

# WEYMOUTH STILL DOESN'T RENOUNCE PAY2PLAY

Katharine Weymouth has a letter to readers apologizing for the Pay2Play dinner she had scheduled for her home. But it is a muddled mess. She apologizes repeatedly—which seems to me an admission of wrong-doing.

I want to apologize for a planned new venture that went off track and for any cause we may have given you to doubt our independence and integrity.

[snip]

As publisher it is my job to ensure that we adhere to standards that are consistent with our integrity as a news organization. Last week, I let you, and the organization, down.

[snip]

We all make mistakes and hope to be forgiven for them. I apologize to our readers for the mistakes I made in this case.

But while she admits the fliers for the Pay2Play dinner suggested the WaPo was selling access, she still stops short of explaining what she really intended.

A flier distributed last week suggested that we were selling access to power brokers in Washington through dinners that were to take place at my home. The flier was not approved by me or newsroom editors, and it did not accurately reflect what we had in mind. But let me be clear: The flier was not the only problem. Our mistake was to suggest that we would hold and participate in an off-the-record dinner with journalists and

power brokers paid for by a sponsor. We will not organize such events.

In fact, the only thing she seems to renounce in this letter is the off-the-record status promised by the fliers. She assures readers that if journalists attend such Pay2Play soirees, they'll be able to publish what goes on.

If our reporters were to participate, there would be no limits on what they could ask. They would have full access to participants and be able to use any information or ideas to further their knowledge and understanding of any issues under discussion.

[snip]

Further, any conferences or similar events The Post sponsors will be on the record.

And while she does say she won't allow sponsors to pay for access to the WaPo's writers—she says no such thing about brokering events between lobbyists and politicians.

From the outset, we laid down firm parameters to ensure that these events would be consistent with The Post's values. If the events were to be sponsored by other companies, everything would be at arm's length – sponsors would have no control over the content of the discussions, and no special access to our journalists.

So this is how the WaPo's publisher believes she can promise "unbiased" news. She swears that her journalists will get to publish what goes on at the Pay2Play soirees. She continues to make the empty promise that sponsors won't get to control the content of discussions (as if Weymouth will really shut them up when they start attacking the public option).

But she doesn't, ultimately, back off the idea of selling lobbyists access to key lawmakers in Weymouth's own living room.