

CREW Cuts

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Spotlight



CREW Holds Watch Party for Tom DeLay's Appearance on ABC's *Dancing With The Stars*

After CREW learned disgraced former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay was set to appear in sequins and heels on ABC's *Dancing With The Stars*, we decided we had to watch "The Hammer" cha-cha across the screen together. On September 21st, CREW invited colleagues, family and friends to a watch party at a Capitol Hill bar to enjoy the spectacle as a group while sipping on "Hammertinis" and "Dirty DeLays."

In 2004, CREW wrote the ethics complaint against DeLay that resulted in his unanimous admonishment by the House Ethics Committee. DeLay was indicted on a felony conspiracy charge in 2005, prompting his resignation from Congress. He is still under indictment.

While DeLay's performance on the show was good enough to get him through to the second round, his appearance only served to remind CREW where he should really be dancing off to next - prison.

[Watch DeLay's appearance on ABC's *Dancing With The Stars*](#)

[Read Maureen Dowd's column in *The New York Times*](#)

[Click here to donate to CREW today](#)



CREW and Obama Administration Reach Historic Deal - White House to Post Visitor Records Online



On September 3rd, CREW and the Obama administration reached a historic settlement in four lawsuits CREW filed for access to White House visitor records. As part of the settlement, and in a drastic reversal from the Bush administration's stance, the Obama administration announced an unprecedented new policy of publically posting White House visitor records online on an ongoing basis.

CREW's lawsuits were filed after the Secret Service, which is responsible for maintaining the records, repeatedly refused CREW's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for the visitor records. In lawsuits filed during the Bush administration for records of visits by Christian conservative leaders and lobbyist Stephen Payne, the White House argued the logs were presidential records - not agency records subject to FOIA. The U.S. District Court disagreed with the White House and twice found the records were indeed subject to FOIA, and the administration appealed both decisions to the U.S. Circuit Court for the District of Columbia.

Early in the Obama administration, CREW filed lawsuits for White House visitor records of coal and health care industry executives to ascertain their influence on policy. Though the Obama White House initially refused to provide the requested records, it later agreed to release these and the Bush administration records as part of the settlement.

Analysis of the Bush-era White House visitor records shows Christian conservative leaders made a staggering number of visits to the White House to push their divisive partisan agenda. Records show that from April 2001 through June 2006, Focus on the Family president James Dobson made 24 visits to the White House - 10 visits to President Bush himself. Andrea Lafferty, the executive director of the Traditional Families Coalition, made a startling 50 White House visits between February 2001 and March 2008. And lobbyist Stephen Payne, who was caught on tape trading access to Bush administration officials in exchange for donations to President Bush's library foundation, visited the White House 53 times between June 2001 and June 2007.

By releasing the contested visitor records to CREW and creating open access to future records, the Obama administration has lived up to its promise of ushering in a new era of government transparency. By being part of this truly historic decision, CREW continues in its mission to promote an ethical and accountable federal government.

[Learn more](#)

[Read the White House's voluntary disclosure policy](#)

[Read analysis of the Stephen Payne visitor records](#)

[Read analysis of the Christian conservative leader records](#)

[Read *The Washington Post* article](#)

[Read *The New York Times* editorial](#)

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CREW Releases Fifth Annual *Most Corrupt Members of Congress* Report

On September 15th, CREW released its fifth annual [Most Corrupt](#)

CREW'S MOST



[Members of Congress](#) report and launched the report's tandem website, [CREW'sMostCorrupt.org](#). The *Most Corrupt* report gives detailed analysis of the unethical - and sometimes downright illegal - activities of 15 members of Congress.

Senators Roland Burris and John Ensign, as well as Representatives Nathan Deal, Jesse Jackson, Jr. and Pete Visclosky are newcomers to this year's list, joining ten other *Most Corrupt* veterans. At least 13 of the 15 members listed are currently

under investigation by the Congressional ethics committees, the Department of Justice (DOJ), or the Federal Election Commission (FEC).

The 15 most corrupt members of Congress are:

[Rep. Vern Buchanan \(R-FL\)](#) - under FEC investigation

[Sen. Roland Burris \(D-IL\)](#) - under Senate Ethics Committee investigation

[Rep. Ken Calvert \(R-CA\)](#) - under DOJ investigation

[Rep. Nathan Deal \(R-GA\)](#)

[Sen. John Ensign \(R-NV\)](#) - under Senate Ethics Committee investigation

[Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. \(D-IL\)](#) - under DOJ & Office of Congressional Ethics investigations

[Rep. Jerry Lewis \(R-CA\)](#) - under DOJ investigation

[Sen. Mitch McConnell \(R-KY\)](#)

[Rep. Alan Mollohan \(D-WV\)](#) - under DOJ investigation

[Rep. John P. Murtha \(D-PA\)](#) - under DOJ investigation

[Rep. Charles B. Rangel \(D-NY\)](#) - under House Ethics Committee investigation

[Rep. Laura Richardson \(D-CA\)](#) - under House Ethics Committee investigation

[Rep. Pete Visclosky \(D-IN\)](#) - under DOJ investigation

[Rep. Maxine Waters \(D-CA\)](#) - under House Ethics Committee investigation

[Rep. Don Young \(R-AK\)](#) - under DOJ investigation

These members have betrayed the constituents who voted them into public office. Our elected representatives must champion the public's interest - not their own private agendas. CREW's report on the *Most Corrupt Members of Congress* holds these officials responsible for their actions.

[Visit CREW'sMostCorrupt.org](#)

[Read CREW's *Most Corrupt Members of Congress* report](#)

[Read the latest news about CREW's 15 *Most Corrupt* members](#)

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CREW Files DOJ Complaint Against Rep. Mike Ross



On September 23rd, CREW asked the Department of Justice (DOJ) to investigate whether Rep. Mike Ross (D-AR) accepted a bribe and engaged in honest services fraud in 2007 by selling his drugstore in Prescott, Arkansas to a large pharmacy chain for well above the property's value. Rep. Ross is a member of House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Blue Dog Coalition, and accepted this deal just as the debate over health care reform was heating up.

ProPublica outlined the details surrounding the June 2007 sale in a [September 22nd joint article](#) with *Politico*. Rep. Ross and his wife sold their store, Holly's Health Mart, to USA Drug for \$420,000. USA Drug, a prominent national drugstore chain, also paid the Rosses between \$500,000 and \$1 million for the store's assets and between \$100,001 and \$250,000 for signing a non-compete agreement.

Several real estate experts have assessed the value of Holly's Health Mart to be well below the price Rep. Ross and his wife received. In fact, Prescott's county government found the price so inconsistent with commercial property values in the area that it contacted USA Drug to verify the amount. Additionally, the only licensed real estate appraiser in Prescott put the price into perspective, telling *ProPublica*, "You

can buy the half the town for \$420,000."

USA Drug has a vested interest in slowing health care reform and has aggressively lobbied congress. The company's founder, Stephen LaFrance, told the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* that blocking government "interference" in health care would mean "nothing but good days ahead" for the pharmaceutical industry.

If Rep. Ross' deal sounds familiar, here's why: in 2003, former Rep. Randy 'Duke' Cunningham sold his house to a defense contractor for a high value in return for legislative assistance. Rep. Cunningham's house sale resulted in his conviction on criminal charges.

Rep. Ross' drugstore sale should certainly be investigated.

[Learn more](#)

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

[Read the *ProPublica/Politico* article that broke the story](#)

[Read the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* article](#)

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CREW Files Bar Complaint Against Sen. David Vitter



On September 29th, CREW filed a bar complaint with the Louisiana Office of Disciplinary Counsel against Sen. David Vitter (R-LA), for violating Louisiana's rules of conduct for professional lawyers by repeatedly soliciting prostitution. CREW's complaint came days after Sen. Vitter announced he was seeking an investigation into community organizing group ACORN for assisting a fake prostitution ring.

In 2007, Sen. Vitter admitted to soliciting prostitution after it was revealed the senator's phone number was included in the "D.C. Madam," Deborah Jeane Palfrey's, list of clients. Later, two other women came forward alleging the

senator visited a New Orleans brothel and regularly solicited prostitution during the 1990s. CREW filed an ethics complaint against Sen. Vitter in July 2007, though the Senate Ethics Committee dismissed the matter without taking action in September 2008.

Sen. Vitter's recent rants calling for a criminal investigation into ACORN's involvement in providing advice to two people posing as prostitutes highlight the senator's blatant hypocrisy. Soliciting prostitution is a crime in DC and Louisiana - and he has yet to be held accountable for his actions

[Learn more](#)

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

[Watch CREW Executive Director Melanie Sloan on *The Rachel Maddow Show*](#)

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

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CREW Files Amicus Brief in Black v. United States

On September 17th, CREW filed a friend-of-the-court, or amicus brief in support of the government in Black v. United States. The plaintiffs in the case, executives of a private company, were convicted of honest services and mail fraud for allegedly looting the company for their own benefit.

Congress enacted the honest services fraud statute to criminalize government corruption under the mail fraud statute by punishing those who use the mail to execute a scheme to deprive another of the right of honest services. Fearing the Supreme Court might reach out to declare the honest services fraud statute unconstitutional, CREW argued that prosecution of public officials under the honest services fraud statute does not require proof that officials threatened or caused tangible harm to the public.

The honest services fraud statute is an invaluable prosecutorial tool and if invalidated will make it very difficult to prosecute public corruption.

[Read CREW's amicus brief](#)

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CREW Files Amicus Brief in Federal Election Campaign Act Case

On September 21, 2009, CREW filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit supporting the Justice Department's interpretation of the provision of the Federal Election Campaign Act that makes it a crime for an individual to evade the Act's contribution limits by utilizing conduits or straw donors.

The Justice Department had prosecuted prominent California trial attorney Pierce O'Donnell for violating the Act's prohibition on conduit contributions by reimbursing 13 employees of his law firm for making a total of \$26,000 in contributions to the presidential campaign of former Senator John Edwards (D-NC). A federal court in California had dismissed the indictment on the grounds that the Act only prohibited "making a contribution and providing a false name, not asking others to make contributions in their names and reimbursing them for it." This interpretation of the Act is counter to nearly 40 years of precedent and, if allowed to stand, would have a disastrous impact on the ability of the Justice Department and the Federal Election Commission to enforce federal campaign finance laws.

In October 2007, on the basis of a complaint filed by CREW, the FEC imposed the second largest fine in its history - \$1 million - against MZM, Inc. and its former CEO, Mitchell Wade, for making conduit contributions. CREW also has an FEC complaint pending against Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL) for reimbursing employees of his car dealerships for contributions to his 2006 congressional campaign. If the O'Donnell decision stands, people like Wade and Buchanan will get away with violating campaign contribution limits.

[Learn more about CREW's FEC complaint against MZM, Inc. and Mitchell Wade](#)

[Learn more about CREW's FEC complaint against Rep. Vern Buchanan](#)

[Read *The National Law Journal* article](#)

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