

DID ENSIGN'S MISTRESS FAIL TO REPORT HER OWN PAYOFF?

The Politico reports that Senator Ensign may have a campaign finance problem—because he did not report the "severance payment" he is said to have given his mistress, Cindy Hampton, when he fired her last year (h/t CREW).

There continue to be a number of outstanding questions on the scandal, including whether Ensign gave a "severance package" to Cindy Hampton, his former campaign treasurer. The affair between Ensign and Cindy Hampton lasted from December 2007 to August 2008, Ensign said. She and her husband both left Ensign's payroll at the end of April 2008.

POLITICO and The New York Times both reported that Cindy Hampton received a severance package from the senator, but Ensign's camp has declined to confirm whether any such payments actually took place.

If Ensign, or any other entity, did provide Cindy Hampton with a severance payment, those payments were not recorded on Ensign's disclosure reports filed with the Federal Election Commission.

"If the payment was compensation for her work for the PAC, it has to be reported," said Brett Kappel, a campaign finance expert with the firm Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease. "It doesn't matter when the payment was made."

But, as Citizen92 pointed out, Cindy Hampton was the one in charge of reporting that payoff. And when they got rid of her, they brought in the

same woman, Lisa Lisker, brought in to clean up after the NRCC embezzlement scandal. (See also this comment from Citizen92 where he was connecting some of these dots back in February 2008.)

Anyway, that confrontation in front of Coburn, the NRCC embezzlement scandal and Ward's retirement may be coincidental timing – or there may be more to it.

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And, of course, Ward was the treasurer of the NRCC (his primary embezzlement dipping well). Ward was briefly replaced by the incumbent assistant treasurer, but in June 2008 was replaced by Lisa Lisker, a partner in the DC based powerhouse firm Huckaby Davis Lisker.

What's interesting is that after the Hamptons left DC "for medical reasons", Ensign's Battle Born PAC made Lisa Lisker treasurer.

Any chance that Ensign (or the Hamptons) were personally plugged into the embezzlement scandal? There sure are a lot of common players here.

In other words from the period when people like Tom Coburn and some other "peers" and "men who are close" to Ensign confronted him about his affair in February 2008 until he got rid of her, Ensign's mistress was in charge of reporting any unusual expenditures—though it's precisely this role that Ensign's spokesperson attributes to her increased pay.

Tory Mazzola, Ensign's spokesman, acknowledged Monday that Cindy Hampton's salary, paid from Ensign's reelection campaign and leadership fund, increased during the period that she was romantically involved with the senator, but he said the pay raise occurred because she "became responsible for direct mail and accounting" at the committees, an expansion of her previous duties.

"Her salary from Battle Born [Ensign's PAC] also increased because of additional responsibilities due to a transition with accounting and compliance," Mazzola said.

So did Cindy Hampton not report her own payoff?