

RICK DAVIS AND AT&T SHACKING UP

Boy, I thought it'd be hard to imagine an administration cozier with AT&T than George Bush's—particularly since Bush replaced both Karl Rove and Dan Bartlett with AT&T lobbyist Ed Gillespie. But apparently, Rick Davis' lobbying firm has been shacking up with AT&T:

So just *how* close are the ties between the McCain camp and AT&T? Well, AT&T shares a luxury skybox with Davis, Manafort Inc. at Nationals Stadium, which opened earlier this year and is home to the city's baseball team. I say it "appears" because two sources, including one person who has been in the skybox, told me about the AT&T/Davis, Manafort luxury suite, but none of the relevant parties will comment on the matter. AT&T's Washington lobbying office has not returned phone calls about the suite, nor has Davis, Manafort. Repeated attempts to seek comment from the McCain campaign have also been unsuccessful. Chartese Burnett, a spokeswoman for the Nationals, said the team does not disclose the holders of the luxury suites because of "privacy concerns." But she did tell me that there are 66 suites at the stadium, which rent for between \$160,000 and \$400,000 per year.

There'd be nothing illegal about a shared arrangement. It would simply reflect the seamless web that exists between McCain and the lobbyists and special interests groups that he likes to criticize while out on the trail campaigning as a "maverick" and "change agent." I just hope they get better iPhone service than I do.

Now, for the record, Rick Davis thinks it's "chasing ghosts" to go after the McCain team's intimacy with big lobbyists.

WALLACE: Well, as a matter of personal privilege, I'm going to give you the opportunity to respond to David Axelrod, who said, you know, for all this talk about wait till we come in and shake the lobbyists, but the campaign team of McCain is filled with lobbyists or, in your case, former lobbyists. How do you respond?

DAVIS: Oh, I think that, you know, it's just more of the same from David Axelrod. I mean, they've been running against ghosts of the past all along. And I think it just shows that they don't really have anything to talk about.

If they want to run against Rick Davis or our campaign staff, let them. I think it's hilarious. I think it's a wonderful distraction from the real issues that we're trying to debate.

It's a classic example of a campaign that doesn't have anything else to say, so they pick on staff.

But then, Davis couldn't and didn't actually refute Axelrod's point: that the McCain campaign is infested with lobbyists. Also, I suspect Davis isn't going to get as much mileage complaining that Obama is "picking on" staff as he has from complaining that Obama or the press are "picking on" poor Sarah Palin.

I'm mostly just curious how they "share" this box. Do they use it together, with Davis' lobbyists entertaining clients on AT&T's dime? Do they have a social secretary dedicated to ironing out timing conflicts? And have any of McCain's big donors discovered an open door to this box?