

CREW Cuts

The Monthly Newsletter of CREW

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Spotlight



CREW's Melanie Sloan Named One of the Most Influential Women Lawyers in Washington

On June 28th, *The National Law Journal* honored Melanie Sloan and 32 other women as lawyers who have "taken a sledgehammer to the glass ceiling" in asserting themselves among Washington's power-players. *Journal* writer Carrie Levine profiled Melanie's accomplishments over seven years of serving as executive director of CREW.

[Click here to read Melanie's profile.](#)

[Click here to read the full list on NLJ.com \(subscription required\).](#)

[Help Melanie and CREW hold corrupt public officials' feet to the fire by donating to CREW today.](#) Together, we can make sure our leaders champion the public's interest over private gain.



CREW Calls for Investigations into Mysterious South Carolina Primary Results



On June 15th, CREW filed a Federal Election Commission (FEC) complaint against four candidates in the June 8, 2010 Democratic primary in South Carolina. CREW alleges that the candidates -



Gregory Brown, Ben Frasier, Brian Doyle and the now-infamous Alvin Greene - violated federal campaign finance law by failing to file mandatory disclosure reports prior to the election.

CREW also called on South Carolina Attorney General Henry McMaster to investigate whether Alvin Greene was induced to run for the Senate seat - a crime in South Carolina. Despite being unemployed and living with his father, Mr. Greene was somehow able to pay the \$10,440 filing fee to run for Senate. Yet in 2009, Mr.

Greene was charged with obscenity and assigned a public defender based on his indigent circumstances. If Mr. could not afford a lawyer, where did he get the \$10,000 to pay his filing fee just four months later? Why would Mr. Greene spend so much money to run for Senate, but then never campaign for the seat?

A review of Mr. Greene's bank records would reveal whether he was illegally paid to run for Senate. Attorney General McMaster declined to investigate, but South Carolina's Law Enforcement Division [announced this week](#) that it has opened an investigation. CREW looks forward to learning the results.

[Learn more](#)

Read CREW's complaints to [the FEC](#) and [the Attorney General of South Carolina](#)

[Read the Associated Press story](#)

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CREW Tip Results in Resignation of Embattled Vitter Aide



On June 23rd, ABC News ran a story based on a CREW-tip that resulted in the resignation of a longtime aide to Sen. David Vitter (R-LA). CREW learned months ago that the aide, Brent Furer, was kept on Sen. Vitter's staff despite having a long history of criminal behavior - including a 2008 conviction for a disturbing domestic violence incident. Mr. Furer, who oversaw women's issues on the senator's staff, was accused of assaulting his girlfriend with a knife and holding her against her will for an hour and a half.

In a transparent attempt to save himself with women voters before his reelection in November, Sen. Vitter accepted Mr. Furer's resignation hours after the story broke on ABCNews.com. This dangerous individual was kept on Sen. Vitter's staff through his 2008 assault case and a 2003 drunken driving arrest, but once his transgressions were made public - he was quickly and conveniently removed.

What was Mr. Furer doing for scandal-prone Sen. Vitter that justified his employment in light of the domestic violence offense? How did Mr. Furer land an expensive white collar criminal defense lawyer to represent him in the case? Only a continued investigation will tell for sure, but CREW believes this story is far from over.

[Read](#) and [watch](#) the ABC News story

[Read CREW's statement on Mr. Furer's resignation](#)

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CREW Responds to Supreme Court's Dangerous Honest Services Fraud Ruling



On June 24th, the Supreme Court ruled to limit the scope of the "honest services fraud" statute that is frequently used in public corruption trials. CREW has long argued that the law is essential to ensuring government officials provide the public with the intangible right of "honest services," and



[filed an amicus brief](#) on behalf of the United States arguing the point in one of the three cases before the high court.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court found the honest services fraud statute unconstitutionally vague and ruled 6-3 to invalidate its use except in cases involving bribery and kickbacks. In anticipation of the ruling, CREW has suggested a federal law that bars executive branch employees from financial conflicts of interest should be extended to apply to members of Congress as well as state and local officials. CREW expects this measure may be introduced in Congress shortly.

The honest services fraud statute has been used in numerous high-profile corruption cases - from disgraced former lobbyist Jack Abramoff and his cronies, to former-Reps. Duke Cunningham and William Jefferson, and New York State Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno. It was a critical prosecutorial tool in fighting public corruption. Americans have a right to expect corrupt officials will be brought to justice and Congress must act quickly to replace this crucial law.

[Learn more](#)

Read the Supreme Court's decisions in the [Black](#), [Skilling](#) and [Weyhrauch](#) cases

[Learn more about CREW's amicus brief in *Black v. United States*](#)

[Read the Associated Press story](#)

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CREW Asks for Investigation into FDA Panel's Conflicts of Interest



On June 7th, CREW sent a letter to the Inspector General (IG) of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) calling for an investigation into conflicts of interest in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC). Two of the committee's members, Drs. Neal Benowitz and Jack Henningfield, have financial ties to pharmaceutical companies that manufacture smoking cessation products.

Financial conflicts of interest go both ways. TPSAC members are explicitly barred from having ties to cigarette companies. It only makes sense for them to be barred from having ties to smoking cessation companies as well. The FDA has a history of conflicts of interest on their advisory panels, with one 2006 case ensnaring the FDA's chairman and leading to his conviction of a crime.

The FDA has tried to implement transparency and public disclosure policies to prevent such conflicts, but it is clear these efforts are not enough. The American public must be assured that any TPSAC recommendations are aimed at curbing smoking, not increasing drug companies' profits.

[Learn more](#)

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

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

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CREW Calls for Congressional Investigation into White House Violations of Federal Records Laws

On June 28th, CREW sent a letter to the House Oversight Committee



calling for an investigation into allegations White House staff have violated the Federal and Presidential Records Acts when communicating with lobbyists. A June 25th [New York Times article](#) revealed lobbyists and staffers are routinely conducting official business through personal email accounts in violation of federal records laws. What's more, staffers are meeting with lobbyists in a coffee shop located near the White House to avoid having records of those meetings created on White House visitor logs.

CREW sued both the Bush and Obama administrations over access to the visitor logs and settled its lawsuit only when the Obama White House agreed to put White House visitor records online. CREW also sued the White House over its failure to properly preserve staff emails and the Obama administration had ensured CREW that all such records are vigilantly maintained. The Obama administration claims to be running the most open government in history - but this explosive exposé claims otherwise. President Obama's continual demonization of lobbyists is apparently causing his own staff members to try to hide their interactions with lobbyists, resulting in less - not more - transparency. The House Oversight Committee must immediately investigate this situation.

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