



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on November 8, 2011

## Rep. Issa to Investigate ACORN's Involvement in OWS Protests

Rep. Darrell Issa (R.-Calif., left) Chairman of the House Oversight Committee, is pushing for a federal probe of the post-ACORN group New York Communities for Change (NYCC) for engaging "in fraud through its participation in the Occupy Wall Street protests." The proposed investigation stems from a Fox News article published in late October regarding the organization's crooked involvement in the OWS movement, where NYCC officials allegedly coordinated "guerrilla" protest events and hired ACORN-affiliated employees to attend the protests and collect donations in a deceitful manner.



Writing Monday to U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch of the Eastern District of New York, Rep. Issa called for an investigation into allegations that the group "solicited donations from union members under false pretenses and misappropriated those funds to support the protesters." As *The New American* [reported](#) last week:

NYCC Executive Director Jon Kest and his top aides have been working at OWS protests and generating money for the NYCC for various expenses related to the movement, including supplies, staff wages, and travel expenses for ex-ACORN employees. "All the money collected from canvasses is pooled together back at the office, and everything we've been working on for the last year is going to the protests, against big banks and to pay people's salaries and those people on salary are, of course, being paid to go to the protests every day," a NYCC staff member told Fox.

However, donors were not advised that their contributions were funding the protests, as the canvassers allegedly told contributors that their donations would go to specific charitable causes, including funding for the teachers union and PCB toxin testing in New York City public schools when in fact, all the funding was being devoted to OWS-related activities. "They're doing the same stuff now that got ACORN in trouble to begin with," a source [told](#) Fox News. "And yes, we're still ACORN, there is still a national ACORN."

"NYCC's close relationship with ACORN and its history of corruption is concerning in its own right, but even worse is NYCC's fraudulent activity," Issa [wrote](#) in the letter. "NYCC misused the money of hardworking union members in order to fund the Occupy Wall Street movement."

Issa is asking that Lynch investigate the reports findings "to determine if they have merit and prosecute any wrongdoing accordingly." However, when reached for comment, Lynch's spokesman Robert Nardoza responded vaguely, "I have no comment as it is a matter of policy that we do not confirm/deny or discuss investigations."

The California Congressman also recounted a second Fox News [report](#), which alleged that NYCC officials fired staff, shredded documents, and blamed "disgruntled ex-employees" for leaking



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information relating to its involvement in the protests. Sources told Fox that NYCC officials began heavily monitoring employee behavior, while prohibiting all texting and phone calls in the office. Further, cameras and speakers were deployed virtually everywhere inside and outside of the office. "Its almost like working at Fort Knox," one source said.

The organization responded to Issas allegations in a [press release](#) Monday:

Let's be clear on the facts: no one at NYCC had anything to do with the conceiving, founding or funding of Occupy Wall Street. We work on a daily basis to fight against illegal foreclosures and to keep the Millionaires Tax in place, so that \$5 billion in social services don't get gutted for the poor. We are allies and work with Occupy Wall Street on occasion and we certainly understand, at the deepest level, its call for economic justice for the 99 Percent of Americans struggling to survive. We know it's hard for billionaires such as Rupert Murdoch and the 1 percent to comprehend how a movement like Occupy came into fruition, but we doubt Murdoch or Roger Ailes have ever been in a similar position as the millions of American families who are out of work and fed up with our political process.

In the press release, NYCC officials assailed the Congressman, calling him a "Republican hatchet man." "Issa, who famously declared that he wanted to hold a hearing a week for forty weeks when he took over the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, has largely come up empty," wrote Jean Sassine, a board member of NYCC. "[He's] now scraping the bottom of the barrel, wasting Americans taxpayer money chasing baseless rumors fed to him by Rupert Murdoch Its unfortunate but we expect nothing less from Issa, Murdoch, and FOX."

While averting specific details, Mr. Kest told *Politico* that NYCC has not been funneling money into the OWS movement. "Id like to say this was our idea and we had something to do with it, but we didnt," he [averred](#). "Its coming from a totally different place its a different constituency than we tend to organize. Its just tapping into something we knew was there in the communities we work in, but we didnt necessarily know it was something that existed all throughout society."

Rep. Michael G. Grimm (R-N.Y.) and other Republicans are supporting Issas call for the investigation. "It is no surprise to hear that an ACORN-affiliated group may be connected to the Occupy Wall Street movement. Their track record of fraud and links to deceitful activity demand that these allegations be thoroughly investigated and prosecuted to the full extent of the law," Grimm affirmed in a statement.

"Furthermore, I am disgusted by the groups alleged fundraising methods... As someone who has taken a strong stance urging the city to remove the dangerous PCB from NYC's public schools in order to protect the safety of our children, I find this reprehensible."



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