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CREW Cuts

White House Admits Destroying Back-up Copies of Emails

On January 15th, in a court filing submitted in response to CREW's lawsuit, the White House admitted destroying back-up copies of some of its emails. Over 10 million emails are missing from between March 2003 and October 2005 and the White House stated that up until October of 2003, back-up tapes containing the only copies of some of the missing emails were recycled.



This means that there likely are no back-up copies of emails deleted during the period of March 2003 through October 2003. During this time, top White House officials leaked the covert identity of Valerie Plame Wilson and the Justice Department began a criminal investigation into the leak.

The White House has offered no explanation as to why the email were deleted, how many were actually lost and why it never acted to recover any of the missing emails, even when presented with a recovery plan by its own Office of Administration.

After filing this court document, the White House deputy press secretary denied that there were, in fact, any missing email. As a result, House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Henry A. Waxman (D-CA), released a letter stating that the White House had informed committee staff that there were 473 days for which no emails were stored for one or more of the White House offices. CREW prepared an analysis of the national news on the dates for which the emails are missing, available on [CREW's website](#).

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[Read The Washington Post story](#)

CREW and Civil Rights Groups Call on Attorney General Mukasey to Rescind Bush Administration Memo Condoning Political Manipulation of the Civil Rights Commission

On January 29th, CREW, along with several civil rights organizations, including the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), National Women's Law Center, National Partnership for Women & Families,

February 2008/ Issue #10

CREW and Media Matters Ask CNN to Exclude Ralph Reed from the "Best Political Team on Television"

On January 16th, CREW and Media Matters for America sent a letter to CNN's U.S. President Jonathan Klein, asking that former Christian Coalition head Ralph Reed, a proven liar with a deep bias against Republican presidential candidate John McCain, no longer be afforded the opportunity to be a part of CNN's self-proclaimed "best political team on television." Most recently, Reed provided commentary as a "Republican strategist" during the New Hampshire presidential primary.

Reed played a pivotal role in the recent scandal involving convicted felon and former lobbyist Jack Abramoff by secretly using his connections and his consulting firm, Century Strategies to further the goals of Abramoff's Indian casino clients, while publicly professing he would never take money derived from gambling. During Reed's 2006 unsuccessful bid to become the lieutenant governor of Georgia, he repeatedly lied about his role in the scheme. Emails released by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee in conjunction with hearings spearheaded by Sen. McCain confirm both Reed's role and the fact that he was aware of the sources of the funds. These emails are available both on the Senate Indian Affairs Committee website and at [governmentdocs.org](#).

Reed's primary opponent in the lieutenant governor race publicized the information that came out during the hearings, contributing to Reed's defeat at the polls. Reed's defenders claim that Sen. McCain released the email exchanges between Reed and Abramoff in revenge for Reed's support of President Bush in the 2000 campaign. Given Reed's hostility to Sen. McCain, Reed is hardly an unbiased voice commenting on the Republican candidates' race for their party's nomination.

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[Read the Atlanta Journal-Constitution post](#)

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, National Congress of American Indians and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), sent a letter to Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey asking that he rescind a 2004 opinion by the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel ("OLC") that allowed the Bush administration to pack the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights with Republicans. The letter is available on CREW's website at <http://www.citizensforethics.org/node/30912>.

In order to circumvent the federal law requiring the Commission to be bipartisan, the OLC issued an opinion allowing Republican members of the Commission to switch their party affiliation to "independent" in order to create additional Republican vacancies on the panel. The Commission is now made up of 5 Republicans, 2 Democrats and has one vacancy.

During his Senate confirmation hearings, Attorney General Mukasey had promised to review OLC opinions to ensure they were "soundly reasoned [and] soundly based." Because the OLC decision is completely at odds with the legislative history clearly demonstrating congressional intent for the commission to be bipartisan -- an interpretation corroborated by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service -- CREW and the civil rights organizations asked the attorney general to stand by his pledge and withdraw the opinion.

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CREW Files Justice and Senate Ethics Committee Complaints Against Sen. Mary Landrieu

On January 8th, CREW sent a complaint to the Department of Justice, the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District for Louisiana and the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas, asking for an investigation into whether Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA) violated federal bribery law by including a \$2 million earmark for Voyager Expanded Learning in a bill in exchange for \$30,000 in campaign contributions from company executives and their relatives. CREW also asked the Senate Ethics Committee to investigate the matter.

Randy Best, a top Republican donor, founded Voyager, an educational products company and rather than selling the company's reading program to school districts, hired lobbyists to obtain earmarks for it. Although the House had appropriated \$1 million for his program for the D.C. public schools, Best still needed a Senate sponsor. A lobbyist arranged a meeting with Sen. Landrieu, the chair of the District of Columbia Appropriations Subcommittee to press for an earmark. Shortly after the meeting, a member of Sen. Landrieu's staff asked Best to hold a fundraiser for her and he agreed. After the fundraiser, Sen. Landrieu's campaign committee received \$30,000 in contributions from individuals associated with the company -- donors who had never before contributed to her. Sen. Landrieu inserted a \$2 million earmark into the D.C. appropriations bill, giving D.C. schools \$2 million to buy Best's unproven reading program.

In addition to violating federal law by trading an earmark for campaign contributions, Sen. Landrieu also may have violated the Senate rule prohibiting "improper conduct which reflects upon the Senate."

Read CREW's complaints

Read the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* story

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