



Capitol Fax

POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE *by Rich Miller*

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DANIELS; KANE

VERY BAD Did the House Republicans blatantly subsidize several campaigns two years ago with staff whose salaries were paid and whose expenses were reimbursed by taxpayers? Well, an article in yesterday's *Crain's Chicago Business* sure makes it look that way.

Several weeks ago, **Capitol Fax** told you that an analysis of legislative staff salaries showed that gross payroll for everyone but the House Republicans dropped in the last two months of the 2000 campaign. The House GOP's payroll actually increased during that same period.

Crain's took the investigation a step further after it obtained "call-in sheets" and travel reimbursement claims for the House GOP from what it called a "ranking Republican insider." The call-in sheets tracked the out-of-office whereabouts of about two dozen Chicago office staffers during the spring and summer of 2000.

The magazine discovered that, "With the state paying for their time and transportation, virtually the entire Chicago staff of Illinois House Republican Leader Lee Daniels spent much of the spring and summer of 2000 in and near House districts with hotly contested general election races."

The staffers were assigned to "key contested races" for "weeks at a time." Sometimes, the mag reported, staff worked for HGOP incumbents in contested races and were reimbursed for their travel expenses by the taxpayers. When a contested district had no incumbent, the reimbursement vouchers were submitted for "travel to the office of a nearby GOP incumbent."

The veracity of the call-in sheets has been questioned by Daniels' press spokesman, who claims the office tracked people electronically, not on paper. But the magazine reported that the sheets are "consistent with GOP campaign records." By the late summer of 2000, the magazine discovered, the House Republican Campaign Committee began partially reimbursing those same people with political money for working in the same districts that the state had paid them to travel to. Plus, the call-in sheets match up with the state travel vouchers. Oops.

* *Crain's* discovered that between the beginning of May and the end of August, 2000, nine House GOP staffers traveled to Tier One targeted Rep. Renee Kosel's district a total of 252 times. The Republican Kosel won by just 131 votes.

* The House Republicans sent six state-paid and reimbursed staff to Rockford apparently to work against Democratic Rep. Jack Franks in his McHenry County district, which is just east of Rockford. The six were sent a total of 121 times. A Daniels spokesperson said the staffers were sent to work on legitimate state assignments. But the magazine interviewed two Republicans who represent the Rockford area, Reps. Ron Wait and

David Winters, who told the reporter that they had no clue why so much state-paid staff time was needed in their area except for "two or three days" of legislative hearings that summer.

- * In just one day in early May, the magazine discovered that almost half of Daniels' Chicago staff was out of the office working in Tier One targeted districts, including in Rep. Bill O'Connor's district. O'Connor was one of Speaker Madigan's number one priorities for defeat in 2000. Staffers were also in Tier One open-seat or Democratic-controlled districts in the south suburbs (Dem Bob Ryan vs. Repub Bob West; and Dem Rep. Kevin McCarthy vs. Maureen Bekta), Lake County (Dem Karen May vs. Nancy Flouret; and Dem Rep. Susan Garrett vs. Cesilie Price) and the McHenry County battle between Democratic Rep. Jack Franks and Republican Tom Salvi.
- * Not reported by the magazine was that one HGOP staff member was listed as being at Unistat at least ten times between the beginning of May and September 12, 2000. Unistat, a political mail house owned by the controversial Roger Stanley, does both campaign and state-paid legislative newsletter mailers for the House Republicans.
- * The Daniels spokesman pointed out that the staffers were taken off the state payroll after Labor Day, which is when campaigns really get going, the spokesman said. Maybe campaigns really get going for the public after Labor Day, but a lot of important field work and strategizing is done long before the traditional campaign kickoff date. Plus, as the earlier **Capitol Fax** analysis pointed out, Daniels' state payroll actually went up after Labor Day.

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- * **This new evidence** is overwhelming and extremely damning for Daniels. And, remember, the *Crain's* article only covers Daniels' Chicago operation. Downstate campaigns were not looked at. If this is an elaborate hoax, as Daniels' spokesman implied, then the Leader should immediately release the electronic version of his staff call-in records.

Chicago election attorney Rich Means is threatening to file a taxpayers lawsuit to force Daniels to reimburse the state. Means also will demand that Attorney General Jim Ryan investigate the allegations.

This is not what Jim Ryan needs right now. He's already under fire for never investigating George Ryan's corruption. A fresh scandal involving the state Republican Party chairman will only make matters worse. Full and immediate disclosure is the only way to go. © 2002 BY AHEAD OF OUR TIME PUBLISHING, INC.