

CREW Cuts

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Spotlight



Melanie Sloan Discusses Notorious PR-Hack Richard Berman and the Latest Ensign Scandal Developments on MSNBC's *The Rachel Maddow Show*

On October 6th, CREW executive director Melanie Sloan appeared on MSNBC's *The Rachel Maddow Show* to discuss the latest developments in the scandal surrounding Sen. John Ensign (R-NV). Her segment directly followed Maddow's interview with Richard Berman - a notorious D.C. hired-gun and front man for the tobacco, alcohol, restaurant and tanning industries. CREW has long had Mr. Berman in its sights, and in January launched www.BermanExposed.org, a website dedicated to exposing his offensive network of front groups.

Ms. Sloan took both Sen. Ensign and Mr. Berman to task, highlighting their outrageous and unethical behavior. [Click here to watch the segment](#) and [click here to donate to CREW today](#).

[Learn more about CREW's actions against Sen. Ensign](#)

[Visit BermanExposed.org](http://www.BermanExposed.org)



CREW Lawsuit Results in Release of Notes of Cheney's FBI Interview in Plame Wilson Leak Case



For years, CREW and the American public have wondered what role former Vice President Dick Cheney played in leaking former CIA officer Valerie Plame Wilson's covert identity to the press. On October 30th, following CREW's successful lawsuit, the Department of Justice (DOJ) obeyed a court order and released the transcript and notes of Mr. Cheney's 2004 leak investigation interview with the FBI. The interview notes provided a glimpse of the vice president's level of involvement.

In the 28-page FBI summary, Mr. Cheney claimed no recollection of events at least 72 separate times, which seemed uncharacteristic of a political figure often touted for his intellect and recall. Mr. Cheney said he could not recall any involvement in either leaking Ms. Plame Wilson's covert identity to the media or telling his chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, the only Bush administration member to be convicted in the leak investigation, to disclose her identity to reporters.

CREW sued DOJ in August 2008 for refusing to respond to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for records of the interview. U.S. District Court Judge Emmet Sullivan ordered the transcript released by October 31, 2009. Judge Sullivan agreed with CREW that because the investigation is over, records of the interview are no longer exempt from the FOIA. He also disagreed with DOJ's position that releasing the interview would discourage future White House officials from participating in criminal investigations and would merely serve as fodder to embarrass officials on late night television- what CREW now calls "the Daily Show defense."

In his closing statement at Scooter Libby's trial, Special Counsel Fitzgerald said a cloud remained over the vice-president. Mr. Cheney's near total amnesia regarding his role in this monumental Washington scandal - resulting in the conviction of his top aide - shows why.

[Learn more](#)

Read the [interview transcript](#) and [two sets](#) of notes

Learn more about [Judge Sullivan's order](#) and [the 30-day extension](#)

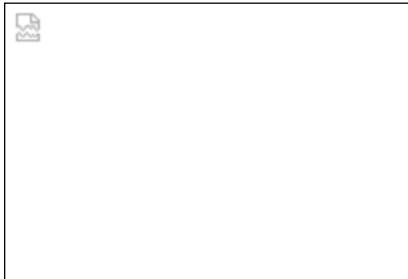
Read Judge Sullivan's October 1st [opinion](#) and [order](#)

[Read The New York Times story](#)

[Read The Atlantic Wire story](#)

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CREW Sends Letter to National Archives - Demands Action Against Ongoing Destruction of Email at Labor Department



On October 23rd, CREW urged the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to take action to prevent the ongoing destruction of email at the Department of Labor (DOL). CREW has learned the DOL has a "media sanitization" policy of permanently destroying all digital media, including email records, of departing employees. Even more troubling, the agency has a policy - at least during the Bush administration - of not backing up the email of departing political appointees. As a result, when Assistant Secretary Patrick Pizzella, a figure in the Jack Abramoff scandal, departed DOL in mid-January 2009, his email was wiped clean with no copies preserved in violation of the Federal Records Act. CREW filed a FOIA

request on October 2nd with DOL to learn more about DOL's deliberate violation of federal law and asked for copies of media destruction logs for former Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, but has not yet received any response.

[Learn more about CREW's letter to NARA](#)

[Read CREW's letter to NARA](#)

[Learn more about CREW's FOIA to DOL](#)

[Read CREW's FOIA to DOL](#)

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CREW Launches New Online State Watchdog Directory



Since 2003, CREW has worked tirelessly to expose the unethical activities of federal government officials. While CREW's focus is the federal government, critical work is being done by state-based groups to identify, challenge, and deter unethical conduct by local and state government officials.

On October 19th, CREW launched www.StateWatchdogGroups.org, a new online directory of state and local-based good government groups hailing from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. CREW created the directory because state and local officials who are exposed abusing the public trust are less likely to reach higher office, where they would have greater opportunities to engage in misconduct.

The 213 listed groups have different missions, but strive for the common goals of civic education, campaign finance reform, election reform, and transparency. Organized by state, the directory includes profiles of watchdog groups' missions and contact information, as well as state-wide pages providing links to news resources and blogs.

This directory should prove to be a vital resource to activists, journalists, and citizens seeking to ensure public officials are held accountable for their actions.

[Visit www.StateWatchdogGroups.org](http://www.StateWatchdogGroups.org)

[Read the Associated Press story](#)

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CREW Updates Complaints Against Sen. John Ensign; Provides New Related Information on Sen. Tom Coburn



On October 6th, following a story in [The New York Times](#) describing new violations committed by Sens. John Ensign (R-NV) and Tom Coburn (R-OK) in the wake of Sen. Ensign's affair with a member of his staff, CREW filed supplements to its complaints against Sen. Ensign with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Senate ethics committee.

The *Times* story indicates Sen. Ensign illegally conspired with Doug Hampton, his former administrative assistant and the husband of his former mistress, to help him violate the one-year lobbying ban and then assisted Mr. Hampton's clients with their legislative agendas. Sen. Ensign also may have committed honest services fraud by contacting federal officials at the

request of Mr. Hampton.

Although Sen. Ensign has characterized a \$96,000 payment to the Hampton family as a gift from his parents, Mr. Hampton's notes, obtained by *The New York Times*, indicate the payment really was severance for Ms. Hampton's termination. Sen. Ensign described the payment as a gift to avoid reporting it to the Federal Election Commission (FEC), which might have forced him to explain it publicly. CREW previously asked the FEC and the FBI to investigate Sen. Ensign's campaign committee's failure to report the payment.

CREW also asked the Senate ethics committee to investigate Sen. Coburn for lying to reporters. Sen. Coburn previously had denied serving any role in the Hamptons' efforts to reach a financial settlement with Sen. Ensign. Sen. Coburn now admits, however, that he thought Mr. Hampton's original request for \$8.5 million was ridiculous, but agreed to pass on what he viewed as a more reasonable request for \$2 million to Sen. Ensign, who rejected it.

As more details of Sen. Ensign's deplorable conduct emerge, CREW will continue its work in holding the Senator and his colleagues accountable.

[Learn more](#)

[Read CREW's letter to the FBI](#)

[Read CREW's letter to the Senate ethics committee](#)

[Read *The New York Times* story describing the new allegations](#)

[Read *The Las Vegas Journal-Review* story](#)

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