

Barack Obama Sees No Taint in Teamster Brass

Have Ongoing Mob Ties, Sleaze Really Escaped Candidate's Notice?

For decades, Inside-the-Beltway politicians have again and again sullied themselves and the American public's view of how Washington, D.C., works by turning a blind eye to Teamster union-boss corruption.

Undoubtedly, the best-known example was the Nixon Administration's 1971 decision to pardon Teamster czar Jimmy Hoffa well before he had served out his 13-year sentence for mail fraud and attempted bribery of a federal jury.

And even the current Administration publicly toyed from 2001 to 2003 with cutting an outrageous deal to end federal oversight over the Teamsters, even as major cases of ongoing rampant Teamster-boss corruption and orchestration of strike violence were making national news.

Due largely to the fierce and vocal opposition of citizens who support the rule of law, the Bush Justice Department never actually cut the deal.

However, in 2008 it is U.S. Sen. Barack Obama (Ill.), now strongly favored to win the Democratic presidential nomination, who is practicing the "old politics" of coddling corrupt Teamster officials in exchange for Teamster forced dues-funded "in-kind" campaign support.

Lifting Federal Oversight Of Teamsters Now Would 'Send the Wrong Message'

Last month, *Wall Street Journal* reporters Brody Mullins and Kris Maher uncovered the fact that Mr. Obama had won the Teamster hierarchy's endorsement for President in February after "privately telling the union he supported ending the strict federal oversight imposed to root out corruption."

At least one other 2008 Democratic presidential hopeful, 2004 vice presidential nominee John Edwards, also privately told Teamster kingpins he supported ending the federal oversight first instituted in 1989 as an alternative to a complete federal takeover of the mobbed-up union.

However, Sens. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.), the only viable presidential candidates left after Mr. Edwards dropped out of the race in February, both apparently refused to endorse terminating federal oversight over the Teamster brass.

Consequently, when current Teamster President Jim Hoffa (the son of Jimmy,



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In order to get forced dues-funded campaign support from Teamster chief Jim Hoffa, Barack Obama is willing

to say that Mr. Hoffa has "cleaned up" the Teamster union hierarchy. Can Mr. Obama really believe that?

who disappeared in 1975 and is presumed dead) effusively declared he and his lieutenants would back Mr. Obama four months ago, the latter was the only major candidate left giving his secret backing to Mr. Hoffa's long-sought objective.

"It's difficult, if not impossible, to believe that Barack Obama has given his support, first privately and now publicly, to ending federal oversight of Teamster bosses because he sincerely believes Jim Hoffa has 'cleaned up' the union," noted National Right to Work Committee Vice President Doug Stafford.

"In Mr. Obama's adopted hometown of Chicago alone, for example, the secretary treasurer and three former staffers of Teamster Local 743 were indicted last September on charges of stealing a union election.

"The following month, the federal oversight board recommended that the top bosses of a second Windy City Teamster affiliate, Local 714, be removed from office for numerous alleged abuses.

"And John Coli, the Teamster official with whom the Obama campaign reportedly brokered the deal to end federal

oversight, has been publicly accused of interfering with efforts to crack down on mob-linked local union bosses.

"Federal oversight is obviously no panacea, and it doesn't get at the root of the problem. But rewarding Jim Hoffa by lifting federal oversight of the Teamsters now would send the wrong message to victims of Teamster-boss corruption."

Barack Obama's Politics Are 'Anything But New'

Mr. Stafford continued:

"Of course, the genuine way to break the cycle of corruption and violence in the Teamsters and other unions is passage of national Right to Work legislation.

"That would empower rank-and-file workers to fight union misdeeds by resigning and withholding their dues, without being fired as a consequence.

"But so far, Mr. Obama's position is opposition to the Right to Work as well as to Teamster federal oversight, that is, a flashing green light for union scofflaws. Such politics are anything but new." 📌