

CREW Cuts

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Spotlight



Melanie Sloan and VoteVets' Jon Soltz Discuss CREW's Complaint against Sean Hannity's Freedom Concerts and the Freedom Alliance on MSNBC

On March 29th, CREW's executive director Melanie Sloan and VoteVets.org chair Jon Soltz appeared on MSNBC's The Ed Show to discuss CREW's IRS and FTC complaints against Sean Hannity, his Freedom Concerts, and the Freedom Alliance. [Click here to watch the segment.](#)

[Learn more about CREW's actions against Sean Hannity](#)

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CREW Files Complaints Against Sean Hannity's Freedom Concerts and the Freedom Alliance



On March 29th, CREW filed complaints with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), calling out the deceptive and illegal practices of Sean Hannity, his Freedom Concerts, the Freedom Alliance and Lt. Col. Oliver North.

Mr. Hannity and Lt. Col. North have falsely claimed that 100 percent of Freedom



Concerts' proceeds are donated to the Freedom Alliance's scholarship fund for the children of killed and wounded veterans. In reality, the concert proceeds are collected by Premiere Marketing - Freedom Concerts' organizer and promoter. Premiere, which happens to be run by the same person who organizes Mr. Hannity's and Lt. Col. North's paid speaking events, then gives an unknown portion of the ticket proceeds to the scholarship fund.

CREW has also found that the Freedom Alliance is violating its tax status as a charitable organization by engaging in political activities. The Alliance regularly links to Lt. Col North's political columns, rents out its mailing list to a Republican-linked communications firm, and organizes a yearly "Freedom Cruise" with Republican Party figureheads like former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and RNC

Chairman Michael Steele.

The IRS and FTC must immediately investigate these groups to determine where the money meant for the children of America's veterans is really going and if the charitable organization providing those scholarships is operating in accordance with the law.

[Learn more](#)

Read CREW's complaints [to the IRS](#) and [the FTC](#)

[Read the Salon.com story](#)

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CREW Files DOJ Complaint Against Former Rep. Nathan Deal



On March 30th, on the heels of a scathing Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) report, CREW filed a Justice Department (DOJ) complaint against former Rep. Nathan Deal (R-GA), requesting a criminal investigation into whether he deliberately lied on his personal financial disclosure forms.

The OCE report, stemming from CREW's August 2009 complaint, found Mr. Deal violated House ethics rules by using congressional resources to pressure state officials into maintaining a lucrative contract with his state-based auto-salvage business, Gainesville Salvage and Disposal (GSD). The report also found Mr. Deal had listed \$75,000 he received from his business in 2008 as "dividends and partnership income" on his financial disclosure forms while his tax returns show that amount as "wages." In addition, Mr. Deal failed to indicate he was a GSD corporate officer.

Under House rules, in 2008 members of Congress could not earn over \$28,830 in outside income, and rules both then and now bar members from earning any money from corporations in which they serve as officers. If Mr.

Deal knowingly provided incorrect information on his personal financial disclosure form - shielding the \$75,000 in wages and his corporate title from House eyes - he committed a felony punishable by up to five years in jail.

Mr. Deal has resigned from the House - now conveniently out of the House Ethics Committee's ambit - to concentrate full-time on his run for Georgia governor. DOJ still has jurisdiction, however, and should open a criminal investigation into Mr. Deal's misconduct.

[Learn more](#)

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

[Read the Office of Congressional Ethics report](#)

[Learn more about CREW's August 2009 complaint](#)

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

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CREW Calls on DOJ Inspector General to Investigate Systemic Training and Supervision Issues



On March 2nd, CREW asked the inspector general of the Justice Department (DOJ) to investigate what appears to be inadequate training and supervision of attorneys in the Department's Criminal Division. CREW sent its letter to DOJ Inspector General Glenn Fine after mistakes by Criminal Division prosecutors led to the dismissal of a case against four Blackwater security guards who were indicted in a massacre that left 14 Iraqis dead and 20 others wounded.

The judge in that case was forced to dismiss all charges against the four Blackwater employees after it was revealed that Criminal Division lawyers illegally relied on compelled statements - and even used immunized testimony to obtain a search warrant to find drafts of those

statements.

The Criminal Division also botched the high-profile corruption case against former Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK). In that case, government lawyers failed to provide the defense with notes of an interview with a key witness. Although a jury had already found the embattled former senator guilty of corruption, Attorney General Eric Holder was forced to ask the court to dismiss all charges.

It is outrageous to think that such important corruption cases have been dropped because of errors and misjudgments on the part of government-supervised lawyers. The DOJ's inspector general should open an investigation to learn what is causing these systemic failures and then craft reforms to ensure they are never repeated.

[Learn more](#)

[Read CREW's letter to Inspector General Glenn Fine](#)

[Read *The Huffington Post* story](#)

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CREW Report Analyzes Obama Administration's Response to FOIAs



On March 16th, CREW released a report on the Obama administration's response to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. CREW's impression is mixed - the White House has championed transparency and accountability and has started to change the Bush administration's culture of secrecy to one in favor of disclosure.

But problems remain. Examples of unnecessary agency secrecy are still numerous, from the Justice Department's reluctance to hand over FBI notes from former Vice President Dick Cheney's interview in the Plame Wilson leak case, to the Department of Health and Human Services' refusal to disclose documents on H1N1 flu vaccine distribution at a time when Wall Street firms were getting doses before those most at risk.

Though there is a clear and pressing need for disclosure in these and other cases, CREW's FOIA efforts have been met with bureaucratic stonewalling. The Obama administration has made great strides in promoting government

transparency, and it is important to recognize these accomplishments. But CREW's practical experience shows that there is still a long way to go.

[Learn more](#)

[Read CREW's analysis](#)

[Read *The Hill* story](#)

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CREW Celebrates Sunshine Week, Accepts Transparency Award from American Library Association



March 14th marked the beginning of [Sunshine Week](#), "a national initiative to open a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information." To recognize CREW's impact on government transparency, the American Library Association bestowed its annual James Madison Award to CREW and Meredith Fuchs of the National Security Archive for their joint work on the [missing White House emails case](#).

CREW is greatly proud of the work done by its staff in striving for a more open and honest government. To celebrate, CREW indulged in some red velvet cake adorned with a tasty tribute to our favorite section of the U.S. Code - the Freedom of Information Act.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the James Madison Award.

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