

CREW Cuts

The Monthly Newsletter of CREW

August 2009 // Issue No. 28

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Spotlight



CREW Responds to Sen. Ensign's Latest Statement on MSNBC's *The Rachel Maddow Show*

On July 24th, Sen. John Ensign (R-NV) issued a statement blaming his silence regarding the many questions surrounding his affair on CREW's active calls for [Senate Ethics Committee](#), [FBI](#) and [FEC](#) investigations into his conduct. CREW's Executive Director Melanie Sloan fired back on MSNBC's *The Rachel Maddow Show* that night, saying CREW's complaints in no way prevent Sen. Ensign from explaining himself, and if he has nothing to hide - he should speak up.

[Click here to watch the segment.](#)



Based on CREW Complaint, FEC Rules Campaign Funds Can't Be Spent on Clothing

On July 16th, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) reaffirmed its position that candidates for federal office may not use campaign funds to buy clothing. The FEC reiterated this policy in response to a December 2008 complaint CREW filed with the Commission against several candidates who had converted campaign money to personal use for clothing purchases.

Reps. Rob Andrews (D-NJ) and Loretta Sanchez (D-CA), and candidates Bill Dew (R-UT) and William Breazeale (R-NC) were all found to have violated campaign finance law by spending a combined total of over \$3,000 of campaign money on clothes. Though the FEC declined to take action because the candidates had reimbursed their

campaigns, the message was clear: candidates must purchase their clothing with their own money just like everyone else.

[Learn more](#)

[Read the FEC's decision](#)

[Read the *Associated Press* article](#)

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CREW Files Ethics Complaint Against Rep. Eric Cantor for Creating Taxpayer-Funded Political Organization



On July 23rd, CREW filed a complaint with the Office of Congressional Ethics, requesting an investigation into whether Rep. Eric Cantor's (R-VA) newly created group, the National Council for a New America (NCNA), improperly uses taxpayer money for political purposes.

Rep. Cantor has claimed the NCNA -- a group run out of his congressional office -- is a "policy organization." In reality, however, it is a political organization with a mission "to rebuild and rebrand the Republican Party," according to NCNA member Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-TX). House ethics rules explicitly prohibit using official House resources for campaign or political purposes. By using his staff to organize the group, arrange its town hall meeting, and create its website, Rep. Cantor has violated those rules.

Additionally, House members are prohibited from holding town hall meetings outside of their congressional district. The NCNA held a town hall in Arlington, VA, which is not part of Rep. Cantor's district or that of any other NCNA member.

Members of Congress are free to create political organizations to strengthen their party, but they can't use taxpayer money to do it.

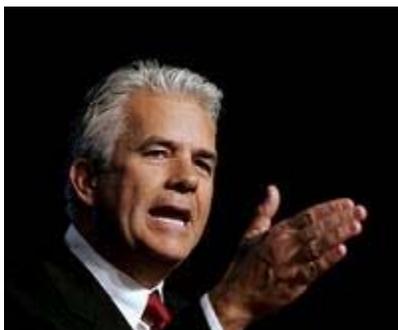
[Learn more](#)

[Read CREW's complaint](#) and [exhibits](#)

[Read *The Nation* article](#)

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CREW & Sen. Ensign: Latest Info Sent to FEC; DOJ Complaint Punted to FBI



This month, CREW again called for Sen. John Ensign (R-NV) to be held accountable for his activities surrounding his affair with a member of his campaign staff. CREW called for a criminal investigation into the senator, after having earlier filed complaints with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and the Senate Ethics Committee.

On July 8th, Doug Hampton, the husband of Sen. Ensign's mistress Cynthia Hampton and a former employee in the senator's Washington, D.C. office, stated when he and Mrs. Hampton were fired by Sen. Ensign, they received a severance payment of over \$25,000. If Sen. Ensign made this severance payment out of his own pocket, it would be treated as in-kind contributions



to his campaign committee and leadership Political Action Committee (PAC), but neither committee had reported any such contributions from the senator. Because failing to report \$25,000 in contributions in a calendar year is a felony, CREW sent a letter to the Department of Justice (DOJ) calling for a criminal investigation into the senator.

Hours after CREW filed its DOJ complaint, Sen. Ensign reported that his parents made payments totaling \$96,000 to the Hampton family in a series of \$12,000 gifts. The senator claims not to have paid Ms. Hampton any severance. Neither Sen. Ensign's campaign committee nor leadership PAC reported any contributions from the senator's parents, and \$12,000 far exceeds the yearly contribution limits for both committees. On July 17th, CREW added this new information to its original FEC complaint filed in June.

Finally, on July 20th, William M. Welch, head of the DOJ's Public Integrity Section, the same team that bungled the prosecution of former Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK), informed CREW that DOJ would not look at CREW's complaint, which, he said, properly should be directed to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. CREW promptly forwarded its complaint to the FBI's Washington Field Office. The question of whether the payments to the Hamptons were illegal unreported campaign contributions or legal gifts can only be cleared up by having all of those involved testify before a grand jury under penalty of perjury.

The new allegations of Sen. Ensign's campaign finance law violations -- and the severe ethical implications surrounding his affair and its aftermath -- underscore the urgent need for investigations into the senator.

[Learn more about CREW's FEC complaint](#)

[Read CREW's FEC complaint](#)

[Learn more about CREW's DOJ complaint](#) and [forwarded complaint to the FBI](#)

[Read the DOJ complaint](#) and [forwarded complaint to the FBI](#)

[Read the *Las Vegas Sun* article about CREW's FEC complaint](#) and [the *TPM Muckraker* article about CREW's FBI complaint](#)

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CREW Sues Secret Service for Refusing to Disclose WH Visitor Logs of Health Care Execs



On July 22nd, CREW [sued](#) the Secret Service for refusing to respond to a June 22nd Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for records of [White House visits made by health care industry executives](#). CREW asked for these records, as well as records of [coal company executives' visits](#), to learn the extent to which influential heads of industry may be shaping administration policy.

Hours after CREW sued the administration, and shortly before a presidential prime time news conference on health care reform, White House Counsel Gregory Craig provided CREW with a [summary of at least some White House visits](#) of 14 health care industry executives - presumably to prevent distraction and embarrassment during the president's news conference. Mr. Craig's summary does not satisfy CREW's FOIA request, as it does not include the actual logs maintained by the Secret Service and other information the records would include, such as the time and duration

of each meeting, the name of the administration official who requested the meeting, or the name of the official with whom each executive met.

CREW currently [has four outstanding lawsuits](#) for White House visitor logs - two filed during the Obama administration and two filed during the Bush administration. Both administrations have claimed these records are presidential, not federal, despite district court rulings to the contrary, and have refused to release them under the

FOIA.

The American people have a right to know who is visiting the White House and influencing policy that will affect all of us so CREW continues to battle for disclosure of the records.

[Learn more](#)

[Read CREW's complaint against the Secret Service](#)

[Read WH Counsel Craig's letter to CREW](#)

[Read CREW's response to Mr. Craig](#)

[Read the *MSNBC.com* article](#)

[Read the *CNN* article](#)

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CREW Continues to Fight for Cheney Interview Regarding Plame Wilson Leak



On July 21st, the U.S. District Court held its second hearing in CREW's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit against the Department of Justice (DOJ) over its refusal to release records related to former Vice President Cheney's FBI interview in the Valerie Plame Wilson leak investigation.

Shortly after the [first hearing](#) on June 19th, DOJ presidential appointee Lanny Breuer, Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division, filed a declaration reiterating the DOJ's position that releasing this interview would discourage future government officials from voluntarily participating in criminal probes, thereby hampering future investigations. At the second hearing, DOJ again raised this argument.

CREW argued DOJ's position is belied by the fact that DOJ has subpoenaed White House officials in the past without any repercussions. Further, mere "apprehensions" about releasing the interview are not enough to justify its withholding under FOIA law.

District Court Judge Emmet Sullivan said DOJ was essentially asking him to create new law by blocking the interview's release, something he admitted he could not do.

The Wilsons and the American public deserve to know the complete truth surrounding the leak of Ms. Plame Wilson's covert identity. The records of the Cheney interview will contribute to our understanding of how government officials sacrificed national security for political posturing.

[Learn more](#)

[Read Lanny Breuer's declaration](#)

[Read CREW's supplemental brief](#)

[Read *The Politico* article](#)

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