

# WHAT REPUBLICANS REALLY MEAN WHEN THEY SAY DRILL! BABY! DRILL!

They mean sex, corruption, and political scandal.

I [first covered](#) the scandal that is breaking big today at about the same time as Governor Palin took the oath of office in Alaska.

This appears to have been the scam: Some time ago, the Interior Department introduced a "royalties in kind" program, which allowed oil companies to pay for the privilege of drilling for oil on our land in kind—in oil and gas—rather than in cold hard cash. The gimmick is that it was supposed to facilitate accounting. Up until recently (don't worry—I'm going to figure out these dates), the oil went into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).<sup>\*</sup> But the SPR apparently is all filled up now, so recently the US government started contracting with companies to sell the oil on the "open market." But, as these things are bound to happen in the BushCo world, we didn't take open bids for the contracts to sell the oil. We apparently just gave companies with ties to a bunch of Interior Department employees in Denver the contracts, which of course meant we got less money than we otherwise would have.

I even predicted,

How appropriate—this Administration will begin with an [oil scandal](#). And it looks like it will end with one, too.

That looks to be prescient, as the Department of Interior Inspectors General's Report describing the scandal has thrown a [whole lot of sex and drugs and improper gifts](#) into the mix.

Government officials handling billions of dollars in oil royalties engaged in illicit sex with employees of energy companies they were dealing with and received numerous gifts from them, federal investigators said Wednesday.

The alleged transgressions involve 13 Interior Department employees in Denver and Washington. Their alleged improprieties include rigging contracts, working part-time as private oil consultants, and having sexual relationships with – and accepting golf and ski trips and dinners from – oil company employees, according to three reports released Wednesday by the Interior Department's inspector general.

The investigations reveal a "culture of substance abuse and promiscuity" by a small group of individuals "wholly lacking in acceptance of or adherence to government ethical standards," wrote Inspector General Earl E. Devaney.

The reports describe a fraternity house atmosphere inside the Denver Minerals Management Service office responsible for marketing the oil and gas that energy companies barter to the government instead of making cash royalty payments for drilling on federal lands. The government received \$4.3 billion in such Royalty-in-Kind payments last year. The oil is then resold to energy companies or put in the nation's emergency stockpile.

Between 2002 and 2006, nearly a third of the 55-person staff in the Denver office received gifts and gratuities from oil and gas companies, the investigators

found.

And don't forget—those "improper gifts" even included a [scam on a house](#) for Sue Ellen Wooldridge and Stephen Griles. Sounds like ... Ted Stevens, doesn't it? Or, for that matter, Duke Cunningham, but that wasn't oil and sex and drugs, just defense contracts and sex and drugs.

See, this is why those Republicans get so worked up when they scream for drilling. It's not a solution to an energy crisis for them. It's a shortcut to a gravy train that might just get them laid.

Update: the reports (there are three of them) are [here](#).