

DID TROY EID ALSO BYPASS THE VETTING PROCESS?

My first thought, after reading Carol Leonnig's article on how DOJ is letting select candidates bypass normal screening processes, was of Troy Eid, Colorado's USA. After all, Troy Eid wrote a letter trying to persuade Gale Norton to make judgments in favor of an Abramoff client, the Mashpee tribe, yet he didn't register as a lobbyist for the tribe. And as for the one Greenberg Traurig client he did register for as a lobbyist, just about every other team member from GT was found to have been involved in improper dealings. Here's a guy just one step removed from the stench of Jack Abramoff, winning nomination to serve as the US Attorney for Colorado. Did he go through the proper vetting process?

And in fact, there were inklings during his nomination process that there was a problem uncovered in his vetting process. Back in 2005, the first time his nomination was considered, there were rumors his nomination had hit a snag during the vetting process—specifically on the issue of improper lobbying.

But now the mandatory background check on Eid has hit a few snags, with the FBI asking around about some questionable lobbying decisions he may have been a part of. Eid left his job as Governor Owens's counsel to become a shareholder at the national law firm of Greenberg Traurig, for which he was an aggressive rainmaker. In recent days and weeks, former partners of the firm's Denver office, clients, rivals, and state agency employees have all been questioned about Eid, and now word is that the FBI may even be contemplating the rare move of asking Governor Owens for an interview regarding Eid's lobbying activities.

One of the questions they might ask: Was Eid making lobbying deals at the same time he was drawing a state paycheck?

Like I said, that was back in 2005, when the Abramoff scandal was still fresh in people's minds. Eid stepped down from consideration, saying the process was taking too much time. All the while, Eid kept telling the same fable about his association with Abramoff. On at least one level, the fable was incorrect—the suggestion that Eid started (in November 2003) at the same time as Abramoff was ousted (in May 2004). As for his assertion that he never worked with Abramoff, in any capacity, perhaps he discounts working closely with very close associates of Abramoff. Or perhaps his memory of Abramoff contacts is just as faulty as the White House's. In any case, we don't know that his elusive Abramoff ties have anything to do with rumors delays in his approval in 2005, but I'd sure hope something like that would raise concerns during vetting.

But then, in 2006, Eid resubmitted his nomination and—voila—they apparently started the vetting process over again.

The Denver Post has learned that the FBI is conducting extensive background checks on Eid as a necessary precursor to sending his name to the Senate for confirmation. Sources close to the process said Eid is the only candidate.

I'll note that this second vetting process occurred not long after the PATRIOT Act provision allowing AG appointments went into effect, signaling the time when DOJ really stepped up the politicization of the department. This second time around, Eid's nomination apparently hit no snags; his name was submitted on July 9.

I don't know if they managed some super-Abramoff exception to normal vetting rules. But it might

explain why we didn't hear about Eid's letter to Norton during his approval process.