 44-page report detailing the outrageous problems with the equipment and service.

The TSA was created in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and its mission is supposed to protect the nation's transportation systems. The agency, granted \$1 billion to purchase the technology necessary to perform its job, has a history of well-documented problems.

Past findings from the Homeland Security Inspector General include TSA air marshals who slept on the job, excessive bonuses for agency managers and a \$500,000 awards banquet for TSA employees that featured severely overpriced desserts and sodas.

March 30, 2006

Federal Election Commission In Trouble

A judge blasted the Federal Election Commission (FEC) for refusing to regulate so-called nonprofit political groups that spent millions in the 2004 presidential election by ignoring contribution limits that apply to federal political committees.

These groups and wealthy businessmen may have eluded campaign reform laws banning unlimited soft money by creating nonprofit 527 groups, nicknamed after the section of the U.S. Tax Code that covers them. Democrats benefited most, collecting nearly twice as much as their Republican rivals with massive donations from wealthy liberals like George Soros, who donated \$15.5 million to oust George Bush.

In his 34-page decision, U.S. District Court Judge Emmet G. Sullivan said he was troubled with the FEC's inaction which does not reflect reasoned decision-making. He also wrote that the agency failed to give a good explanation for its decision not to require the 527 groups to register as federal political action committees and face the same strict fundraising, spending and disclosures rules.

As a result, groups supporting John Kerry or opposing Bush raised \$266 million in the 2003-04 election cycle while those opposing Kerry or backing Bush collected \$144 million, according to the nonpartisan campaign tracking finance service Political Money Line.

FEC officials contend that the commission lacks authority to regulate such contributions and that it is up to Congress and the president to approve legislation if in fact there is a need.

March 29, 2006

L.A. Mayor Promotes Costly Student Truancy

A longtime member of a radical Chicano group that advocates overthrowing the U.S. government, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has played a key role in his city's massive pro-illegal immigration marches.

Among the mayor's accomplishments is instigating and promoting massive student truancy that will cost the already ailing Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) nearly a million dollars in state funding.

Villaraigosa rallied thousands of high school students who ditched school to march on the streets and freeways of Los Angeles in protest of the Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act which was passed by the House of Representatives last year.

For years the mayor has strongly supported a radical anti-American movement known as Mecha (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan), which claims that seven states in the southwestern U.S. were stolen from Mexico and must be reconquered and reclaimed for Mexico.

Ironically, most chapters of the militant group get their money from tax-funded public schools such as University of California, Los Angeles or California State University, Northridge. In fact, as a student at UCLA, Villaraigosa was the longtime president of Mecha.

The mayor, who wants to take over the city's school system, apparently ordered district officials to support the truant students. Letters were sent to parents, in English and Spanish, stating that LAUSD would provide security and buses to chauffeur students back to school after protesting on the freeway.

March 29, 2006

Nuclear Material Slips Through Border

Illustrating a huge weakness in border security, undercover federal agents drove into the United States from Canada and Mexico with enough radioactive material in their rented cars to build a pair of dirty bombs.

The good news is that the material, Cesium-137, triggered the sophisticated radiation alarms in Texas and Washington state. The bad news is U.S. customs agents were easily tricked with counterfeit Nuclear Regulatory Commission documents copied from the Internet and fake shipping documents from a fictitious company.

The undercover operation to test border security was conducted by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the non-partisan investigative arm of Congress. The frightening 12-page report can be viewed on its web site (www.gao.gov).

Among the GAO's findings is that customs agents are not able to check whether a person caught with radioactive materials is in fact permitted to possess them under a government-issued license. In other words, nuclear smugglers with fake documents must raise suspicions in other ways in order to be stopped with their illegal cargo.

The outraged chairman of the Senate Homeland Security subcommittee, Minnesota Senator Norm Coleman, said that fake documents could easily be created by his 20-year-old son with a simple Internet search.

March 28, 2006

JW Attends Rally in Support of Afghan Christian Convert

On March 24, a rally was held at the Afghani Embassy in support of Abdul Rahman, the Afghan Christian convert who was sentenced to death for accepting Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. About 40 people attended the rally, including conservative author Michelle Malkin, and representatives from organizations such as Free Republic, Family Research Council and the Institute of Religion and Democracy. Judicial Watch was represented by two members of its legal team; paralegal Cristina Rotaru and attorney Meredith Di Liberto.

The message was simple: Free Abdul Rahman.

The rally participants prayed together, chanted their support for Rahman, and spoke eloquently of freedom. This was not about partisanship or politics. Just don't tell the media that. Several members of the media showed up for the rally and began to pepper participants with questions about President Bush's response to the impending execution. The number of times "Bush" or "Bush Administration" was used by members of the media, far exceeded the number of times "Abdul Rahman" was uttered.

Any doubt about why the participants were there was quickly cleared up by Cam Edwards. Edwards, a rally participant, reminded the media that the rally was not about President Bush or politics. “This,” Edwards said, “is about a man in Afghanistan who is going to die because he believes in Jesus Christ.”

March 28, 2006

Dirty, Unethical Wisconsin Politics

The third of five convicted lawmakers involved in Wisconsin’s biggest political scandal was sentenced this week for his role in illegal, taxpayer-funded campaigning that also constituted a state ethics violation.

Former Assembly Majority Leader Steven Foti will serve 60 days in jail for, among other things, putting a Republican Party fundraiser, Sherry Schultz, on his taxpayer-financed payroll during the 1998 and 2000 elections. Earlier this month, Foti acknowledged in court that he added Schultz to his state payroll to raise money for other Republicans and to handle his own re-election campaign.

The sentencing judge, Steven Ebert, called it a deceitful assault on Wisconsin government and taxpayers and slapped Foti with a sentence twice as long as the guideline.

The federal investigation into the Wisconsin corruption was launched in 2001 and focused on illegal campaigning. Two Democrats, former State Senate Majority Leader Chuck Chvala of Madison and former State Senator Brian Burke of Milwaukee, are already serving their sentences. Two Republicans, former Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen of Waukesha and former State Representative Bonnie Ladwig of Racine, will be sentenced in May.

Foti currently works as a lobbyist with a \$100,000 annual income. Most of the companies he represents—Miller Brewing Co., the Wisconsin Funeral Directors Association and the Wisconsin Society of Anesthesiologists—were campaign contributors during his political career.

March 28, 2006

U.S. Protects Employers That Hire Illegals

Crucial yet seldom-mentioned in the heated immigration reform debate is the fact the U.S. government protects American companies that hire illegal immigrants by ignoring repeated violations or slapping them with tiny, meaningless fines.

Since the 1986 implementation of a law that criminalizes the act of hiring an undocumented worker, federal authorities have seldom enforced it. Passed during Ronald Reagan's presidency, the Immigration Reform and Control Act was created precisely to deter people from entering the country illegally with low prospects for employment.

Applying the law has been a low priority for the U.S. government, however. In fiscal year 1999, the agency in charge of enforcement, the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), devoted about 9% of its total investigative agents to worksite enforcement. In 2003 the newly created Immigration and Customs Enforcement devoted only 4% of its agents. Rarely are employers busted for violations and, even when they are, civil penalties range from \$110 to \$1,000 which is nothing for companies making millions of dollars in profits, thanks to the low wages they pay illegal aliens.

Joe Gandelman, a veteran journalist who wrote extensively about immigration and now operates *The Moderate Voice*, writes that the U.S. government has never really cracked down on employers who hire illegal immigrants. In fact, as far back as the 1980s it was well known that the INS office in Kansas City looked the other way when employers used immigrants from Mexico.

At least the senators who proposed last year's controversial immigration reform legislation have addressed the important role companies play in the issue. Texas Senator John Cornyn and Arizona Senator Jon Kyl believe employer accountability is crucial and immigration reform will fail if an underground workforce is allowed to exist.

March 27, 2006

Communists In Charge of Protecting U.S. Shore

A company owned by a communist Chinese billionaire suspected by U.S. intelligence agencies of arms smuggling and other national security violations, is in charge of safeguarding the American shoreline from nuclear threat.

The U.S. government is in the final stages of awarding Hong Kong-based Hutchinson Whampoa a no-bid, \$6 million contract that will put it in charge of operating sophisticated, American-made equipment that detects radioactive material in shipping cargo at a Bahamian port only 65 miles from the U.S. shore.

Just three years ago the Bush administration blocked the mega Chinese company from purchasing bankrupt U.S. telecommunications company Global Crossings on national security grounds. Additionally, a recently declassified U.S. military intelligence report cited Hutchinson as a smuggler of arms and other prohibited materials into the United States from the Bahamas.

Asia's richest and most influential businessman, Li Ka-Shing, currently owns both the Pacific and Atlantic ports on the Panama Canal. In the mid-1990s, the U.S. Commerce Department documented concerns about an \$88 million container ship terminal he built in the Grand Bahamas to supposedly smuggle prohibited materials into this country.

March 24, 2006

Terrorist Media Frozen By U.S.

Two years after the U.S. State Department added a Lebanese media group to its terrorist exclusion list for funding the radical group Hezbollah, the U.S. Treasury Department has finally frozen its massive assets.

The action by the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control means that Americans are forbidden from doing business with Lebanese Communication Group, which operates a satellite television station called al-Manar and a radio station called al-Nour.

U.S. government officials say the media outlets have for years supported fundraising and recruitment efforts by Hezbollah and the television station raised lots of funds for Hezbollah through advertisements broadcast on the network.

The Coalition Against Terrorist Media praised the U.S. government action and said that al-Manar runs programming designed to recruit terrorists and incite violent attacks. An international organization, the Coalition Against Terrorist Media works to limit media outlets' ability to recruit terrorists and promote violence.

March 23, 2006

Hillary Invokes Jesus And The Bible

A latecomer to the heated immigration debate, Hillary Clinton finally spoke out on the issue and, not surprisingly, her view on the matter has changed drastically in only a few years.

In theatrical fashion, the New York senator surrounded herself with a multicultural coalition to earn the week's sound byte by invoking biblical themes in vowing to block legislation that seeks to crack down on illegal immigration.

Clinton said such legislation is not in keeping with her understanding of the Scriptures and that it would literally criminalize the Good Samaritan and probably even Jesus himself.

In 2003, just three years ago, Clinton was opposed to illegal immigration, saying she was "adamantly against" foreigners who enter the country illegally and even suggested the U.S. impose a national identification card system.

Needless to say, those in charge of protecting our borders don't have much faith in Clinton's support if in fact she is elected president. The U.S. Border Patrol's largest union, Arizona-based Local 2544, sarcastically said it has a peaceful little ocean-front property on the Arizona border to sell to those who believe Clinton will be tough and enforcement-minded.

March 22, 2006

Illegal Immigrants Create Danger On Highway

An onslaught of serious traffic accidents involving illegal immigrants on a major Colorado highway could provide support for two bills that would make human smuggling a state felony.

In the last two days alone, 100 illegal immigrants were involved in six major wrecks on Colorado's Interstate 70 and state troopers arrested an additional 31 suspected illegal immigrants in two traffic stops.

Officials with the U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE) office said "this is an everyday thing" and added that many of the illegal immigrants would be released because the onslaught of arrests would overwhelm a nearby detention facility in Aurora that only has 360 beds.

A series of accidents involving illegal immigrants on the same highway in the last few years, pushed Colorado State Senator Peter Groff to introduce two bills that would make immigrant smuggling a state felony and thus allow local police to make arrests. Currently, charges must be filed by federal authorities who rarely do so.

A recent poll of state troopers revealed that every week officers encounter an average of more than 500 undocumented immigrants along Colorado highways, however, they have no jurisdiction to take action.

Federal authorities seem to dismiss the severity of the problem with one ICE spokesman saying that "simply being in the country illegally is an administrative, rather than a criminal, violation."

March 22, 2006

Whistleblowers Could Lose Protection

A federal whistleblower law that protects public employees from retaliation for denouncing government misconduct could be severely weakened if the Supreme Court rules against a former county prosecutor in a case being debated this week.

The high court's decision will affect the nation's 20 million public employees and a negative ruling would eliminate their ability to use the First Amendment as protection against a supervisor's retaliation for exposing government misconduct. The ruling will also affect the way government employers and employees communicate in the workplace, which will in turn influence the degree to which public officials can be held accountable.

The case involves Los Angeles County prosecutor Richard Ceballos who was demoted for urging his supervisors to drop a criminal case after he provided evidence of wrongdoing by the arresting officer who, among other things, lied on a search warrant affidavit.

Ceballos sued the District Attorney's office when he was demoted and denied a promotion in retaliation. A trial court judge dismissed the suit, but the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the decision.

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in October 2005 and this week debated the issue of whether government employees have free-speech rights that protect them while they carry out their duties.

Not surprisingly, the Bush administration has sided with the District Attorney's office saying that the government's desire to maintain an efficient workplace outweighs an employee's right to voice opinions about internal decision-making.

March 21, 2006

California City A Sanctuary For Illegal Immigrants

While most municipalities are battling illegal immigration, one tiny southern California city in Los Angeles County actually changed several laws to accommodate residents known to be in the country illegally.

Officials in Maywood, which has a 96% Hispanic population of 29,000, proudly announced that they want to make their town a “sanctuary city” for illegal immigrants. The city council has passed legislation proving their desire to welcome illegal immigrants.

The city eliminated the police department’s traffic division after complaints that officers unfairly targeted illegal immigrants, got rid of sobriety checkpoints because the roundups nabbed mostly illegal immigrants and even rescinded a law prohibiting the erection of shade canopies because it was seen as a slap at undocumented residents who used them to create more living space.

Additionally, some in the community of rundown apartments, strip malls and factories want to name the city’s elementary school after former Mexican President Benito Juarez.

One blog wrote that Maywood highlights the dangerous practice of altering laws to cater to illegal immigrants and asked if it makes sense that the city council sacrifices the security of the entire city to placate the majority of illegal residents.

March 21, 2006

The \$600 Million Government Waste

North Carolina Representative Charles Taylor continues to push for a controversial \$600 million road that few people want and nobody needs, because it will supposedly stimulate the local economy. Fiscal conservatives and environmentalists have come together to criticize the project.

The funding will come from the financially strapped National Park Service and critics charge the project would tremendously damage one of the nation's most popular forests, Smoky Mountains National Park, which lies on the North Carolina-Tennessee border.

Though there is wide opposition to the proposed and unnecessary 30-mile road, Rep. Taylor has significant leverage as he happens to run the subcommittee that controls the budget of the U.S. Department of the Interior. That government agency is comprised of eight bureaus, among them the National Park Service. In other words, the Department of the Interior must approve the funding and Taylor runs the committee that controls that agency's money.

Among those highly opposed to the costly road is Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee. The North Carolina Conservation Network calls it the "Road to Nowhere" and a boondoggle for American taxpayers.

March 20, 2006

Texas Police Runs Drug Business

After a lengthy federal investigation, the Troup Police Department of Troup, TX was shut down. The chief and several officers ran a lucrative business dealing the illegal drugs confiscated from criminals. Some officers even made marijuana home deliveries.

The police chief, Chester Kennedy, who led the tiny department for 14 years, was charged with evidence tampering and a sergeant, Mark Turner, was charged with fabricating evidence and delivering drugs to an undercover federal agent, assuring him there was more available from a police evidence box.

Ironically, one of the officers charged in the ongoing corruption case was named the Troup Chamber of Commerce Officer of the Year in 2005. The officer, Mark Turner, is accused of felony tampering and fabricating evidence as well as delivery of marijuana.

The county sheriff's department and the FBI launched an investigation after the sheriff received complaints from both inside and outside the department that Troup police had not sent any drug evidence to be tested in five years. They zeroed in on four cases where people were arrested, but the drugs disappeared, including an eight-ball of methamphetamine, several plants, and a gallon bag filled with weed.

The town's mayor, John Whitsell, denied turning a blind eye and said talk of wrongdoing was just a rumor and all small towns have rumors. Troup is indeed a tiny city in the rolling hills of East Texas with a population of about 2,000. The motto of the town is "The Good Neighbor Town."

March 16, 2006

Government Incompetence in Oregon

Portland officials spent millions to build a fancy state-of-the-art jail that they cannot afford to operate and the effect could be deadly for residents of Multnomah County since a record 5,000 violent criminals were released last year due to lack of jail space.

Wapato Jail cost \$59 million and was completed nearly two years ago, but the facility remains empty while convicted drug dealers, burglars and con men roam freely because there is nowhere to incarcerate them.

Certainly, the county could have saved millions on the construction and applied the funds to operating costs. As jails go, Wapato is fancy and high-tech with long driveway circles and modern art sculptures on the front lawn. The main building appears like a manor with pink stucco and glass tile on the outside. The interior motif features pastels and there are vaulted ceilings and open-air corridors.

The huge mishap is not surprising in Multnomah County, which has long been accused of severe mismanagement and huge financial problems. In fact, a county employee recently fired for denouncing several financial misdeeds has filed a whistleblower lawsuit.

March 15, 2006

Govt. Contractors Don't Pay Taxes

A Senate panel is finally investigating why the U.S. government allows private companies with lucrative federal contracts to avoid paying millions of dollars in taxes each year.

A study published by the Government Accountability Office reveals that thousands of contractors owe more than \$6 billion in taxes yet continue to do business with the government. The U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs began looking into the matter a few years ago but has finally become active in putting an end to the practice and even pursuing the delinquent contractors.

The committee's chairman, Minnesota Senator Norm Coleman, stressed that these are not everyday tax delinquents, but rather contractors who receive millions of dollars from American taxpayers and yet refuse to pay their fair share of taxes.

A few examples include a communications equipment company that got \$100,000 in federal payments while owing nearly \$900,000 in unpaid taxes and a security services company that got \$100,000 while owing more than \$3 million in mostly payroll taxes.

The contractors do business with the government through the General Services Administration, which acts as a spigot for nearly \$66 billion in federal spending and claims to help federal agencies better serve the public by offering the best value.

March 14, 2006

In-Depth Look Into Hillary's Scandalous Past

Hillary Clinton's Culture of Corruption: The Scandal Queen. Sounds appropriate given the subject's well-documented public career. It's actually the title of a seven-part series, launched

this week by *New Media Journal*, detailing the New York senator's scandal-plagued career with colorful anecdotes and fascinating figures.

The eight-page introduction covers Clinton's early years as a partner in the Rose law firm, her years in the White House and her character. That part, tells how Clinton refused to acknowledge the woman who wrote her 1996 book, *It Takes a Village*, how she targeted and tried to destroy her husband's mistresses and how she denied knowing close associates, such as Indonesian billionaire Moctar Riady, because he is a renowned criminal.

Among the most interesting points is the scandal index of the Clinton years, which lists the couple's staggering numbers. For instance, it points out that Hillary is the only First Lady to come under criminal investigation and that her husband was the first president to be impeached for personal malfeasance, that he had the most number of guilty pleas by friends and associates and the most number of cabinet officials to come under criminal investigation. (Of course, Judicial Watch is partially responsible for the intense focus on the Clinton scandals.)

Other interesting facts of the Clinton presidency include: the most number of witnesses to flee the country or refuse to testify, and the first president to be held in contempt of court, to receive the greatest amount of illegal campaign contributions and to be sued for sexual harassment.

March 13, 2006

Corrupt Mayor's Race Defense Weak

After a seven-week trial, former Atlanta mayor Bill Campbell's race-based defense did not get him completely off the hook. A federal grand jury found him guilty of tax evasion, though it acquitted him of the more serious racketeering and fraud charges.

Corruption was so widespread during Campbell's two terms as mayor (1994 to 2002) that 10 former city officials and contractors have been indicted. Campbell himself was charged with taking huge cash bribes and gifts in exchanged for city contracts. The former mayor is also well-

known for spending the cash on gambling trips to Mississippi river casinos and on various mistresses.

Campbell has always claimed that he is an innocent man who is being prosecuted only because he is black.

Campbell could face nine years in prison, though he will not be sentenced for another month or so. The blog *Sentencing Law and Policy* says that Campbell can still be sentenced for racketeering and bribery if the judge believes he is guilty by a preponderance of evidence. In other words, his “acquitted” conduct can still be used against him at sentencing time.

March 10, 2006

U.S. Agents Smuggle Mexicans for Cash

Two high-ranking U.S. Border Patrol supervisors who helped create a successful anti-smuggling program, have been arrested for smuggling illegal immigrants for a Mexican trafficking organization in exchange for bribes.

Federal authorities say the agents, Mario Alvarez and Samuel McClaren, raked in more than \$300,000 to release apprehended immigrants. They have been indicted on eight counts including conspiracy to bring in aliens for financial gain, conspiracy to commit bribery and filing false tax returns.

Apparently, the U.S. agents worked for a renowned Mexican smuggling organization called “Javier Sanchez-Perfino.” One news report says that the agents drove a member of the smuggling ring in a U.S. government vehicle from an immigration processing center in El Centro, CA to a Wal-Mart parking lot in Calexico, CA. The man was then let go in exchange for \$6,000 cash.

The El Centro Border Patrol sector, which stretches from California’s Imperial Valley to the Arizona border, apparently needs to do some house cleaning. Last year an agent pleaded guilty

to smuggling several hundred pounds of marijuana in a Border Patrol vehicle. Two other agents were caught smuggling 1,300 rounds of ammunition into Mexicali.

March 09, 2006

More Fraud In Connecticut Gov's Office

The Connecticut Governor's office can't seem to steer clear of political scandal. Less than two years after one governor resigned to serve a sentence in federal prison, the woman who replaced him is in hot water for violating election laws.

Sixteen top administrators in Governor Jodi Rell's administration were fined \$500 each this week by the State Elections Enforcement Commission for violating state law by distributing invitations to subordinates for a December fund-raiser for Rell. It is against state law for government administrators to solicit political contributions. The administrators include 13 heads of state agencies, from Leonard C. Boyle, a former federal prosecutor who is commissioner of the Department of Public Safety, to Linda J. Yelmini, the state's former head of labor relations and now the commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services.

Many of Rell's administration officials felt uncomfortable when Rell's chief of staff, Lisa Moody, told them to pass out invitations for the fundraiser but only a few declined because it was interpreted as an order from the boss.

Rell, a Republican, took office in 2004 after Gov. John Rowland resigned for his involvement in an ongoing fraud and conspiracy scandal. In December 2004 he pleaded guilty to conspiracy, mail and tax fraud and admitted taking more than \$100,000 in vacations and chartered trips to Las Vegas from a contractor and a jet company that received state tax breaks. He was released from federal prison last month after serving a 10-month sentence.

March 08, 2006

Renowned Terrorist In The Ivy League

While Yale University has come under fire for admitting the Taliban's foreign secretary as a student, little has been mentioned about the U.S. government agency—the State Department—that granted the renowned terrorist the visa to attend the Connecticut university.

Although Sayed Rahmatullah Hashemi was a top ambassador for the oppressive Afghan terrorist regime that supported Osama bin Laden, U.S. government officials granted him a visa to study in this country.

The State Department's position is that being a member of the Taliban is not necessarily grounds for ineligibility and based on Hashemi's past activities, U.S. officials determined there was no basis for ineligibility.

Never mind that Hashemi has been imprisoned at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan and for years he has defended and praised Osama Bin Laden, whom he calls a freedom fighter. In fact, at a speech delivered a few years ago at the University of Southern California, Hashemi falsely asserted former U.S. President Ronald Reagan considered Bin Laden a hero of independence because he fought the Soviet Union, but now that the Soviet Union is fragmented, U.S. leaders have transformed Bin Laden into a terrorist.

Many Yale alumni have launched a boycott campaign against the school in a response to the decision to admit Hashemi to the school.

March 07, 2006

Illegal Immigrants Destroying National Wildlife

A nonprofit group dedicated to protecting all native wild animals and plants has published a detailed report documenting how illegal immigrants crossing through the 350-mile Arizona-Mexico border have destroyed hundreds of acres of national forests and their habitat.

Titled "On The Line: The Impacts of Immigration Policy on Wildlife and Habitat in the Arizona Borderlands," the 41-page report tells how illegal immigrants have devastated national parks by leaving mountains of trash and human waste, with recurring fires, by despoiling natural springs and vandalizing historic sites. The migrants have also created illegal trails and roads that destroy sensitive and federally protected vegetation.

The manager of a seriously damaged federal park, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, said that 2 ½ million pounds of garbage are scattered through broad valleys and desert arroyos every year. Cabeza Prieta houses 400 plant species and 300 types of wildlife, including ringtail cat, kit fox, bighorn sheep, javelina, badger, bobcat, mule deer and desert tortoise. It's only a matter of time before their home is rendered uninhabitable.

The same applies to the other five national parks, three wildlife refuges, three national monuments, two national conservation areas and national forest located along the Arizona-Mexico border.

March 07, 2006

Huge Bribery Scheme In Tiny Virginia County

When a flood devastated a rural mining town in southwest Virginia, public officials accepted bribes from the wealthy contractors who swarmed the area to secure multi-million dollar cleanup deals.

Spanning 504 miles and with a population of only 26,000, Buchanan County is not the kind of place where big time contractors normally strive to sign lucrative deals. However, the ravaging 2002 flood brought them in by the dozens and officials filled their pockets with big bucks.

Two county supervisors, a former supervisor, two county officials, a federal contract worker and ten area businessmen and contractors convicted or pleaded guilty for their roles in the bribery scheme known as Operation Big Coon Dog. Federal authorities created the name because many public officials accepted bribes in the form of hunting trips and a type of hunting dog called coon.

Prosecutors say some county officials accepted up to \$545,000 in cash, bribes and gifts from several of the contractors trying to secure deals to clean up the \$30 million damage to the remote coal communities.

On a positive note, this week prosecutors seized about \$1.3 million of the bribe money and have returned it to the county. More money may come the county's way since some of those already convicted are forfeiting portions of their bribes.

March 03, 2006

New York Gets Sued For Ignoring Voting Law

The U.S. government sued the state of New York for repeatedly ignoring a federal voting reform law that requires the state to update its antiquated system.

New York officials have taken no action to improve or replace the outdated and unreliable voting system, despite the 2002 Help America Vote Act enacted by Congress that requiring every state to do so. The Justice Department claims that New York is dead last in compliance and one local paper wrote that "this does the state's dysfunctional image no good."

The law to modernize voting systems was enacted to avoid a repeat of the confusion of the Florida recount in the 2000 presidential election. The federal government offered states \$3.9

billion to comply with provisions for updated technology, voting security and other improvements.

New Yorkers vote with outdated mechanical lever machines and counters that frequently break down on election nights. One editorial said the Justice Department finally gave New York a well-deserved kick in the pants over the state's snail-like efforts to comply with the law.

March 02, 2006

Clinton Administration Endorsed Communist Control Of U.S. Ports

During a cross country tour to blast the controversial port management deal with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and announce her plan to introduce legislation to block it, Hillary Clinton has failed to mention a few important details.

First, her fear of port security in the hands of a foreign government—in this case the Arabs—is not stopping the flow of money to her husband, who happens to be in the UAE creating a scholarship program for the Bill Clinton Foundation. The Dubai government is said to be donating big bucks.

Secondly, the New York senator has left out how, despite objections from the intelligence community, her husband pushed for deals with communist China after he received campaign contributions from renowned Chinese lobbyist Johnny Chung.

This includes a deal Bill Clinton made with Chinese company, Hutchinson Whampoa, to run the Panama Canal and its ports, as well as the administration's endorsement of another Chinese company, China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO), to run the Long Beach Naval Base in California.

Now Hillary is singing a different tune, saying, "Port security is national security and national security is port security."

March 01, 2006

Repeated Violations Of House Ethics Rules

A veteran Michigan congressman recently honored with the Soul and Spirit Humanitarian award during Black History Month has been accused by top aides of repeatedly violating House ethics rules.

John Conyers, the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, forced his aides to work on several local and state campaigns—including his wife Monica's failed bid for a state senate seat—and forced them to baby-sit, chauffeur and tutor his son.

The information was detailed in complaints that Conyers' former deputy chief of staff, Deanna Maher, and former legal counsel, Sydney Rooks, provided to the House ethics committee, the FBI and U.S. Attorney's office.

Evidence includes letters, memorandums, electronic mail, handwritten notes and expense reports. In his 42 years in the House of Representatives, Conyers has earned a reputation as a die-hard liberal who has been quick to play the race card.

February 28, 2006

Illegal Contributions In Congress

A former defense contractor who recently pleaded guilty to bribing California Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham told federal officials that he gave illegal campaign contributions to U.S. Rep. Katherine Harris (R-FL), and Rep. Virgil Goode (R-VA).

Mitchell Wade, former President of defense contractor MZM Inc., has pleaded guilty to election law fraud and testified in court that he gave nearly \$80,000 in illegal donations to Harris and Goode.

Harris, who is seeking a U.S. Senate seat, immediately released a statement claiming she did no wrongdoing and had no idea the \$50,000 in contributions were illegal though MZM was her biggest donor in 2004.

A former Florida secretary of state, Harris has faced illegal contribution allegations in the past. In 1997, a Sarasota firm, Riscorp, was federally investigated for making illegal contributions to Harris' 1994 Florida Senate campaign. Harris took nearly \$30,000 from Riscorp but denied she had any direct knowledge of the illegal contributions.

February 27, 2006

Defense Dept. Agrees To Overpay Millions Of Dollars

Even though a Pentagon audit revealed that a Halliburton subsidiary overcharged the United States Government more than \$250 million for work in Iraq, the Army announced it will reimburse the company for the entire \$2.41 billion no-bid contract.

The Army's explanation is unsettling. Army spokeswoman Rhonda James said that "the contractor is not required to perform perfectly to be entitled to reimbursement."

The contract itself caused controversy in 2003 when it was discovered that it was awarded without competitive bidding. Accusations began circulating that Dick Cheney's connections to Halliburton (he was CEO before becoming vice president) secured the lucrative deal. In fact, Judicial Watch uncovered documents suggesting that the deal was made with the approval of the Vice President's office.

Disregarding the Pentagon's Defense Contract Audit Agency report that Halliburton clearly overbilled the government, Army officials justified the practice by saying that in the haste and peril of war the company had largely done as well as could be expected, and therefore should be reimbursed for its costs.

February 24, 2006

More Voting Fraud In Florida

Florida's Palm Beach County cannot seem to shed election controversy. During the 2000 presidential election fiasco, the county's butterfly ballots were the big story and now the high-tech machines that replaced those paper ballots are in the spotlight.

A recently released audit of voting-machine logs from the 2004 presidential election reveals that many machines were tampered with and tens of thousands of malfunctions and errors occurred. The nonprofit organization Black Box Voting had to sue former Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections Theresa LePore to get the information.

The report says that the internal logs of at least 40 touch-screen voting machines reveal that votes were time and date-stamped as cast two weeks before the election, sometimes in the middle of the night. This includes several dozen voting machines with votes for the November 2, 2004 election cast on dates like October 13, 15, 16, 19, or 28 2004 and one tape dated in 2010.

Palm Beach County's current Supervisor of Elections, Arthur Anderson, said that his staff had looked into the problem and that the votes were normal, simply the dates somehow changed.

February 23, 2006

Judge Runs Personal Business Out Of Courtroom

It took two years, but California's Commission on Judicial Performance finally reprimanded a judge for running a real estate business out of his courtroom, using official court letterhead to intimidate tenants and court personnel such as his bailiff to collect rents.

In a lengthy letter to Orange County Superior Court Judge John Watson, the state commission, which investigates complaints of judicial misconduct, said, "Judge Watson's use of court staff, court resources and the court facilities for his personal real estate business was improper." It

also points out that a judge may not use his or her office, staff, or public property and/or resources under the judge's control for personal, non-governmental purposes.

The state commission first learned of the misconduct in 2004 when tenants of one of Judge Watson's many properties complained that he used his judicial clout to bully them, court stationary to communicate with them, and his clerk to intimidate them. Judge Watson has always maintained that no rules were broken and appeared confident that he would beat any action by the commission. Not surprisingly, he has refused to comment on the commission's public reprimand.

February 22, 2006

U.S. Tries To Clean Up United Nations

The United Nations has become synonymous with fraud and abuse. U.S. Ambassador John Bolton's drive to clean house is triggering a backlash from corrupt "developing" nations who accuse him of encroachment.

Beginning this week, Bolton will chair the first of two sessions investigating financial and sex scandals in U.N. peacekeeping operations. The ambassadors of 132 developing countries are angry, with many claiming that Washington is trying to take control of the 60-year-old U.N.

South Africa's U.N. ambassador, Dumisani Kumalo, was especially upset after receiving a letter from two U.S. congressmen—Henry Hyde (R-IL) and Tom Lantos (D-CA)—saying their colleagues in the House of Representatives have followed and will continue to follow his actions very closely with the intention of holding him accountable.

After all, the United States pays nearly one fourth of the regular U.N. budget and 27 percent of the U.N. peacekeeping budget. Therefore taxpayers should be assured that their money is being well spent.

February 21, 2006

Government Secrecy

United States intelligence agencies have been secretly removing from public access thousands of historical documents, previously available for years, including some that have already been published by various historians and even the U.S. State Department.

Historians at George Washington University's National Security Archives discovered the secret operation and made it public to the media. So far, more than 9,500 formerly declassified and publicly-available documents have been reclassified, including reports from the Korean War and the early Cold War.

Under existing guidelines, government documents are supposed to be declassified after 25 years, unless there is a particular reason to keep them secret. Most of the reclassified documents were available to the public through the National Archives.

Led by the Central Intelligence Agency, the secret program of restoring previously declassified information began in 1999 because the agency was trying to recover documents released as a result of a 1995 declassification order signed by Bill Clinton. The argument for reclassification included a controversy over Chinese nuclear espionage and the 1999 Wen Ho Lee spy scandal during the Clinton Administration.

February 16, 2006

U.S. Officials Give Terrorists Classified Information

Federal prosecutors involved in the government's signature domestic terrorism case against a Muslim charity, mistakenly gave highly classified intelligence materials to the terrorists' defense attorneys.

Arguing for the return of the sensitive counter-terrorism information, government officials wrote that “its disclosure and dissemination could have profound national security and foreign policy implications.”

The case involves the Texas-based Holy Land Foundation, once the nation’s largest Muslim charity and a front for the militant wing of Hamas. After a lengthy investigation, the Treasury Department froze the so-called charity’s assets in December 2001 and the Justice Department won indictments against seven Holy Land officials.

The government’s case relies heavily on secret surveillance, anonymous FBI informants and foreign intelligence. According to the *Orlando Sentinel*, evidence includes thousands of hours of wiretaps and more than one million pages of classified documents.

Ironically, the government spends millions of dollars annually to withhold information that should be made public under the Freedom of Information Act. That is precisely why *Texas Lone Star Times* sarcastically asks how exactly did Hamas’ lawyers get 14 volumes of sensitive classified intelligence handed to them?

February 14, 2006

Hurricane Relief Money Used For Massages, Gambling, Jewelry

Many Louisiana hurricane victims who received federal assistance money in the form of \$2,000 debit cards used it to pay for condoms, a pistol, strip club fees and expensive tattoos, according to a lengthy report released by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Appropriately titled “FEMA’s Control Weaknesses Exposed the Government to Significant Fraud and Abuse,” the 30-page report also addresses the use of multiple Social Security numbers to obtain unwarranted handouts.

The report’s most interesting feature is table 2 on page 22, which is titled “Purchases That Did Not Appear Necessary to Satisfy Immediate Emergency Needs.” The table details how FEMA-

issued debit cards were used to pay for a \$400 Swedish massage, a \$1,000 bail bond, \$200 worth of alcohol, a \$1,000 gambling debt at a Louisiana casino and even a \$1,100 diamond engagement ring.

February 13, 2006

Florida Attorney General In Hot Water

Charlie Crist served on various ethics committees as a state legislator and when he became Florida's attorney general in 2002, he launched the state's first-ever hotline designed exclusively to address complaints of fraud.

Now Crist, a Republican gubernatorial candidate who hopes to replace Jeb Bush, is in hot water for taking money from two men with shady backgrounds. Ironically, one of them, Cape Coral businessman Russell Whitney, has been investigated by Crist's attorney general's office for deceptive advertising.

The other contributor to Crist's gubernatorial campaign is a former Ukrainian government official, Volodymyr Shcherban, charged with corruption in his home country and with serious immigration violations in the United States. According to a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesman, Shcherban posted bail of \$2 million cash earlier this year after being charged with a visa violation.

Both men attended a \$500-a-plate fundraiser for Crist that was hosted by billionaire Donald Trump at his West Palm Beach estate.

February 09, 2006

Public To Pay For Celebrity Private Investigator Crimes

The ongoing case of disgraced private investigator to the stars and the Clintons, Anthony Pellicano, could end up costing taxpayers in two California cities millions of dollars because police officers conspiring with Pellicano illegally accessed law enforcement databases.

Beverly Hills Police Officer Craig Stevens has already pleaded guilty to six felony counts for illegally accessing the department's databases. Also, Los Angeles Police Sergeant Mark Arneson has been charged with tapping into confidential databases to gain information on dozens of people being investigated by Pellicano.

Legal experts say that the officers' actions mean the cities of Beverly Hills and Los Angeles could face enormous civil litigation payouts, since municipalities are liable for their police departments.

Pellicano, fresh out of prison for possession of explosives, is charged with racketeering for paying police officers to get him confidential records and information and using it to illegally wiretap more than 80 celebrities, attorneys and reporters. The Clintons used Pellicano as their "audio expert" to claim falsely Gennifer Flowers doctored taped conversations with Bill Clinton. (See February 6, 2006 post.)

February 08, 2006

Cleaning Up The World Bank

A vigorous campaign to end corruption in the World Bank and the developing nations to which it lends billions of dollars annually is making headlines worldwide and instilling fear in leaders of left-leaning nations who have labeled the man responsible for the cleanup a "neoconservative ideologue."

World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense from 2001 to 2005, announced the much-needed anti-corruption campaign this week and said the World Bank is currently withholding five loans worth \$250 million to Kenya, which has been dogged by a corruption scandal involving high-level officials.

The World Bank has been plagued by fraud for much of its 184-year history. With a multinational staff of 10,000, the bank lends about \$20 billion a year to developing countries. Many World Bank staffers are encouraged by the new anti-corruption campaign and many say that they have been energized.

The Mid-Atlantic points out that, in the wake of the Iraq Oil For Food scandal, Wolfowitz is tackling an important issue that should concern anyone truly worried about world poverty.

February 08, 2006

House Majority Leader Boehner Rents Apartment From Lobbyist

So much for a clean slate. *The Washington Post* reports that newly elected House Majority Leader John Boehner rents an apartment on Capitol Hill owned by a lobbyist:

“The relationship between Boehner, John D. Milne and Milne’s wife, Debra R. Anderson, underscores how intertwined senior lawmakers have become with the lobbyists paid to influence legislation. Boehner’s primary residence is in West Chester, Ohio, but for \$1,600 a month, he rents a two-bedroom basement apartment near the House office buildings on Capitol Hill owned by Milne, Boehner spokesman Don Seymour said yesterday. Boehner’s monthly rent appears to be similar to other rentals of two-bedroom English basement apartments close to the House side of the Capitol in Southeast, based on a review of apartment listings.

“Milne’s clients – including restaurant chains and health insurance companies – hired him to lobby on issues at the heart of Boehner’s work, including minimum-

wage increases, small-business tax breaks and tax-free savings accounts to help cover insurance costs, congressional lobbying records show.”

February 07, 2006

Punish Corruption Like A Street Crime

An Illinois federal judge fed up with the rampant corruption in his state, has issued strongly-worded decisions in two separate cases detailing the need to punish public officials for corruption.

U.S. District Judge Ruben Castillo called for crooked public officials to face the same prison time as street criminals and said the only way to protect the public from the ongoing problem of public corruption, and to promote respect for the rule of law, is to impose strict penalties on all defendants who engage in such conduct.

The judge first lashed out against corrupt public officials in a decision a few weeks ago regarding the appeal of three defendants—former Public Safety Director Emil Schullo and reputed mobsters Michael Spano, Sr. and James Inendino—convicted of fleecing the town of Cicero of \$76,000.

This week, Judge Castillo reiterated his stance in the case of a former Aurora city councilman and alderman who admitted taking thousands of dollars in bribes in return for his support of a developer’s projects.

February 06, 2006

Clinton Private Investigator Indicted Again

Fresh out of prison after serving a 30-month sentence for possession of explosives, renowned private investigator to the stars and the Clintons, Anthony Pellicano, has been charged with racketeering for paying police officers to get him confidential records and information.

Among other things, the indictment says that Pellicano paid bribes to corrupt public officials. Not surprisingly, the media has been quick to report the names of numerous Hollywood stars—like Michael Jackson, Elizabeth Taylor and Sylvester Stallone—who hired Pellicano but nowhere is there a mention of his most famous clients: Bill and Hillary Clinton.

Pellicano was first used by the Clintons in 1992 in a bid to discredit the steamy tape recordings of conversations between Bill and his longtime mistress Gennifer Flowers. Judicial Watch represented Flowers in a defamation suit against Clinton campaign officials and Hillary based on their attempts to use Pellicano's analysis to discredit and thus defame her.

This well-documented link between the Clintons and Pellicano is never mentioned in the media. Although the liberal media examined the highly questionable background of Hollywood celebrity sleuth/audio expert/guest of the federal penal system Anthony Pellicano, we have not seen much mention of his most prominent gig: “analyzing” the Gennifer Flowers tapes of her conversations with Bill Clinton and declaring them “doctored” during the 1992 Presidential campaign.

February 06, 2006

Corruption Isn't Just A Washington Thing

The recent lobbyist scandals in Washington may give the impression corruption is limited to political bigwigs in Congress, but FBI statistics reveal that fraud is widespread in all levels of government, including judges, state legislators and even local municipality clerks.

In fact, in the last two years more than 1,000 government officials have been convicted of corruption. Additionally, 177 federal officials, 158 state officials, 360 local officials and 365 police officers were charged with some type of fraud.

A few examples—covered in the past by Judicial Watch—include New Mexico State Treasurer Robert Vigil (accepted kickbacks), California Congressman Randy Cunningham (accepted

bribes), former Illinois Governor George Ryan (took kickbacks in exchange for government contracts) and Ohio Governor Bob Taft (ethics violation for failing to report gifts).

Even low-level workers such as those at the Department of Motor Vehicles, have been caught in fraud recently. In Arizona 34 employees were charged with taking bribes to make fake licenses and in Tennessee license examiners accepted bribes in exchange for illegal immigrant driving certificates.

February 03, 2006

Border Incursions Rattle Arizonans

A story about the continuing problem of Mexican incursions appeared in today's *Arizona Republic*:

“Ayers remembers hearing the heavy whirl and chop of helicopter blades cutting through the sky above the Tres Bellotas Ranch, a sprawling swath of oak trees and barberry brush right on the U.S.-Mexican border.

“Even from inside the ranch house, Ayers could tell it must be a big helicopter. He headed outside, thinking it might be U.S. customs, maybe a drug bust.

“Instead, Ayers walked right into a group of armed, masked men speaking Spanish and dressed like agents from the Federal Investigative Agency, Mexico's FBI.

“The encounter on U.S. soil would be investigated by the FBI, U.S. Border Patrol and Mexican authorities, one of the latest in a long list of suspected incursions from Mexico into U.S. border states.

“After long downplaying the number of incursions along the Southwestern border, top Border Patrol officials now acknowledge such incidents are all too

common. Over the past decade, the Department of Homeland Security has reported 231 incursions along the border, including 63 in Arizona. Homeland Security defines an incursion as an unauthorized crossing by Mexican military or police, or suspected drug or people smugglers dressed in uniforms.”

Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl intends to hold hearings on incursions starting March 1, 2006 with Sen. John Cornyn, (R-TX). It seems clear that the problems of illegal immigration and a border that the government refuses to protect continue to represent a serious threat to the safety of Americans.

February 02, 2006

Republicans Elect John Boehner to Replace DeLay

The Republican Caucus today elected Rep. John Boehner of Ohio to replace Tom DeLay as Majority Leader of the House. DeLay stepped down from his position in September after his indictment in Texas on campaign-related felony charges.

Boehner’s election is seen as an upset to Rep. Roy Blunt of Missouri who had claimed over 100 supporters during the leadership race. During the first round of votes, Rep. John Shadegg of Arizona took roughly 40 votes, Blunt 110, and Boehner 79. In the second round, Boehner received the backing of Shadegg and his supporters, allowing him to win over Blunt with 122 votes.

N.Z. Bear wrote, “It is a critical time for the House GOP, and Boehner’s leadership will be essential in bringing the party out from the cloud of corruption scandals,” while Glenn Reynolds of *Instapundit* labeled Boehner as “the Diet Coke of reform.”

February 01, 2006

Voter ID Laws Called Racist by Liberals

In an effort to prevent voting fraud, Ohio became the latest state to pass a law that requires voters to furnish a photo identification at the polls and Georgia is on the verge of doing so.

Twenty three states have voter identification requirements, which many civil rights groups such as the NAACP have criticized because they claim the poor and minorities will be discouraged from voting.

In fact, the NAACP believes voter identification laws are a ploy to keep the Democratic base of the poor and elderly blacks from getting to the polls. Democrats seem to agree with the assessment with one senator, Georgia's Ed Harbison, calling it a "voter constriction bill" and another, Mississippi senator David Jordan saying that "it weakens the driving force behind the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that so many African Americans fought for."

Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue, a Republican, said it is necessary to prevent voter fraud and called it a "great step forward for the integrity of our voting process."

January 31, 2006

Illegal Immigrant Driving Certificates On Black Market

In 2004, Tennessee became the first state to offer illegal immigrants driving certificates and the plan has backfired in a big way. It turns out that the certificates are hot black-market items that have been purchased by illegal aliens in numerous states, not just Tennessee.

Recent federal arrests exposed shuttles that bring South and Central American immigrants from other states, like New Jersey, to licensing centers in Knoxville where the certificates are obtained. Another federal sweep revealed a conspiracy in which license examiners in Murfreesboro accepted bribes in exchanged for the driving certificates.

The attorney for a woman accused of bringing 100 immigrants from New Jersey to Knoxville for certificates said the government is overreacting because his client represents workers, not terrorists. “None of these Mexican immigrants are in flight school anywhere,” he said.

This case proves that when you make up a law to help justify an illegal activity, you encourage more illegal activity. If Tennessee wants to stop “outsiders” from taking advantage of this law, they only have to commit to putting handcuffs on anyone (from inside or outside the state) who shows up to get a certificate. They are, after all, illegal immigrants.

January 30, 2006

Iraqis Captured In Mexico Trying To Enter U.S.

Defenders of illegal immigration that cry racism and deny national security is at stake need to start paying attention to the facts. This week Mexican federal agents arrested four Iraqis in the northern city of Navajoa trying to sneak into the United States without proper documents. Last week, two Iraqis with fake Greek passports were arrested in Tijuana, the gateway into California.

Last year, Border Patrol officials nabbed 577,418 illegals on the Arizona side of the border and 14,323 were non-Mexicans - up from 9,974 from 2004. Of those, 407 came from nations designated as “countries of interest,” meaning those that are known to harbor terrorists.

Who can forget Mahmoud Youssef Kourani who paid to be smuggled across the US-Mexico border in 2001 and later was convicted and imprisoned for providing material support to Hizbullah, an infamous terrorist group.

On a positive note, Mexican authorities work diligently to capture illegal immigrants in their country even though they criticize the U.S. for securing its borders. Conservative author Michelle Malkin points out the irony, asking readers to imagine if we held Mexican “undocumented workers” in conditions like those of a Tijuana state prison. Amnesty International would be howling.

January 27, 2006

Congressman Unapologetic About Questionable Earmarks

The Washington Post reports that Rep. John T. Doolittle (R-CA) is unapologetic that he helped steer \$37 million for defense funding to a California company, whose officials and lobbyists helped raise at least \$85,000 for Doolittle and his leadership political action committee.

Doolittle's statement comes despite the fact that the director of this California company has been identified as "Co-conspirator No. 1" in criminal charges brought against Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham (R-CA) late last year. Cunningham pleaded guilty and resigned from Congress last November for taking \$2.4 million in bribes in return for inserting earmarks in appropriations bills.

The *Post* article mentions a Congressional Research Service report that earmarks have jumped from 4,155 valued at about \$29 billion in 1994 to 14,211 worth nearly \$53 billion 10 years later. This seems to suggest that there is some correlation with the deepening relationship between members of Congress and lobbyists.

"The hunt for earmarks has become so consuming that lawmakers are neglecting other duties, said Scott Lilly, who recently retired as chief Democratic aide on the House Appropriations Committee. Last year, the committee received 10,000 requests for home-district projects on one spending bill alone -- 25.4 projects per lawmaker, said committee spokesman John Scofield."

Earmarks have become such an obsession of the Congress, "That's all they do," continued Lilly.

But there does appear to be some hope for change in the Senate. The Heritage Foundation's Mark Tapscott reports that Senators Coburn and McCain have circulated a letter to all senators saying that they will challenge every future legislative earmark that comes to the Senate floor. The Senators say, "We believe that the process of earmarking undermines the confidence of the

American public in Congress because the practice is not open, fair, or competitive and tends to reward the politically well-connected.”

January 27, 2006

No Punishment For Alien-Smuggling Americans

Every year thousands of American citizens smuggle Mexicans into this country for cash and even when caught, face no consequences. Last year alone, 4,078 U.S. citizens were arrested at the two main gateways (San Ysidro and Otay Mesa) into California from Mexico, yet only 279 faced alien smuggling charges. Since 2000, the number of illegal immigrants caught inside vehicles has quadrupled from 10,600 to 40,333 and about half of the drivers were U.S. citizens.

This has led customs officials at those two California ports—the busiest for human smuggling—to become the first in the nation to implement a program of civil fines for citizens and legal residents caught smuggling people into the country.

Critics, however, are calling for criminal prosecution of smugglers since they believe fines are not enough to deter Americans from this lucrative business in which they make an average of \$500 per immigrant. Ira Mehlman of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a nonprofit that studies immigration issues, says collecting the fines will be impossible and therefore prison time would be more effective.

A lengthy newspaper article illustrates how easy it is for Americans to make thousands of dollars smuggling Mexicans into the country. The reporter followed a veteran American smuggler through the process with his Tijuana contact. The smuggler, a young man, got caught at the California border with his cargo yet, as federal arrest records show, he was released along with 36 other American drivers caught trying to smuggle 61 migrants during a four-day stretch. The man was not fined or charged, simply relieved of his human cargo and sent home.

January 26, 2006

ACLU Sues To Allow Terrorist Muslim Scholar Into U.S.

The U.S. government has for years denied the visa of a controversial Muslim scholar, Tariq Ramadan, with documented terrorist ties, citing a Patriot Act clause that denies entry to aliens who have used a position of prominence within any country to endorse or espouse terrorist activity.

This week the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sued the U.S. government for preventing Ramadan from entering the country, arguing that the government is using anti-terrorism laws as “instruments of censorship” to bar foreign scholars whose political views might be contrary to those of the U.S. government.

The lawsuit, filed in Manhattan, New York, fails to mention Ramadan’s strong ties to militant terrorist groups through the years. For instance, he was banned from France in the late 1990s because of his links to an Algerian Islamist who had initiated a terrorist campaign in France. A Spanish judge found that Ramadan had close ties to an Algerian, Ahmed Brahim, indicted in Spain for Al-Qaeda activities. Ramadan publicly refers to the Islamist atrocities of September 11, Bali and Madrid as “interventions.”

January 25, 2006

Senator Uses JW Whistleblower Case To Blast FBI

A new FBI whistleblower lawsuit has led a senior senator to write a letter to the Bureau’s director questioning a chronic “double standard” of discipline at the agency. The six-page letter from Iowa Senator Charles Grassley to FBI Director Robert Mueller prominently mentions the case of Judicial Watch client Robert Wright, a veteran FBI agent who was targeted for dismissal for criticizing the bureau’s counterterrorism investigations a few years ago.

The recent case involves a 23-year agent, Cecilia Woods, who exposed her boss's affair with an informant in Panama, where they were both stationed. The ongoing affair between the senior FBI official, Gil Torrez, and a confidential informant left the FBI agent open to blackmail by a hostile foreign intelligence agency. Regardless, Woods got suspended for 10 days and was later transferred to a less prestigious domestic post. She retired last year.

Grassley's lengthy letter accuses the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility of routinely imposing harsher disciplinary sanctions on rank and file agents than on supervisors, even when the misconduct is similar. It uses Robert Wright's case as an example, calling his punishment an "unusually harsh penalty."

January 25, 2006

Former Illinois Governor to Take Stand in Corruption Trial

More than 70 witnesses have testified in the four-month long corruption trial of former Illinois Governor George Ryan and, for the first time, we will hear Ryan's version. His attorneys plan to put him on the stand next week.

Prosecutors say that while Ryan served as Illinois Secretary of State and Governor (1991 to 2003), he and his relatives accepted tens of thousands of dollars in bribes in exchange for state business contracts.

Ryan is also charged with several tax counts, including lying on personal income tax forms and diverting campaign money to family without paying taxes on it. In fact, an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) agent testified this week that Ryan failed to report about \$80,000 on his federal tax forms. The trial may not be over, but a poll, conducted by a chain of Illinois newspapers, reveals that nearly 70% of Illinois residents believe Ryan is guilty of most charges.

Judicial Watch denounced Ryan several years ago for his close relationship with Cuban dictator Fidel Castro and his trips to the island in an effort to lift the decades-old U.S. embargo. In fact, in 1999 Ryan became the first sitting governor in 40 years to travel to Cuba. The historic trip

opened the way for Illinois-based Archer Daniels Midland, a big contributor to many political campaigns, to become the first company to sell food directly from the United States to Cuba since 1963.

January 24, 2006

Supreme Court Says State Judges Can Get Political

Most states have a strict judicial code of conduct that limits the political activity of sitting judges, making the election of state judges nonpartisan and low key. A Supreme Court decision, however, will probably transform them into big-money contests that resemble partisan political races with lots of special interest money.

The justices let stand a lower court's free-speech ruling in a Minnesota case that eliminates rules—in effect in most states—prohibiting candidates for judgeships from personally soliciting money or from identifying their political party affiliation.

That means judges can engage in partisan campaigning and personally seek funds. This hands special interests a victory (especially plaintiffs lawyers) and will exacerbate the rising tide of money and politics flooding into America's courtrooms, according to the conservative news service BBSNEWS.

January 23, 2006

Hillary Clinton's Iranian Money Connection

When Hillary Clinton criticized the Bush Administration for “downplaying” the threats of Iran's nuclear program and for letting European nations take the lead in negotiations, she forgot to mention that she has taken thousands of dollars from Iranian-Americans sympathetic to the radical Iranian regime of President Mahmoud Amhadinejad.

Federal Election Commission (FEC) records show that the New York senator took a \$2,000 contribution in 1999 from the Nemazee Corporation, owned by New York financier Hassan Nemazee, who has ties to the pro-Mullah American Iranian Council.

The Nemazees have already donated \$8,000 to Hillary's 2006 Senate campaign, with \$4,000 coming from Hassan Nemazee and another \$4,000 from Nemazee Capital Corporation, made in the name of Sheila Nemazee.

Less than a year ago, a prominent Iranian activist named Gita Kashani, offered to host a big fundraiser for Clinton at her San Francisco Bay area home. The event got cancelled at the last minute when Bill Clinton underwent heart surgery. Kashani is a pro-regime, anti-sanction activist who is a former member of the board of trustees of the controversial Iranian American Political Action Committee. She is also a friend and admirer of Hillary Clinton.

January 20, 2006

Former Atlanta Mayor Goes to Trial For Fraud And Corruption

During his eight years as Atlanta Mayor, Democrat Bill Campbell managed city hall as a criminal enterprise. A seven-year federal corruption probe has already led to the convictions of 10 city officials tied to his administration.

Now it's Campbell's turn to answer to a seven-count indictment that accuses him of racketeering, accepting bribes and tax evasion. A jury has been selected and his trial begins next week in Atlanta.

The federal indictment contends that Campbell raked in more than \$160,000 in payoffs and collected \$137,000 in illegal campaign contributions. It also charges that city contractors bankrolled a trip to Paris for Campbell, sent him on gambling junkets and installed a heating and air-conditioning system in his Inman Park home.

Campbell, who is black, has accused prosecutors of being racially motivated so don't be surprised if his defense team plays the race card. One Atlanta political blog says that Campbell is probably the most corrupt mayor that Atlanta has ever seen and that he will play the race card to the hilt like he has always done in the past.

January 19, 2006

“What We Were Prevented From Investigating”

From Independent Counsel Barrett's press release regarding the release of his final report on the crimes of former Clinton official Henry Cisneros, who lied to FBI officials:

“This has been a long and difficult investigation. It is my hope that people will read the entire Report and draw their own conclusions. An accurate title for the Report could be, ‘WHAT WE WERE PREVENTED FROM INVESTIGATING.’

“After a thorough reading of the Report it would not be unreasonable to conclude as I have that there was a coverup at high levels of our government and, it appears to have been substantial and coordinated. The question is why? And that question regrettably will go unanswered. Unlike some other coverups, this one succeeded.

“I recommend that people begin by reading the memorandum of Mr. John Filan, Chief of the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigation Division in the South Texas District (Appendix no. 16).”

Filan was concerned that Barry Finkelstein (the government's Assistant Chief Counsel overseeing Criminal Tax) had a cozy relationship with the Cisneros' defense. A second concern of Filan's was that Cisneros' case was pulled from the field with the apparent intent to ‘kill’ it, regardless of the evidence and there were improper disclosures with the Tax Division of the Justice Department in further attempts to stop the case.

After the Office of the Independent Counsel (OIC) resumed its obstruction investigation following Cisneros' 1999 guilty plea, it met with considerable resistance. Several witnesses could not be questioned because they repeatedly used their 5th amendment right not to incriminate themselves. Only after being granted immunity did these witnesses testify in front of a grand jury.

When the OIC realized that attempts to subpoena the Justice Department for documents related to the obstruction investigation would become meaningless because of the statute of limitations, the OIC closed down obstruction investigations to devote time solely to the release of the final report.

If not for the attempts of the Clintons to redact from the report incriminating information related to the roles they played in helping Cisneros and obstructing Barrett's investigation, the American people would have a much clearer picture as to what actually happened during this period of time in the Clinton administration.

January 19, 2006

Hillary's Law Firm, Senate Democrats Keep Barrett Report Bombshells Under Wraps

Independent Counsel David Barrett's highly anticipated report related to his investigation of former Clinton cabinet member Henry Cisneros was finally released today. As is so often the case, what was included in the report is not nearly as interesting, or damning, as the content removed from it.

Robert Novak writes about the Barrett report in today's *Chicago Sun-Times*:

“As long forecast, it alleges serious corruption in the Clinton administration's Justice Department and Internal Revenue Service. The question is what was contained in 120 pages removed by the judges.

“These allegations explain why Barrett finally has closed down after 10 years the last prosecution under the lapsed independent counsel statute. Its target, Henry Cisneros, long ago resigned as secretary of Housing and Urban Development in a plea bargain after admitting he lied to FBI interrogators to gain Senate confirmation. What kept Barrett in business was what he and his prosecutors contend is a Clinton administration cover-up of income tax evasion charges against Cisneros.

“Not only Barrett’s stubbornness but also a tip from an IRS whistleblower in San Antonio, Texas, meant the case did not end with Cisneros’ personal disgrace. But for now, the cover-up has succeeded. No tax prosecution was brought against Cisneros, and IRS conduct has not been questioned. Friends describe Barrett, a Republican lawyer from Washington, as feeling at age 68 that he has failed fully to uncover the scandal and that it is up to Congress to get out the truth.”

Novak continues, saying that any member of Congress can read the Barrett report just by asking, and further, any lawmaker who believes American taxpayers should see the product of this \$23 million in expenditures could presumably publish the material without fear of legal sanction.

With this in mind, Judicial Watch is asking all of its supporters to call their members of Congress and demand that the redacted sections of the Barrett report be released to the public. The number for the Capitol Hill switchboard is **202-224-2131**.

January 18, 2006

Hillary Silent on Clinton Presidency’s Latest Cover Up

This week Hillary Clinton called the Bush Administration one of the worst in U.S. history and she accused Republican leaders of running the House like a “plantation.” Wonder what the New York senator will have to say about a detailed report that reveals a tax-fraud cover up in her husband’s administration?

Newly released portions of the independent counsel's delayed report charges that a cover up at senior levels of the Clinton Administration killed a tax fraud case against cabinet member Henry Cisneros, who admitted in 1999 that he had made secret payments to a mistress before becoming Clinton's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Conducted by independent counsel David Barrett, the probe took 11 years to complete and mention's that then-Internal Revenue Service Commissioner Peggy Richardson, a close friend of Hillary's, was involved in efforts to quash the probe.

The powerful political law firm of Williams & Connolly, which represents Cisneros and the Clintons, has succeeded in getting some of the Barrett report redacted before release.

January 17, 2006

Kennedy's Alito Bashing Haunts Him

Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy put on quite a show when he ripped into Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito for his one-time ties to a group opposed to admitting more women and minorities to Princeton.

It turns out that the veteran Democrat Senator himself belongs to a social club, for Harvard students and alumni, notorious for discriminating against women. The Owl Club was even kicked off of the campus two decades ago for refusing to allow female members.

Apparently, the veteran liberal senator didn't know that women are not allowed to join his beloved Owl Club and the *Boston Herald* reported that Kennedy will quit the club immediately, though he already paid his annual due of \$100.

Media reports nationwide have ridiculed Kennedy and even late-night talk-show hosts have joked about the irony of his attacks on Alito.

January 13, 2006

Nancy Pelosi Demands Selective Ethics Investigation

Nancy Pelosi's infamous letter demanding an investigation into a "Republican culture of corruption" in Congress fails to mention the San Francisco Congresswoman's own troubles and those of Louisiana Democrat Congressman William Jefferson, who took bribes for promoting business opportunities in Africa.

In a well-publicized and lengthy letter to Republican House Speaker Dennis Hastert, Pelosi, the House Democratic leader, points out that the country has been inundated with Republican arrests, guilty pleas, bribery allegations and resignations and says it is long past time for Congress to address the systemic Republican culture of corruption that has undermined the American people's confidence in this institution.

Nowhere in the letter does Pelosi mention how she herself violated federal election law by operating two leadership political action committees in order to circumvent contribution limits.

A spokesman for Speaker Hastert, Ron Bonjean, said it was hypocritical for Pelosi to throw mud considering her own recent troubles and those of several in her party.

January 12, 2006

Hillary Clinton Joins Forces With Radical Harry Belafonte

Washed-out singer turned leftwing activist Harry Belafonte made news last week for calling President George W. Bush "the greatest terrorist in the world" during a rally led by Venezuela's socialist leader, Hugo Chavez.

Today Belafonte, the self-professed leader of the American socialist revolution, will join forces with his longtime friend, Hillary Clinton, at a luncheon hosted by a liberal interest group called the Children's Defense Fund.

The New York senator appeared with Belafonte only a few months ago at a Congressional Black Caucus event in which Belafonte said American policy was written on the walls of oppression everywhere. Clinton praised his comments when she took the podium at the event.

Many are wondering if Clinton will once again praise Belafonte for his latest America-bashing comments.

January 12, 2006

60-Day Sentence For Child Rapist May Get Judge Impeached

A Vermont judge known for being soft on crime went too far by issuing a 60-day sentence to a man who confessed to raping a 6-year-old girl repeatedly over four years and state legislators are finally calling for his impeachment. State Senator Wendy Wilton said in a television appearance that people believe the judge “has flipped his lid.”

Even longtime politician friends of the Burlington district court judge, Edward Cashman, were outraged with the sentence. One state congressman accused the judge of violating his constitutional oath of office as a judge.

The judge’s explanation for the offensively light sentence is that the child rapist, 34-year-old Mark Hulett, could not receive sex offender treatment while in prison.

January 11, 2006

First Tier of Lawmakers Revealed in Abramoff Scandal

Yesterday during the Alito confirmation hearings, Senator Graham (R-SC), speaking after Senator Feingold’s tough questioning regarding the Vanguard case in which Alito initially didn’t recuse himself, made a joke about the Abramoff scandal:

“That was an interesting exchange. I guess there’s no rule against beating a dead horse, or we’d all have quit a long time ago. (LAUGHTER) So in the next 30 minutes, I’m going to ask you the same questions you’ve been asked for a whole day. (LAUGHTER) And I hope you’ll understand if any of us come before a court and we can’t remember Abramoff, you will tend to believe us.”

Just a day after Graham’s “joking,” *The Washington Times* recently made known the identities of a “first tier” of lawmakers tied to the Abramoff scandal. The Justice Department is currently scrutinizing Sens. Conrad Burns (R-MT); Byron L. Dorgan (D-ND); and Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), along with Reps. J.D. Hayworth (R-AZ), and Bob Ney (R-OH).

January 11, 2006

Hillary Clinton’s Vindictive Streak Alive And Kicking

For Hillary Clinton, repeatedly denying her many wrongdoings, and those of her husband, is the norm and rarely do her pals in the media challenge her version of the facts. This week, however, several publications are questioning her continued denial of placing a hold on President George W. Bush’s nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

The hold means that Kavanaugh’s nomination will have to be resubmitted and that is a tedious procedure that will further delay his consideration. Why would the former First Lady do such a thing? Retaliation for Kavanaugh’s role in the Ken Starr investigations of her and her beloved husband. Kavanaugh, a highly regarded attorney and Yale Law School graduate, was on the staff of the independent counsel’s investigation that led to the impeachment of Bill Clinton.

One editorial notes that using a Senate hold on a nomination due to a personal grudge is no way for a senator to behave and suggests that if Hillary has legitimate grievances against Kavanaugh, she should state them so there can be a full debate about any allegations.

January 10, 2006

Cuban Spies at Major U.S. University

It's no secret that most academic institutions in this country lean far to the left and now the case of a longtime South Florida college professor turned Cuban spy helps support that fact.

For decades, the Florida International University (FIU) psychology professor, Carlos Alvarez, and his wife, an FIU psychology counselor, allegedly have spied for Cuba's communist government by using shortwave radios, numerical-code language and computer encrypted files to send information to Fidel Castro's intelligence commanders. The couple was indicted in Miami this week and were held without bail because the judge believes they are a flight risk.

The charges are serious considering, since 1982, Cuba has been on the U.S. State Department's list of states that sponsor terrorism. According to the U.S. government, Cuba remains on the list for supporting designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations and for harboring fugitives from U.S. justice, including domestic terrorists.

Not surprisingly, much of the liberal media coverage expressed disbelief at the charges with several outlets reporting that there was no indication of any possible spying for Cuba.

January 09, 2006

IRS Withholds Public Information

The Internal Revenue Service is one of the nation's largest and most powerful agencies and both Democrat and Republican administrations have been accused of using it as a political tool. Now a veteran college professor, who has tracked the IRS for 30 years, is suing the agency for illegally withholding detailed tax enforcement data that shows which kinds of taxpayers get the most and toughest audits.

Syracuse University Professor Susan B. Long is also co-director of the nonprofit Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, a data research organization that provides the public with detailed information about the operation of hundreds of federal agencies. Her recent lawsuit accuses the IRS of violating a 1976 court order directing the agency to provide her with data on criminal investigations, tax collections, the number and hours devoted to audits by income level and taxpayer category and other enforcement records.

A spokesman for the IRS acknowledged that the court order is still in effect but claims the agency cannot seem to determine exactly what information Long is entitled to.

January 06, 2006

Lobbyists Thrive On Congress's Laziness

Today on *Slate*, John Dickerson theorizes that one of the reasons lobbyists thrive in Washington is because of the laziness of Congress members and staffers. It is a point not as obvious as greed for campaign contributions and free golfing, which makes it more interesting to discuss.

In an interview with a successful former lobbyist, Dickerson learns more about the intricacies of influencing members of Congress:

“The lobbyist’s first point was that the dance of influence is subtler than people think. If it works right, a member never has to say, even to himself, “I have to vote for this subsidy because lobbyist Jack has just put a check in my pocket.” That happens on occasion, but usually only when a piece of legislation comes up suddenly, or if a lobbyist goes off script. The more effective scenario, for everyone concerned, involves the lobbyist becoming friendly with members of the Congress member’s staff, who research issues and advise him or her what to do and how to vote.

“When the member of Congress goes to staff for information, he wants it fast. A staffer can read all available material on the issue, think through the policy, and

balance what's right against the member's political interests or he can call his friend Smitty the lobbyist. Smitty knows all about this complicated stuff in the telecommunications bill. He was talking about it just the other day at the Wizards game, which was almost as fun as the Cointreau-and-capon party Smitty hosted at his spread in Great Falls over Labor Day.

“Smitty has a solid, intellectually defensible answer to every question. He also knows how an issue is likely to play out politically for the member back in his home district. In a hectic day, Smitty makes a staffer's day easier. That's almost as appealing as the skybox and the free drinks. It's easy to rationalize relying on lobbyists for this kind of help. In asking lobbyists to help them understand technical issues, staffers are doing the same thing journalists do every day and in fact, journalists often call the same lobbyists for the same reason. They find someone who understands the issue, figuring that they're smart enough to use the information that rings true and discard the spin.”

And so this seems to be the way the system works: staffers turn to lobbyists for quick and knowledgeable information, the staffers sanitize the information and Senator Whomever is happy. While this is all going on, the lobbyist continues to cultivate relationships with staffers to the point where a lucrative lobbying position is offered to a staffer, a job that offers six-digit figures rather than a meager five-digits.

The disheartening thought about the ethically-challenged Congress we have is that this questionable behavior would have continued *ad infinitum* if no one had been caught. Members of Congress and lobbyists are like children stealing from a cookie jar, if you catch them in the act and all you do is tell them to put the cookie back, they will follow your request. But without any serious punishment or rule changes, they will continue to steal as long as backs are turned.

January 06, 2006

Democrat Senator Keeps Abramoff Money Because It's a "Republican Scandal"

While most lawmakers are frantically trying to distance themselves from the Jack Abramoff scandal by returning money linked to the disgraced lobbyist, some refuse to give it up with one well-known senator offering a most interesting reason.

"Abramoff was a Republican operative and this is a Republican scandal." A top aide to Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) actually said that when explaining why his boss would not return more than \$60,000 donated by Abramoff clients.

Others are also refusing to part with some big Abramoff-connected bucks. For instance, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) will keep \$41,000, Representative Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) will keep \$42,500, Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) will keep \$10,000 and Representative J.D. Hayworth (R-AZ) will not part with \$150,000.

Although many news reports of the Abramoff alleged bribes of Congressional officials suggest that this is a Republican scandal, there appear to be as many if not more Democrats involved.

January 05, 2006

Julie Myers Gets Recess Appointment from Bush

In an astoundingly disappointing action, President Bush yesterday appointed the inexperienced Julie L. Myers to be the head of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This recess appointment means she will only work for the next 11 months before the Senate gets to decide whether to confirm her.

Sadly this seems to be another example of Bush cronyism at its worst. Myers' uncle is Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers, the departing chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. She is also married to Michael Chertoff's chief of staff.

Critics of Myers say she has never held a law-enforcement management position. Myers also only has the minimum legal requirements to be appointed for her position. The law requires 5 years of managerial experience and 5 years of law enforcement experience. She has 11 years combined experience.

This appointment also appears to be another signal that Bush is not serious about homeland security despite serious trouble with illegal immigrants coming through a porous southern border. "Look for illegal alien problems to get worse, not better," writes Debbie Schlusel. "Ditto for Islamic money laundering through such means as Hawalas. The clueless Myers doesn't have an inkling about any of this or about law enforcement."

January 05, 2006

Media Covers For Democrats In Abramoff Coverage

While the Jack Abramoff scandal is huge and clearly involves both political parties, media coverage would lead anyone to erroneously think that only Republicans had ties to the disgraced lobbyist who has pleaded guilty to conspiracy, tax evasion and mail fraud.

From an *Associated Press* story published nationwide to a *New York Times* editorial questioning whether the Justice Department will aggressively pursue a case that could ensnare prominent Republicans, the coverage has been downright biased. Abramoff has given lots of money to Republicans, he has given a lot of money to Democrats too, but why would the media care about that silly little detail?

An interesting fact, absent in the so-called mainstream coverage, was made public by the nonprofit Center for Responsive Politics, which revealed that Indian tribes Abramoff lobbied for contributed about \$1.5 million to Democratic candidates since the 2000 election.

Debbie Schlusel writes in her blog that Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) took thousands from Abramoff's firm and from his client, the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. Perhaps the media will start reporting both sides of this big story.

January 04, 2006

California City Under Fire For Enforcing Immigration Laws

Violence between Mexican activists and anti-illegal immigration advocates broke out in the small Southern California city of Costa Mesa over a new law that makes it the nation's first city to authorize its police department to enforce federal immigration laws.

Costa Mesa Mayor Allan Mansoor said he proposed the law, which passed by a vote of 3-2, because many of the residents in the city of 108,000 requested it. Police officers will work with federal immigration officials and sheriff's deputies to determine the immigration status of suspects arrested for other crimes.

Among those arrested for violently protesting the new law, was illegal-immigration advocate Coyotl Tezcalipoca, the head of the radical group Tonantzin Collective. Another Mexican rights group present at last night's City Council meeting was the Atlachinolli Front.

January 03, 2006

Abramoff Guilty Plea Means Trouble For Congress

The anxiety level in Washington must be at an all-time high in the wake of lobbyist Jack Abramoff's guilty pleas to federal charges of conspiracy, tax evasion and mail fraud. The plea was part of an agreement that the influential Republican lobbyist made to cooperate with the government in its massive investigation of influence peddling involving members of Congress.

The charges against Abramoff outline lavish gifts and contributions to an unnamed House member (identified in previous reports as Congressman Bob Ney (R-OH)) in return for an agreement to use his office to aid Abramoff clients. Ney's attorney has already downplayed the plea, saying it offers "nothing new."

But the agreement with the Justice Department will probably secure crucial testimony from Abramoff against several members of Congress who received favors from him or his clients.