

MCCAIN'S LAWYER SHELL GAME

In today's conference call, John McCain was represented by John Dowd, of Akin Gump.

You might remember Dowd. He was the guy who made sure Monica Goodling got immunity before she confessed to the way she had politicized DOJ.

But more interestingly John Dowd helped Cindy McCain avoid all legal consequences for stealing drugs from her own medical charity (in the process, Dowd attacked the whistleblower who came forward to expose Cindy's law-breaking).

How curious, don't you think, that John Dowd after all these years has returned to defend McCain? (Greg Sargent notes that last year, John Dowd was mourning the John McCain he used to know.)

It's particularly curious given that McCain had already retained a lawyer back in December to fight charges that he abused power: Skadden Arps partner Bob Bennett. Back then, Bennett was arguing that the stories showing McCain had intervened for Vicki Iseman's clients improperly were part of a smear job.

A spirited defense of McCain was already being mounted on television Thursday by Robert Bennett, who has, according to the Drudge Report, been on this case for McCain since December 2007, when the high-profile lawyer (and Democrat brother to Republican Bill) was brought on to pressure the *Times* to kill the story:

Just weeks away from a possible surprise victory in the primaries, Republican presidential candidate Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz has been waging a ferocious behind the scenes battle with the NEW YORK TIMES,

the DRUDGE REPORT has learned, and has hired DC power lawyer Bob Bennett to mount a bold defense against charges of giving special treatment to a lobbyist!

McCain has personally pleaded with NY TIMES editor Bill Keller not to publish the high-impact report involving key telecom legislation before the Senate Commerce Committee, newsroom insiders tell the DRUDGE REPORT.

Bennett still insisted overnight that the story was nothing more than a "smear campaign,"

Bennett was using precisely the same language Dowd is using today—calling the exposure of McCain's favors for Iseman a "smear campaign."

Now that's where we come full circle.

It was Bob Bennett, of course, who recommended the Senate Ethics Committee investigation drop McCain (and John Glenn). But in the final report, he stated that McCain had exercised "bad judgment" for meeting with Senate regulators about Keating's interests.

So what's it say about McCain, that he had to ditch the **last** lawyer who was screaming "smear campaign" about his participating in influence peddling because he was precisely the lawyer that conducted what his new/old lawyer now screams was a "smear campaign," and because he was the attorney that certified that McCain had, in fact, exercised bad judgment the last time he was significantly engaged in influence peddling. Even his "smear campaign" criers come with built-in conflicts of interest!

What's it say about the guy that he's had to create a small sub-specialty for DC's top lawyers to cry "smear campaign" in efforts to

dismiss his repeated participation in DC's influence peddling racket?

Update: the Obama campaign just sent out a reminder of two of the things Bennett said while he was presiding over the Senate inquiry:

Bennett: McCain Had Closest Relationship to Keating. During his opening statement of the hearings, Bennett said, "Of the five senators here before you, Senator McCain had the closest personal friendship with Charles Keating. Their friendship pre-dated Senator McCain's political career. Senator McCain also was the only one who received personal as well political benefits from Charles Keating." [Senate Ethics Committee, 11/15/90]

Bennett: McCain's Vacations with Keating Were "Troubling Evidence." During the opening statement, Bennett also said, "When John McCain was a member of the House, he and his family vacationed with the Keatings at the Keating home in Cat Cay, the Bahamas... This was troubling evidence to counsel, and we investigated." [Senate Ethics Committee, 11/15/90]