

# National News

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## Kerry Wants DNC Head McAuliffe Out

“Kerry Expected to Fire McAuliffe” reported NewsMax.com and the *New York Post* on March 4. The article reports that “likely Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry won’t wait for party chairmen Terry McAuliffe to resign, as promised, after the November election, but will move to fire him sooner rather than later.”

Insiders of the Kerry campaign say that since Senator Kerry has won de facto control of the party, the first thing he’s likely to do is to oust McAuliffe as chairman of the Democratic National Committee. McAuliffe has stated that he intends to step down at the end of the year. There are several ostensible “issues” over which the two have violently disagreed and “there’s no love lost” between the two of them, a prominent historian close to Kerry is quoted as saying. “The Kerry people can’t stand McAuliffe. They want their own man in charge of the party, someone they can trust,” a top Democrat told the *Post*.

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## Two-Tier Pay Forced On Grocery Workers

Ending a strike and lockout of nearly five months, 59,000 southern California grocer workers accepted a contract on March 1 conditioned by Wal-Mart’s national pressure to cut wages and benefits.

Under the “two-tier” contract, current employees’ wages would stay as they are, but each newly hired worker is to be paid substantially less: Meatcutters and food clerks will officially get about 15% less than the current wage scale.

Current workers will get a new, reduced health-care plan, for which most new workers will have to wait a year to become eligible, and their families will be eligible only after 30 months. Current employees are to have their pensions cut by 35% (to a maximum of \$1.92 an hour); new hires will get less than half of the *reduced* amount (a maximum of 80¢ per hour).

The management assault on the grocery

workers was coordinated by Steven A. Burd, CEO of Safeway, which owns Vons and Pavillions stores, and is in the strike/lockout with Albertson’s, as well as Krogers’ Ralph supermarkets. Burd became the grocery company’s boss when the leveraged-buyout firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co.(KKR), notorious for asset-stripping and stock manipulation, took over Safeway in the early 1990s. Though Safeway later became publicly owned, four KKR directors are still on its nine-member board. Burd cited the competition from Wal-Mart, which pays its people less than the Federal poverty level.

Grocery workers’ contracts expire in other areas of the country over coming months. Some 20,000 employees at Safeway and Albertson’s in the San Francisco Bay area are due to renew in September, and they are vowing not to accept a two-tier settlement.

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## Detroit Terror Case Is Out of Control

In the latest effort to contain the damage in a Detroit prosecution once proclaimed as a major victory in the war on terrorism, Attorney General John Ashcroft on Feb. 28 appointed a “special attorney” to investigate prosecutorial misconduct.

Craig Morford, a Federal prosecutor from Cleveland, has been designated as the equivalent of a special prosecutor, who will report to the Deputy Attorney General, not to Ashcroft. He is authorized “to conduct in the Eastern District of Michigan any kind of legal proceedings, civil or criminal, including Grand Jury proceedings and proceedings before United States Magistrates which United States Attorneys are authorized to conduct,” according to a statement issued by Ashcroft.

In the Detroit case, two Arab men were convicted of conspiracy to support terrorism; one was convicted of document fraud, and one was acquitted. The judge is now considering throwing out the conviction, because of prosecutorial misconduct which included withholding of evidence, and threatening a defense lawyer with an unfounded criminal investigation. The lead prosecutor in that case has been transferred out of De-

troit, and he is suing Ashcroft and other DOJ officials. “The whole thing is clearly a mess,” says former DOJ official Michael Greenberger.

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## Two-Front Criminal Probe of Tom DeLay

The FBI and a Texas prosecutor are now conducting separate criminal investigations into House Majority Leader Tom DeLay’s vast fundraising and lobbying machine. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), are calling for a Congressional investigation. While the national and Texas probes are focussed initially on separate sets of individuals and alleged crimes, they are digging into overlapping aspects of what is known as “DeLay, Inc.”

The FBI investigation, and the demands for a Congressional probe, concern the looting of Indian tribes by lobbyist Jack Abramoff and his associate Michael Scanlon. Abramoff was the principal organizer and fundraiser for Tom DeLay’s original election-funding group, Americans for a Republican Majority (ARMPAC), created in 1994. Scanlon was DeLay’s aide and chief public spokesman until joining Abramoff in private lobbying a few years ago.

Travis County District Attorney Ronald Earle is investigating the illegal use of corporate donations, through ARMPAC’s spin-off Texans for a Republican Majority (TRMPAC) to grab control of the Texas legislature in the 2002 elections. DeLay then secured the legislature’s passage of a scheme to redraw the Texas Congressional districts so as to increase the hold of Republicans, and DeLay personally, over the U.S. House of Representatives.

Representing Tom DeLay’s influence in Washington, Abramoff and Scanlon reportedly took some \$45 million in fees from several Indian tribes in recent years. The Choctaw tribe in Mississippi paid Abramoff \$10 million, and also contributed to the DeLay’s Texas scheme, TRMPAC. Another casino tribe, the Barona Band of California, donated thousands to DeLay’s Texas group. Indictments are expected soon in the Texas case, in which the Speaker of the Texas house of Representatives, DeLay’s man Tom Craddick, is most deeply embroiled.