

GOP Megabucks Flood Lieberman Campaign

by Michele Steinberg and George Canning

Is it legal for the Republican Party to run two candidates for Senate in the same state and the same election? That's what voters, and enforcement agencies like the Federal Election Commission and the Department of Justice should be investigating.

For one thing, the so-called "independent" pro-Iraq-war veterans group, Veterans for Freedom Action Fund (VFFAF) that *supports* "chickenhawk" Joe Lieberman is going around the nation attacking Democratic Party war hero and 39-year Marine veteran Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.). VFFAF is financed by the Republican Party's top financiers, who give \$10,000-and-up mega-contributions to the GOP through the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, and similar entities.

In addition, some of highest of the GOP's high-rollers, including some of Dick Cheney's and George W. Bush's *personal* moneybags, "The Pioneers," are filling Lieberman's coffers.

Lieberman, who lost the Democratic Party primary to Ned Lamont, who waged and won a valiant campaign to mobilize voters to oppose the Iraq war, jumped in with an "Independent" campaign. Immediately, GOP dollars began flowing in to Lieberman, while the GOP leadership iced out their official candidate Alan Schlesinger, a life-long Republican, rendering him a non-entity.

The campaign finance reports posted on the FEC website for the Connecticut Senate race say it all: Lieberman has raised nearly \$14 million in campaign funds; Lamont has received slightly over \$9 million; and Schlesinger has brought in just over \$194,000, with \$100,000 of that being a campaign loan.

If Lieberman wins the election, it will be because the White House *threw* it to him; and woe to the Democrats who have promised Lieberman a committee chair.

Two illustrations of Lieberman's White House ties:

- In Washington, D.C., in September, Tom Kuhn, a Bush Pioneer, and Yale roommate, hosted a fundraiser that brought in about \$400,000 for Lieberman's campaign. Also participating in the event was Republican operative Rick Shelby, who pressured GOP lobbyists to cough up \$1,000 per ticket. It was a brilliant success.

- In Florida, in August, one of Dick Cheney's closest Republican finance operatives, Mel Sembler, organized a fundraiser for Lieberman that took in about \$200,000. Sembler, a former ambassador to Italy, and former finance chairman of

the Republican Party, is an "insider's insider." When Special Prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald indicted Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Cheney's former chief of staff, for perjury and lying to a grand jury during the Federal investigation "Plamegate," the White House leak of the identity of covert CIA agent Valerie Plame, it was Sembler who came to Scooter's defense. Sembler, who describes himself as "dear friends with Cheney," is, in fact, the chair of the advisory committee of Libby's legal defense fund.

Plame is now suing Libby and Cheney in civil court for the leak that endangered her life, and destroyed her CIA career. The leak was in revenge for the fact that Plame's husband, former Amb. Joe Wilson, had uncovered the truth: that Cheney et al.'s claim that Iraq had purchased uranium from Niger was based on fraudulent documents.

The Associated Press, on Sept. 26, reported that Sembler, "said he has worked hard to raise money" for Libby. And, he insists that the indictment is bogus.

Veterans for Smear Jobs

Complaints have surfaced that Chickenhawk Lieberman may be receiving illegal campaign financing, both directly and "in kind" from Veterans for Freedom Action Fund, a Swift Boat-type White House dirty-tricks operation.

While VFFAF is primarily an attack dog, it has supported one candidate with radio, TV, and print ads—Joe Lieberman. And just what is this group? Formally registered with Iraq veteran Wade Zirkle of Virginia as its head, the group is bankrolled by heavy contributors to the GOP. And it is advised by two of the biggest liars in Washington: Bill "We're Winning in Iraq" Kristol, the Leo Strauss-trained editor of the *Weekly Standard*; and Dan Senor, the spokesman for the head of the Iraq occupation, Paul Bremer. Another VFFAF advisor is former White House spokesman Taylor Gross.

Under Federal law, the VFFAF, which is registered as a "nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization," must be "independent" from the Lieberman campaign, but it is also advised by Bill Andresen, Lieberman's former chief of staff.

FEC records show that two of the biggest funders of the VFFAF are Zirkle himself, who, under the name, W. Denman Zirkle, contributed \$10,000 to the National Republican Senatorial Committee, and Samuel Heyman, who gave \$10,000 out of the \$27,000-plus that VFFAF spent on promoting Lieberman in the outrageously false September ads that paint Lamont as soft on terrorism.

Samuel Heyman and six other member of the Heyman family, according to FEC records going back to just before the 2000 Bush-Cheney campaign, all seem to reside in the same Post Office box, 7002, in Westport, Connecticut. The Heyman clan has given over a million dollars to GOP campaign funds such as Republican Majority Fund, the Republican National Committee, and the National Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee. In fact, in 2000, Samuel Heyman alone, gave \$250,000 to Republican Party organizations.