



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 26, 2010

Dems Call on Sestak and White House to Come Clean

Republicans aren't the only ones wanting to know more about an alleged bribe the White House offered Congressman Joe Sestak of Pennsylvania if he would drop out of the Democratic primary against Sen. Arlen Specter. Sestak defeated Specter, a five-term incumbent who changed parties last year, in the Senate primary last on May 18.



On May 24, Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-NY), called on the White House to tell what, if anything, was offered Sestak. Yesterday, Dick Durbin of Illinois, the Senate's Number 2 Democrat, with close ties to the White House, put the onus on Sestak to tell what went on.

"At some point I think Congressman Sestak needs to make it clear what happened," Durbin told the Cable News Network. "Congressman Sestak raised the issue," Durbin said. "If there's been some confusion, I hope he can make the facts as clear as possible. Then, as far as the administration is concerned, they will react to that."

Sestak said in an interview in February of this year that the White House officials offered him a federal job if he would drop out of the race. He did not say who it was who made the offer or what job was mentioned. When asked the job was Secretary of the Navy, Sestak, a retired admiral, said "No comment." Sestak was asked about it again on *Meet the Press* last Sunday and said again that a job had been offered him as an inducement to get out of the race, but he again declined to say anything further.

A Republican Senator since 1980, Specter changed parties last year, saying at the time that the switch would "enable me to be reelected." While still a Republican, he was one of only three GOP Senators to vote for Obama's \$787 billion stimulus bill. He was endorsed by Obama and other top Democrats, but had fallen out of favor as much with Democrats who resented his opportunism as with Republicans for his liberal stands on both fiscal and social issues.

White House press Secretary Robert Gibbs confirmed that aides to the president had conversations with Sestak before the primary, but did not say what was discussed, insisting only that "nothing inappropriate happened." Neither the White House nor Sestak has said who it was that spoke with the congressman.

"I think what the White House should do is, to some degree, say, 'Here are the facts,'" Weiner said during an appearance on MSNBC. "If there's not a lot [to] what's going on here, then just say what happened."

Republicans, meanwhile, have been pressing for an investigation into the matter. Rep. Darrell Issa of California, ranking Republican on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, has called on Attorney General Eric Holder to appoint a special prosecutor in the matter, and has threatened to file an ethics complaint against Sestak.



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Offering someone a job in the federal government in return for a personal or political favor is a criminal offense. But a cloud of uncertainty over what, if anything, was offered could also be a political liability hanging over the heads of Democrats this fall. Weiner said he believes it's likely nothing inappropriate happened, but the matter needs to be dealt with openly.

"When we're having conversations like this three days after the nomination, that's a problem," said the New York congressman. "Someone has to help us out here, and I think the White House and Congressman Sestak need to make sure we're not talking about this next week."

Photo of Rep. Joe Sestak: AP Images



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