

GEORGE WILL SUMS UP MCCAIN'S "UNATTRACTIVE RIGHTEOUSNESS"

George Will, voicing the position of those (like Mitch McConnell) who don't like getting attacked for doing things their attacker has done, captures the state of McCain's hypocrisy regarding lobbyists and campaign finance.

First, the Times muddied, with unsubstantiated sexual innuendo about a female lobbyist, a story about McCain's flights on jets owned by corporations with business before the Senate Commerce Committee, and his meeting with a broadcaster (McCain at first denied it happened; the broadcaster insists it did, and McCain now agrees) who sought and received McCain's help in pressuring the Federal Communications Commission. Perhaps McCain did nothing corrupt, but he promiscuously accuses others of corruption, or the "appearance" thereof. And he insists that the appearance of corruption justifies laws criminalizing political behavior – e.g., broadcasting an electioneering communication that "refers to" a federal candidate during the McCain-Feingold blackout period close to an election.

[snip]

Although his campaign is run by lobbyists; and although his dealings with lobbyists have generated what he, when judging the behavior of others, calls corrupt appearances; and although he has profited from his manipulation of the taxpayer-funding system that is celebrated by reformers – still, he probably is innocent of insincerity.

Such is his towering moral vanity, he seems sincerely to consider it theoretically impossible for him to commit the offenses of appearances that he incessantly ascribes to others.

Such certitude is, however, not merely an unattractive trait. It is disturbing righteousness in someone grasping for presidential powers.

Will adds a little detail to the dynamics of the Von Spakovsky nomination I laid out the other day. The guy who originally mobilized opposition to Von Spakovsky, Trevor Potter, is the same guy McCain will rely on to argue that—in spite of receiving benefits from his decision to accept matching funds—McCain should not be held to the requirements imposed by that decision.

Von Spakovsky is as skeptical as [former FEC Chair Bradley] Smith is about the entanglement of politics in regulations for which McCain is primarily responsible. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, refusing to surrender the settled principle that each party chooses its FEC members, insists that all four be voted on as a package.

McCain, although rarely reticent about matters concerning campaign regulations, has said nothing in defense of von Spakovsky, the campaign against whom has been led by the Campaign Legal Center, whose president is Trevor Potter, general counsel of the McCain campaign.

That is, Potter will argue that McCain should be able to back out of matching funds, if he ever gets the chance to argue it, which currently relies on the resolution of Von Spakovsky's nomination.

I do wonder what motivated Will to write this column right now. Was he nudged by those still angry about McCain's early campaign finance

reforms?