



Ethics Committee Extends Investigation into Jesse Jackson Jr.

A newly released report, originally [compiled](#) in August 2009 by the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) claims there is "probable cause" to affirm that Jackson "directed a third party" to raise money for Blagojevich in exchange for a Senate appointment, or knew his surrogate "would likely make such an offer." At least \$1.5 million in campaign funding was reportedly offered.



There is "substantial reason to believe" Jackson usurped federal law by ordering his congressional staff to launch a "public campaign" to secure the appointment, the report noted. Further, the OCE report named businessman Raghuvver Nayak as a likely third party.

The Ethics Committee had previously delayed Jackson's probe because the Justice Department was directing a criminal investigation that convicted Blagojevich on a nexus of corruption charges, including actions to sell the Senate appointment. While the committee conceded that Jackson's investigation "does not itself indicate that any violation occurred," The December 2 announcement means that the committee has not vindicated him and will continue pursuing the case.

Jackson vowed to cooperate with the committee's decision to extend the probe, but renewed his plea that he had actively pursued Obama's former Senate seat without any wrongdoing on his part. "I have said from the beginning that I publicly and transparently sought to have the Governor of Illinois appoint me to fulfill the final two years of then-Senator Barack Obama's term in the U.S. Senate," he [professed](#) in a written statement. "I did nothing illegal, unethical or inappropriate in that pursuit and I believe that is what the Ethics Committee will conclude at the end of this process."

Jackson explained that he was candid in his pursuit of the appointment, but did not indulge in any fraudulent activity. In a long-winded letter to the committee, his attorneys, Reid Weingarten and Brian Heberlig, argued that there was "no basis" for the 2009 report's conclusions. "Congressman Jackson never offered to raise campaign funds for Blagojevich in exchange for appointment to the Senate seat," the letter read. The attorneys also said Jackson took his case for the appointment to the media because of his "poor relationship" with Blagojevich.

The 2009 report determined that there is significant evidence to believe that Jackson's staff in both Chicago and Washington were directed to perform illicit actions to secure the appointment. The report alleged, however, that its conclusions were obstructed by the fact that Blagojevich, Nayak, and another fundraiser, Rajinder Bedi, refused to cooperate with the investigation.

The OCE report excerpts recorded remarks by Blagojevich in which he said an "emissary" offered him



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on December 6, 2011

money to appoint Jackson. "We were approached 'pay 10 play,' That, you know, he'd raise me 500 grand. An emissary came, then the other guy would raise a million, if I made him a senator," the former Governor [said](#).

Some legal experts observe that the mere fact that the Ethics Committee is extending its investigation is noteworthy. "It is significant, because the Ethics Committee likes to dispose of cases that are without merit and get them over and done with," [suggested](#) University of Baltimore law professor Charles Tiefer, former Deputy General Counsel for the U.S. House. "The fact that it's keeping this case alive shows that it just can't exonerate him."

Regardless of the case's final verdict, the OCE's findings and the committee's decision to extend the probe could spur political fallout for Jackson, as he stands for reelection in 2012 in a befuddled district that has attracted a viable primary opponent, former Rep. Debbie Halvorson (D-Ill.). While Jackson claims hold to a majority of the district's constituents, substantial areas of the Chicago suburbs are more familiar with Halvorson, and critics note that any wavering on the part of Jackson's supporters could be politically fatal.

Halvorson capitalized on the December 2 announcement, indicating that she will make Jackson's alleged wrongdoing a campaign issue. "There we go," she said. "Another day where he's got to deal with ethics, distractions and his lawyers instead of constituents and this has been going on for over three years."

Indeed, Rep. Jackson's concern over the district and his constituents is compelling enough that he reportedly asked President Obama for support in the 2012 race. The question is whether the President would be willing to stick his neck out for another allegedly crooked Illinois politician.

Photo: Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr.



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