

January 17, 2008

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Dear Mr. Klein:

Last week, during CNN's coverage of the New Hampshire presidential primary, former Christian Coalition head Ralph Reed provided commentary as a "Republican strategist." It is ironic that a network that prides itself on having the "best political team on television" is furnishing a platform to such a proven liar with a deep bias against one of the major Republican candidates.

As you may know, Ralph Reed played a pivotal role in the recent scandal involving convicted felon and former lobbyist Jack Abramoff, a story CNN covered extensively. Mr. Reed secretly used his connections and his consulting firm, Century Strategies, to further the goals of Mr. Abramoff's Indian casino clients, while publicly professing he would never take money derived from gambling.

During Mr. Reed's 2006 unsuccessful bid to become the lieutenant governor of Georgia, Mr. Reed repeatedly lied about his role in the scheme. He said he knew nothing about Mr. Abramoff's agenda and merely opposed the expansion of casino gaming. Jim Galloway, Reed Rallies Supporters; Lt. Governor Hopeful Counts on Grass Roots, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, March 27, 2005. Mr. Reed said of Mr. Abramoff, "He deceived his law firm, he deceived his clients and he deceived me." Id. Mr. Reed further said he had "no direct knowledge" of the source of the money paid to him. Jim Galloway, Reed Helped Others Win. Now Hopes It's His Turn, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 8, 2005. Mr. Reed's spokesperson said that Mr. Reed knew Mr. Abramoff's law firm "had tribal clients, but he did not know their specific clients or their specific interests." Id.

The truth is that Mr. Reed was deeply involved in creating television, radio and grassroots campaigns to drum up public opposition to the expansion of gambling in Alabama, Louisiana and Texas, all paid for by tribal casinos seeking to avoid competition. Emails released by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee confirm both Mr. Reed's role and the fact that he was aware of the source of the funds. For example, on April 4, 1999, Mr. Abramoff asked Mr. Reed to provide a budget for the Choctaw. "Once I get this, I will call Nell at Choctaw and get it approved." Two days later, Mr. Abramoff again emailed Mr. Reed saying, "It would be really helpful if you

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could get me the invoices as soon as possible so I can get Choctaw to get us checks asap.” Mr. Reed replied with a list of the costs already incurred, “what we are out already,” amounting to \$101,000. On April 9, Mr. Abramoff asked Mr. Reed to provide regular cost updates that he could “pass on to Nell Rogers.” On April 21, Mr. Reed submitted a bill for an additional \$122,000, which he explained would be used to cover expenses for a rally by pastors and anti-gambling activists as well as inserts in church bulletins. He explained he would need \$250,000 to \$350,000 for more work. Mr. Reed claimed, “If victory is possible, we will achieve it.” By May 10, Mr. Reed had been paid \$1.3 million for work Mr. Abramoff billed to the Choctaw. Alan Judd, Reed Emails Upset Allies; Anti-Gambling Groups Express Uneasiness About Consultant’s Knowledge That Funds Came From Tribe, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 26, 2005. These are just a few examples; there are literally dozens of other email exchanges between Mr. Reed and Mr. Abramoff regarding the actions Mr. Reed was taking on behalf of tribal casinos in exchange for large sums of money.

Mr. Reed was, not surprisingly, anxious to hide his work for Indian casinos, which was at odds with his stance that he would not accept funds derived from gambling. To that end, Mr. Abramoff arranged for payments to Mr. Reed to run through various conduits. In 2000, Mr. Abramoff and Mr. Reed had an email discussion about whether it would be acceptable to pass money through Americans for Tax Reform. On February 2, 2000, Mr. Abramoff wrote, “Let me know if it will work just to do this through ATR until we can find another group. Mr. Reed responded a few minutes later, “Yes, it will.” Mr. Reed also received payments through the American International Center, a fake think tank headed by a former lifeguard, and through the National Center on Public Policy, a charitable organization that did Mr. Abramoff’s bidding in return for funding.

Mr. Reed’s work on behalf of Mr. Abramoff’s tribal clients became public as a result of hearings held by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, spearheaded by Senator and Republican presidential candidate John McCain. Mr. Reed’s primary opponent in the lieutenant governor race focused on Mr. Reed’s relationship with Mr. Abramoff during the campaign and Mr. Reed lost the race. In addition, *The Washington Post* has reported that Mr. Reed’s defenders allege that Senator McCain released the email exchanges between Mr. Reed and Mr. Abramoff in revenge for Mr. Reed’s support of President Bush in the 2000 campaign. Jonathan Weisman, McCain Faces Payback From Old GOP Foes, *The Washington Post*, January 14, 2008.

Mr. Reed’s belief that Senator McCain is to blame for his political loss is groundless. It was Mr. Reed’s avaricious decision to play up his credentials as a Christian conservative leader to organize anti-gambling activists on behalf of Mr. Abramoff’s Indian tribal casino clients and his obvious hypocrisy that led to his political downfall. Nevertheless, given Mr. Reed’s hostility to Sen. McCain, Mr. Reed is hardly an unbiased voice commenting on the Republican candidates’ race for their party’s nomination.

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If asked, most people would probably agree that “the best political team on television” would not include a person with a tenuous relationship with the truth and a well-known enmity toward a particular candidate. As Mr. Reed is, indeed, just such a person, CNN has no business including Mr. Reed as part of its hyped political team in future presidential news coverage.

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Melanie Sloan
Executive Director
Citizens for Responsibility
and Ethics in Washington



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President and CEO
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cc: Joy DiBenedetto
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