



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on March 6, 2019

AOC Could Face Jail for Campaign Shenanigans, Two FEC Complaints Filed

Representative Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), the Muslim radical who doesn't like Israel and says so pretty loudly, is the unnamed target of a resolution that condemns anti-Semitism that will pass the House today.

But at least she can't land in jail for insulting the Israel lobby. Not so with that other starlet in the leftist cosmos, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.).



She faces two complaints filed with the Federal Election Commission, and possibly big fines and jail in a third matter, the [Daily Caller News Foundation reported](#), that would also involve the FEC.

Money Laundering?

The key actors in all three matters are Ocasio-Cortez and her chief of staff, Saikat Chakrabarti, the founder of two curious entities, Brand New Congress PAC and Brand New Congress, LLC.

[The Coolidge-Reagan Foundation has accused](#) AOC and her campaign of "laundering" money through a PAC to pay her boyfriend, Riley Roberts.

"On August 9, 2017, Brand New Congress PAC paid Ocasio-Cortez's boyfriend, Riley Roberts, \$3,000," the complaint says. "The description of the payment specifies only 'marketing consultant.'" And "less than three weeks later ... Cortez's campaign committee paid Brand New Congress LLC \$6,191.32 for 'strategic consulting.'"

The next month, the complaint alleges, the PAC paid Roberts another \$3,000 as a "marketing consultant." So, the complaint concludes, "Cortez's campaign committee paid just over \$6,000 to Brand New Congress PAC, while its affiliated LLC turned around and paid her boyfriend \$6,000."

[Alleges the complaint:](#)

The timing and amounts of these transactions, the use of two affiliated entities as intermediaries, the vague and amorphous nature of the services Riley ostensibly provided, the magnitude of these transactions compared to both the limited funds the campaign had raised at the time and the total amount of its expenditures, and the romantic relationship between Ocasio-Cortez and [Roberts] collectively establish reason to believe these transactions may have violated campaign finance law.

Roberts, the complaint alleges, did not provide "bona fide services" and what he received "exceeded the fair market value of any legitimate services.... The true intent of the payment to [Roberts] was to provide personal benefit to a boyfriend."

Thus, "to mask the payment of official campaign funds to her boyfriend, Ocasio-Cortez instead laundered them through intermediaries Brand New Congress PAC and Brand New Congress LLC." Then, she "incorrectly reported a payment of \$6,191.32 to Brand New Congress LLC ... for strategic consulting, rather than correctly characterizing the underlying payment of \$6,000 to [Roberts]."

The Coolidge-Reagan Foundation also pointed to Medium.com, which exposed Roberts' access to her



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official calendar, his house.gov e-mail address and credentials, apparently, as a House “staff member.”

Shady Groups

A major report from [DCNF deals with](#) the connection between Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign and the Justice Democrats, the PAC largely responsible for her unlikely victory.

Ocasio-Cortez and her chief of staff, Chakrabarti, control both, DCNF reported.

The two “obtained majority control of Justice Democrats PAC in December 2017, according to archived copies of the group’s website, and the two appear to retain their control of the group, according to corporate filings.”

Should FEC find out the new congresswoman’s campaign “operated in affiliation with the PAC, which had raised more than \$1.8 million before her June 2018 primary, it would open them up to ‘massive reporting violations, probably at least some illegal contribution violations exceeding the lawful limits,’ former FEC commissioner Brad Smith said.”

[DCNF reported](#) that the pair “never disclosed” to FEC that they “controlled the PAC while it was simultaneously supporting her primary campaign.”

Smith told DCNF the two could be looking at jail time, while former commissioner Hans Von Spakovsky, a Republican, said the two are “potentially in very big trouble and may have engaged in multiple violations of federal campaign finance law, including receiving excessive contributions.”

A GOP election expert told DCNF that a PAC “funding campaign staff and activities as an alter-ego of the campaign committee ... would be a blatant abuse of the PAC rules.”

[Reported DCNF:](#)

Justice Democrats stated on its website from December 2017 until two weeks after Ocasio-Cortez’s June 2018 primary victory that she and Chakrabarti held “legal control” of the PAC, and corporate filings obtained by TheDCNF show that the two still serve on the three-member board of Justice Democrats on paper.

Political committees are affiliated if they are “established, financed, maintained or controlled by ... the same person or group of persons,” federal election law states.

If FEC determines that Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign and Justice Democrats were affiliated, anyone who contributed more than \$2,700 total to both “would have made an excessive contribution,” a campaign finance violation, Smith told TheDCNF.

AOC’s campaign and the Justice Democrats hauled in \$4.6 million during last year’s midterm, DCNF reported, citing FEC records. And Justice Democrats “raked in far more than \$25,000 from individual contributors of over \$2,700 after Ocasio-Cortez and Chakrabarti took control.”

If the two willfully violated the law, [Smith told DCNF](#), they might land in the clink.

[The second FEC complaint](#), from the National Legal and Policy Center, accuses AOC, Chakrabarti, Justice Democrats, and the Brand New Congress entities of illegally hiding individual campaign expenditures in large payments for “strategic consulting.”

They “orchestrated an extensive off-the-books operation,” the complaint alleges, “to make hundreds of thousands of dollars of expenditures in support of multiple candidates for federal office.”

Photo: AP Images



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