



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 14, 2014

## DOJ Blocks Corruption Investigation Involving U.S. Senators

Prosecutors in Utah are currently working on a corruption investigation involving two U.S. senators. Unfortunately, the Justice Department has blocked the FBI's use of federal systems in the probe, prompting the prosecutors to speak out.

The corruption investigation involves Senator Mike Lee (R-Utah) and Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev). The [Washington Times](#) writes:



The probe, conducted by one Republican and one Democratic state prosecutor in Utah, has received accusations from an indicted businessman and political donor, interviewed other witnesses and gathered preliminary evidence such as financial records, Congressional Record statements and photographs that corroborate some aspects of the accusations, officials have told the *Washington Times* and ABC News.

Aspects of the investigation include whether Senators Lee and Reid accepted or pursued monetary or other benefits for political favors, and whether Senator Lee was honest when he purchased and then sold a home in Utah for a significant loss to a campaign contributor and federal contractor.

"There are allegations, but they are very serious allegations and they need to be looked at by somebody," Sim Gill, a Democrat who is the elected chief prosecutor in Salt Lake County, told the *Times*. "If true, or even if asserted, they truly should be investigated and put to rest, or be confirmed."

The investigation has hit a snag, however, as the Justice Department's public integrity selection, the department that handles corruption cases involving elected officials, has rejected FBI agents' bid to use a federal grand jury and subpoenas to determine the validity of the accusations.

Because of this, local prosecutors are finding themselves in the difficult position of having to make a case without the use of the federal court system.

Further, the investigation is complicated by Senator Reid's efforts to confirm Senator Lee's chief counsel as the U.S. attorney in Salt Lake City. The *Washington Times* explains, "That action — a Democratic Senate leader letting a Republican be named to a key prosecutor's position in the Obama administration — raised many eyebrows and angered some Democrats."

Additionally, all the federal prosecutors in Utah were compelled to recuse themselves from the corruption case after concerns over a conflict of interest were raised involving one prosecutor and a specific subject of the investigation. State prosecutors obtained a court order that transferred the evidence that had been gathered in the investigation up until the recusal to their office.

Gill has voiced his frustrations over the difficulties he and his colleague have faced in their efforts to pursue the probe.

"We're just two local prosecutors but everybody who was supposed to look at this evidence above us



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has made a decision not to, and by default left it to us to investigate and prosecute at the state level," Gill said.

At the moment, the investigation does not focus solely on Sens. Lee and Reid. The prosecutors are also investigating state charges against officials in Utah, including former Utah Attorney General John Swallow, who is being accused of violating eight state laws on abuse of public office.

Swallow "compromised the principles and integrity of the office to benefit himself and his political supporters," and he "hung a veritable 'for sale' sign on the office door that invited moneyed interests to seek special treatment and favors," the legislative report concluded.

The Justice Department chose not to pursue the case against Swallow, however, prompting officials to turn the investigation over to state level officials, with the assistance of FBI agents.

"The sentiment was that it doesn't matter in the end where it occurs as long as justice is served," said one anonymous official.

According to the prosecutors, the investigation is focused at the moment on any crimes that may have been committed inside Utah's borders, which could include Lee and Reid, but that they are not currently investigating them.

However, Troy Rawlings — Gill's Republican counterpart in the investigation — emphasized, "We are not going to ignore the scraps of evidence coming in about them."

The Justice Department's unwillingness to respond to accusations and evidence presented against the two senators has some calling for a special prosecutor who could completely circumvent the Justice Department and U.S. attorney general's office and perform an independent analysis of the evidence.



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