

MITCH MCCONNELL, HANS VON SPAKOVSKY, MITT'S RE-EMERGENCE, AND MCCAIN'S FEC MONEY WOES

The LAT reports that Mitt's thinking of un-suspending his campaign.

Josh Romney, one of former Gov. **Mitt Romney's** five sons, says it's "possible" his father may rejoin the race for the White House, either as a vice presidential candidate or seek to become the Republican Party's standard bearer if the campaign of Sen. **John McCain** falters.

The 60-year-old Romney, who "suspended" his campaign for the GOP nomination after a disappointing showing on Super Tuesday and a week later endorsed McCain, was taking a break from politics this weekend on a skiing vacation in Utah with his wife **Ann**, according to his 32-year-old son.

The elder Romney, who was unable to assemble sufficient conservative support to thwart McCain, has made no public comment since the McCain camp was rocked...

by a controversial article in the New York Times last week first revealed in December in a posting on the Drudge Report.

[snip]

Because he suspended rather than terminated his campaign, Romney still retains control of the nearly 300 delegates he's already won. Another former governor, **Mike Huckabee**, remains

in the race and is nearing Romney's delegate totals, though few give him a realistic chance of catching McCain with more than 900 delegates.

Now, I doubt Mitt would be considering un-suspending his campaign without talking to the GOP bigwigs first. So this trial balloon suggests that GOP bigwigs may well be worried about McCain's two pressing problems: the Straight Talk for Lobbyists Express seems to be getting traction in the news, and the FEC says McCain is officially taking matching funds, which means he has reached the limit he can spend between now and the GOP Convention in September.

Personally, I think they're probably more worried about the FEC problem. They probably just can't understand that having a presidency run by lobbyists might be a problem for the average voter. And if McCain can't spend between now and September, he will lose.

But here's the curious bit. At least according to the FEC, they will consider McCain to be receiving matching funds (and therefore to be forced to stop spending) until such a time as they have a quorum so they can consider his request to withdraw from matching funds.

So the McCain campaign sent the Federal Election Commission a [letter \(pdf\)](#) earlier this month saying that he was opting out. But there's a problem. And FEC Chairman David Mason, a Republican, made it plain in [his letter \(pdf\)](#) yesterday: McCain can't *tell* the FEC that he's out of the system. He can only *ask*.

And the FEC, which normally has six commissioners, can't give him an answer until it has a quorum of four commissioners. It currently only has two. That's because the Senate has been deadlocked over four nominees; Democrats

insist on a separate confirmation vote for vote-suppression guru Hans von Spakovsky, and Republicans insist on a single vote for all nominees.

This puts the Dems in a strong position—by denying the FEC a quorum, they can deny McCain the ability to get out of matching funds. They don't have to do anything except continue to refuse to consider all four nominated commissioners a hearing together; so long as they continue to insist that von Spakovsky receive his own hearing, things won't move forward.

Unless Mitch McConnell budes on his insistence that all the commissioners receive a hearing together.

But here 's the thing. Mitch McConnell (whom I'd include among those GOP bigwigs whose support Mitt would get before threatening to un-suspend his campaign) hates John McCain. Absolutely hates him.

In fact, I'd say that McConnell is one of the most likely sources for the Iseman story in the first place. After all, the first piece of evidence to counter McCain's denials was McCain's deposition in McConnell's suit against the McCain-Feingold campaign finance law (BCRA is one of the reasons McConnell hates McCain so much). The deposition was given to McConnell's attorney in that suit, Floyd Abrams. While the deposition is publicly available, it is likely that someone pointed Isikoff to it. If so, I'm guessing that someone is rather closer to McConnell than he is to McCain.

In other words, the Iseman smear may have been intended to break (with the nudging of Drudge) back in December, so McCain would lose the nomination to the party bigwigs' presumptive favorite, Mitt Romney. The same guy threatening to get back in.

Suffice it to say I look forward to seeing whether McConnell helps McCain out of his little

FEC problem by withdrawing his demands concerning von Spakovsky. Or whether he forces McCain to choose between breaking the law he passed—or dropping his bid for the Presidency.