

CULTURE OF CORRUPTION FACT CHECK #1

DeLay, Cunningham & Culture of Corruption

MYTH:

Yesterday's ruling exonerated Tom DeLay: □

"The court's decision to dismiss a portion of Ronnie Earle's manufactured and flawed case against Mr. DeLay underscores just how baseless and politically motivated the charges were. The judge's ruling...represents yet another legal victory." Spokesman Kevin Madden. [R. Jeffrey Smith and Jonathan Weisman, "DeLay's Felony Charge Is Upheld," The Washington Post, [12/6/05](#)]

FACT:

The two most serious charges against DeLay were upheld:

Tom DeLay will go to trial faced with felony charges of money laundering, punishable by five years to life in prison, and conspiracy to launder money. □ [April Castro, "DeLay Could Face Trial Early Next Year" The Associated Press, [12/6/05](#)

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MYTH:

Randy "Duke" Cunningham's case is an isolated scandal of individual's misjudgment : □

"[B]oth sides have sides have done it. It doesn't relate to anything other than the individual and his fall from ethical standards." [Washington Times editor and former Newt Gingrich Chief of Staff Tony Blankley on "Hardball with Chris Matthews," [11/29/05](#)].

""Cunningham is a minor factor in all [t]his," said one Republican pollster, who spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to freely discuss party positioning on this most-sensitive of issues. "His actions can't be blamed on a 'culture of corruption' but instead on personal stupidity." [Chris Cillizza, "Rep. Cunningham Enters Guilty Plea, Resigns," The Fix, washingtonpost.com's politics blog, [11/28/05](#)] □

FACT:

Corrupt Republican leaders like Cunningham and DeLay epitomize the Republican culture of corruption in Washington, highlighting the urgent need for the GOP leadership's to start enforcing the House ethics rules and investigating the widely reported and serious corruption scandals

Just last year indicted Representative Tom DeLay was admonished three times last year by a bi-partisan House Ethics Committee for his links to ethics scandals concerning Wester energy corporation, Texas redistricting and passing of the Medicare Bill:

- **Wester Scandal:** DeLay was admonished for creating at least the "appearance" that Westar Energy executives were provided special access at a West Virginia golf retreat as result of \$25,000 in corporate contributions to Texans for a Republican Majority, a political group affiliated with DeLay. At the time of the retreat, the House was about to consider an energy bill that Westar hoped to influence. [Memorandum to Members of House Ethics Committee, [2004](#)].

- **Texas Redistricting Scandal:** DeLay was admonished for using government resources for a political undertaking. Delay's staff contacted the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) during the 2003 Texas redistricting battle to obtain information from FAA databases on the whereabouts of Democratic Members of the Texas House who had fled Austin in a plane for the purpose of denying the House a quorum. [Id.]

- **Medicare Bill Scandal:** Rep. DeLay was also admonished by the Ethics Committee for offering to endorse Rep. Nick Smith's (R-MI) son, who would be running for Congress, on the House floor in exchange for Rep. Smith's vote in favor of the Medicare/prescription drug bill. [*Investigation of Certain Allegations Related to Voting on the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003,* Ethics Committee, [2004](#)].

The nature of the Cunningham-defense contractor ring scandal is strikingly similar to the Westar scandal, as this one links fat cat defense contractors' questionable campaign contributions to political groups associated with Cunningham and at least 10 other Republican lawmakers on the Hill: At least 10 Republican congressional lawmakers including indicted former Majority Leader Tom DeLay received thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from defense contractors linked to Cunningham case

A list of congressional Campaign Contributions from "Co-Conspirators" from Cunningham case, 2001 - 2005:

NAME AMOUNT

Rep. Randy Cunningham (R-Calif.) \$66,000

Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-Calif.) \$32,000

Rep. John Doolittle (R-Calif.) \$30,000
Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas) \$30,000
Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) \$28,500
Rep. Virgil Goode (R-Va.) \$28,250
Rep. Jerry Weller (R-Ill.) \$20,000
Rep. Henry Bonilla (R-Texas) \$12,500
Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) \$11,250
Sen. Larry Craig (R-Idaho) \$10,000

[Josephine Hearn, "Co-conspirators' largesse extended to many," The Hill, [11/30/05](#)]

A report linked two other prominent senior House Republicans, who received huge contributions from a Cunningham "Co-Conspirator," to Pentagon contracts awarded to the defense contractor: [Matt Kelley & Jim Drinkard, "Contractor spends big on key lawmakers," USA Today, [11/30/05](#)]

Cunningham-defense contactors ring scandals is a part of the Republican culture of corruption on Capitol Hill. As many as 60 congressional lawmakers may be linked to the corruption scandals engulfing the Capitol Hill : "You know, Duke Cunningham got caught, but the question many Americans are asking is, how deep is the congressional cesspool? **Six members are currently under investigation for possible crimes and ethics violations. And some reports say the number could go as high as 60.**

What in the heck is going on in the nation's capital?" [Joe Scarborough on "Scarborough Country,"

[11/29/05](#)

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Republican Senator John McCain expressed his concern about the ethics scandals within his own party yesterday on NBC's Meet the Press: "I don't think the Ethics Committees are working very well. The latest Cunningham scandal was uncovered by the San Diego newspaper, not by anyone here...." [Senator John McCain on NBC's "Meet the Press," [12/4/05](#)]

Even former Speaker Newt Gingrich is tired of the Republican culture of corruption

epitomized by Abramoff and Cunningham: "Gingrich said he was deeply troubled by the resignation Monday of Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham, R-Calif., and by the widening bribery and ethics investigation into the activities of lobbyist Jack Abramoff. "Frankly, it sickens me," Gingrich said. He called on Republicans to lead on ethics reform. " [Glen

Warchol, "Gingrich implores GOP to 'clean it up', The Salt Lake Tribune,

[12/2/05](#)

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Despite the mount of corruption scandals, the ethics committees in Congress are still sitting on sidelines: "There is no ethics enforcement in Congress today, and it's inexcusable." [Tom Fitton, President of Judicial Watch, a conservative monitor of government ethics, Jeffrey H. Birnbaum, "In a Season of Scandals, Ethics Panels Are on Sidelines," The Washington Post, [12/5/05](#)]

DeLay, Cunningham, and Abramoff scandals are not just isolated cases of individual misjudgments. They are the current hallmark figures of culture of corruption in Washington. □ These ever-widening scandals highlight the urgent need for the GOP leadership's to start enforcing the House ethics rules and investigating the widely reported and serious corruption scandals

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