



## July 10, 2008 - Bonusgate: The First Shoe Drops

The news was stunning as Attorney General **Tom Corbett** today announced the first criminal charges resulting from a 17-month investigation of all four caucuses of the state legislature. Allegations include various forms of theft, criminal conspiracy and conflicts of interest.

While today's charges targeted only House Democrats, Corbett said investigations into the other three caucuses are "ongoing." [Click here](#) for the official announcement.

The probe began by looking into whether legislative leaders in the House and Senate illegally used \$3.6 million in tax dollars to reward legislative staffers who also worked on election campaigns. It soon expanded to reveal a *"theft of taxpayer funds and resources"* that Corbett said had a *"scope and magnitude hard to describe."* The probe tracked the alleged use of tax funds for political campaigns back to 2004. Former House Democratic staffer **Eric Webb**, testifying under a grant of immunity, provided detailed accounts of activity that, if proven, resulted in the use of tens of millions of dollars in taxpayer funds to subsidize campaign activity. Among the alleged activities are using tax-paid phones, offices, and equipment for:

- fund raising for Democratic candidates and campaigns
- opposition research to find negative information about Republican opponents
- sending email blasts to supporters, routed through a server in Michigan to conceal that the emails were coming from tax-paid offices
- circulating nominating petitions of Democratic candidates
- challenging the nominating petitions of opponents, including 2004 presidential candidate **Ralph Nader**. 50 House Democratic staffers are alleged to have participated in this effort.
- on-the-ground campaigning in legislative districts

In 2006, Corbett said, a total of 458 House Democratic staffers were listed in a database of campaign workers.

Those charged are:

**Mike Veon**, D-Beaver, former House Democratic Whip

Rep. **Sean Ramaley**, D-Beaver

Attorney **Jeff Foreman**, chief counsel to current House Democratic Whip **Keith McCall**, D-Carbon

**Rachel Manzo**, executive director of the House Democratic Policy Committee

**Jennifer Brubaker**, executive director of the Legislative Research Office for the House Democrats

**Patrick Lavelle**, research analyst for the House Democratic Caucus

**Michael Manzo**, former chief of staff to House Majority Leader **Bill DeWeese**, D-Greene, and Rachel Manzo's husband

**Scott Brubaker**, former director of administration for the House Democratic Caucus and Jennifer Brubaker's husband

**Brett Cott**, formerly a research analyst on Veon's staff

**Steven Keefer**, former director of information technology for the House Democratic Caucus

**Earl Mosley**, former director of personnel for the House Democratic Caucus

**Annamarie Perretta-Rosepink**, former legislative assistant and chief of staff for Veon's Beaver County district office.

### More to Come

Today's charges are expected to fuel the wild fire of political intrigue that has smoldered for years and that achieved a flash point following the 2005 pay raise. In recent months, more than a dozen lawmakers and former lawmakers have come forward privately to reveal details of how the pay raise happened and connections between the pay raise and a PA Supreme Court decision upholding the state's slots gambling

law. The decision, just two weeks before the pay raise, ratified the procedure used for both the gambling law and the pay raise. The procedure included passing laws without giving citizens the opportunity to know what the legislature was doing until after the fact.

Both the League of Women Voters and Common Cause PA have challenged the pay raise in federal court.

### **Missing from the Charges**

Corbett's charges did not include other misuses of tax dollars for political campaigning. Those include:

- Millions of dollars spent on so-called "public service announcements" featuring lawmakers on radio and TV in the run up to elections.
- Mailings to targeted constituent voters.
- Polling that includes questions about favorability ratings for incumbents. See the [November 26th, 2007 edition](#) of [DR News](#). PA is reported to be the only state where tax dollars are used for political polling.

### Questions:

- Does any rank-and-file member of the General Assembly still believe that the legislature is capable of policing itself (as the new Open Records law permits) or reforming itself? Will lawmakers now authorize a constitutional convention to debate changes in how state government, especially the legislature, operates?
- Which House Democrats benefitted from the opposition research conducted by staffers? What did they know about the source of that research?
- After paying more than \$1 million to an outside investigator and consultant on ethics, which resulted in the firing of seven staffers, how did House Democrats miss four additional staff, including the spouses of two staff who were fired?
- Will DeWeese now suspend without pay the indicted employees?

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