



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on February 7, 2012

Top Obama Donors Tied to Mexican Fugitive Seeking Pardon

Two of Cardona's brothers who live in Chicago, Carlos and Alberto, each donated tens of thousands of dollars to the Democratic National Committee. They also rose to become some of the top fundraisers — known as “bundlers” — for Obama's reelection campaign, raising vast amounts of money from other family members and business associates.

Neither brother had a history of donating to political causes or candidates before last year, according to the *Times*. But fugitive “Pepe,” who skipped bail in 1994 before reappearing in Mexico, has been accused of using his millions to purchase politicians in Mexico. And his brothers in Chicago have been tied to some of the intrigue south of the border.



American diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks showed that the State Department suspected Pepe of illegally funneling some \$5 million into Mexican political campaigns in 2006. His brother Alberto reportedly helped on some of the campaigns through his business ventures in Mexico.

The leaked cables also revealed that Pepe was suspected of orchestrating the murder of a competitor in Mexico's casino industry. Other incidents of violence and corruption have been linked to the wealthy “businessman” as well.

In the United States, the apparent crime boss was facing five years in prison for a fraud conviction. While an appeal on the state conviction in Iowa was pending, Pepe was arrested in New Mexico, eventually pleading guilty to federal drug charges tied to trafficking narcotics in 1994. He finally jumped bail and fled the country before emerging as a top titan in Mexico's crime-ridden casino industry.

Federal prosecutors eventually got the guilty plea on drug charges thrown out in 1998, though the reason for quashing the indictment was not immediately clear. But in Iowa, where there is still a valid warrant out for Pepe's arrest, his lawyers and family members have been trying unsuccessfully to get a pardon from the state Governor.

Citing Iowa prosecutors, the *Times* reported that Pepe's Chicago-based brother Carlos enlisted the help of the former Democratic Party state chairman to lobby for an official pardon. Despite the pressure, however, Pepe was not pardoned. Officials familiar with the case said it would be a “travesty of justice.”

Critics and commentators slammed the President after the scandal broke. “Mexican drug cartels have endorsed President Barack Obama's \$1 billion re-election bid to the White House, while Mexican mafiosos are holding fundraisers for their favorite Democrat,” [wrote](#) columnist Tom McGregor.



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“Apparently, Obama offers ‘hope’ for a better business climate for Mexican assassins, kidnappers and drug bosses.”

After being asked about the scandal by reporters, the President’s campaign initially said it was unaware of any improprieties, the *Times* reported. It subsequently promised to return the money in question before the news even broke.

“On the basis of the questions that have been raised, we will return the contributions from these individuals and from any other donors they brought to the campaign,” Obama campaign spokesman Ben LaBolt was [quoted](#) as saying. “More than 1.3 million Americans have donated to the campaign and we constantly review those contributions for any issues.”

Most of the central characters in the scandal did not return phone calls or the repeated media requests for comment, according to news reports. One of Pepe’s sisters-in-law, however, said it was not fair to taint the whole family over one brother and that the relatives in Chicago started raising money to support Democrats because they believed in helping Latinos.

“I understand that it looks real bad,” the sister-in-law was quoted as saying by the *Times*. “But the rest of the family are really good people. Pepe is actually a good person too.”

Obama has been accused of [“Chicago-style” corruption](#) on more than a few occasions since his surge to prominence several years ago in the 2008 presidential campaign. Indeed, from rewarding political allies such as Big Labor with “stimulus” and bailout money, to pumping tax dollars into well-connected “green” ventures, and even trafficking guns to Mexican cartels, critics say the administration has been tainted with the stench of corruption and lawlessness from the beginning.

A congressional investigation is currently underway into “Fast and Furious,” the federal weapons-running program used by the Obama administration to push for more gun control before the deadly scheme was exposed by whistleblowers. Top officials, including Attorney General Eric Holder, have [admitted to lying](#) under oath and could be held in contempt of Congress if what investigators call a “coverup” continues.

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