

MCCAIN ANNOUNCES HE WILL FOLLOW CHRISTOPHER WARD'S FINANCE METHODS

Remember Christopher Ward? The guy who set up a bunch of interlocking campaign funds at the NRCC, all the while inventing audits that made it look like it was kosher, but whom the FBI is very busy investigating for fraud? Well, key to the interlocking campaign accounts were his Victory Funds. I still owe you all a series of posts describing how the money worked. But for a short summary of how I think they work, you can read this Politico story describing how McCain plans to finance his campaign.

Indeed, to help counter their money deficit, McCain strategists now suggest that the proper comparison should be between the combined assets of the campaign and the RNC and that of their opponent and the far less flush DNC.

“The McCain camp is funded jointly” is how one adviser describes it.

By taking federal funds – something they intend to do, campaign manager Rick Davis told a closed-door meeting of chiefs of staff on Capitol Hill last week – McCain will receive \$84 million.

That money, McCain aides say, will be bolstered by the \$20 million in coordinated funds that they can legally direct the RNC to spend on anything they want.

Further, they’ll rely on the committee-campaign joint Victory Fund run out of the RNC, which allows contributions of up to \$28,500 per person – far more than the \$2,300 donors can give to individual candidates.

The Victory dollars will go into the states and be used to hire staffers, who in some cases will serve as the de facto McCain aides.

Other elements of the campaign, such as those tasked with developing coalitions and lining up surrogates, will also be placed at the RNC to save on overhead.

"Those functions that can legally be done at either [the campaign or RNC], we'll err on the side of doing them at the RNC," Black says. "The whole thing is under one umbrella in the way we are budgeting." [my emphasis]

This is not to say McCain is breaking the law (aside from the campaign finance limits which he has already broken, that is). But it does say McCain is choosing a finance method that the Republican Party has already shown it cannot manage properly without someone committing fraud and—potentially—sifting money off the top for other expenditures.

You remember John McCain, surely. He's Mr. Campaign Finance. The guy who insists (correctly) that big money donations taint us all. But now, with his lobbyist led campaign, he just invented a way for them to give ten times as much to him and his lobbyist lackeys. I'm sure McCain will find it very useful to use those \$28,500 donations to pay his "staffers," most of whom are lobbyists.