

## Exclusive Web Content: CREW's Major Actions Targeting Congressional Corruption

By

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The recently revealed FBI investigation of Congressman Gary Miller (R-Calif.), who is accused of illegally scheming to put off paying taxes on several profitable land deals, is just the latest of many victories in the bold quest of The Center for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) to clean up Congress. Media reports nationwide give CREW credit for instigating the investigation by filing an IRS complaint against Miller in August 2006.

Since its founding in 2003, CREW, led by pioneering attorney Melanie Sloan, has played a major role in exposing the political scandals that have tarnished Washington in recent years and changed the balance of power in Congress. To show the full extent of this women-led organization's impact, *Ms.* has compiled a list of the major actions CREW has taken to root out Congressional corruption and their often politically seismic results.

### Convicted members of Congress:

Member of Congress	Corrupt Actions	CREW's Role	Current Status
Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham (R-Calif.)	In November 2005, Cunningham pleaded guilty to wire and mail fraud, tax evasion and conspiracy to accept bribes. According to federal prosecutors, the former congressman accepted \$2.4 million in bribes from defense contractors, particularly MZM's Mitchell Wade, while	Drafted ethics complaint* asking the House to investigate whether or not Cunningham had accepted bribes from Wade, violating federal laws and House rules.  Filed complaint with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) against MZM and Wade	Resigned from Congress. Currently serving an 8-year sentence in federal prison.  Wade pleaded guilty in February 2006 to bribing and conspiring with Cunningham and making nearly \$80,000 in illegal contributions to Reps. Goode (R-Va.) and Katherine

	<p>serving on the defense appropriations subcommittee. Bribes included a Rolls Royce, antique furniture, the use of a yacht, and the purchase of his home for \$700,000 more than it was worth.</p>	<p>alleging that he violated the law by forcing his employees to donate to the company PAC and specific candidates.</p> <p>Filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the Departments of Homeland Security and Defense seeking information on communication between Cunningham and Rep. Virgil Goode (R-Va.) regarding MZM or Wade.</p>	<p>Harris (R-Fla.).</p> <p>In May 2006, the House ethics committee announced it was launching an inquiry into “whether other House Members or staff are implicated” in the Cunningham scandal.</p>
<p>Rep. Bob Ney (R-Ohio)</p>	<p>Ney is the first elected official to face prison time due to his involvement with Abramoff. In October 2006, Ney pleaded guilty to conspiracy and making false statements, admitting that he had received numerous gifts (including luxury vacations valued at over \$170,000) and campaign contributions from Abramoff in exchange for official actions benefiting the convicted lobbyist’s clients.</p>	<p>Drafted ethics complaint, charging that Ney’s actions violated bribery and illegal gratuity statutes as well as House rules.</p> <p>Also launched a media campaign bringing his ethics issues to public attention. “I think if we hadn’t gone after Ney, he might still be there,” Sloan says.</p>	<p>Forced to resign from Congress. Sentenced to 30 months in federal prison. Ney’s seat was won by a Democrat, helping to shift the balance of power in congress.</p>

**Accused members of Congress:**

Member of Congress	Accusation	CREW’s Role	Current Status
Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.)	<p>Just hours after becoming the House majority whip in 2002, Blunt tried to insert a provision into the Homeland Security bill that would have benefited Philip Morris, one of his top campaign donors, without the knowledge or support of the rest of the House leadership.</p> <p>Blunt also urged the insertion of a provision into the \$79 billion emergency Iraq appropriations bill benefiting UPS and FedEx. UPS is a client of Blunt’s lobbyist son, Andrew, and both companies have contributed to him.</p> <p>Blunt’s ties to disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff have also come under scrutiny. In 2003, Rep. Blunt signed three letters to Interior Secretary Gale Norton endorsing a view of a gambling law that benefited Abramoff’s tribal clients. Around the same time, Abramoff and his firm donated \$3,000 to Blunt.</p>	<p>Drafted ethics complaint accusing Blunt of “taking official actions for personal gain” in supporting legislation that benefited the clients of his lobbyist girlfriend and son, and of possibly “violat[ing] the federal bribery laws” by accepting campaign contributions in seeming exchange for legislative action. CREW’s complaint claimed that Blunt “flout[ed] federal law and House Standards of Official Conduct in multiple ways over a period of years without reprisal.”</p>	<p>Despite Blunt’s ethics issues, Republicans elected him to serve as their minority whip in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.</p>

<p>Sen. Conrad Burns (R-Mont.)</p>	<p>Having received more money from Abramoff than any other member of Congress, Burns, who oversaw funding for Indian affairs, legislatively earmarked \$3 million in 2004 to the wealthy Saginaw Chippewa tribe of Michigan, an Abramoff client, even though the grant was intended for impoverished tribes. In doing so, Burns may have violated federal laws prohibiting bribery and honest services fraud, as well as Senate rules.</p> <p>An Abramoff-owned company also treated members of Burns' staff (along with several staffers of then-House Majority Leader Tom DeLay), to a trip to the 2001 Super Bowl potentially in violation of a Senate rule prohibiting members and staff from accepting "gifts of personal hospitality" from registered lobbyists.</p> <p>Burns also faced criticism for taking legislative action to protect the business interests of garment companies in the Northern Mariana Islands around the same time that he accepted \$12,000 in donations from Abramoff and his garment industry</p>	<p>Sued the National Indian Gaming Commission in April 2005 for failing to respond to their Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for records relating to the commission's contact with Congressmembers, including Burns.</p>	<p>Lost his re-election bid. Widely reported to be under Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation. Returned \$150,000 in donations received from Abramoff.</p>
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Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas)	<p>In September 2005, DeLay was indicted in Texas for allegedly conspiring to funnel \$190,000 in corporate funds (which are prohibited in state elections in Texas) through the Republican National Committee and then back to seven Texas House candidates for the 2002 election. That year, Republicans in Texas gained a majority in the Texas House for the first time in 130 years and used that power to redistrict the state's congressional map to favor Republicans. In 2004, five additional Texas Republicans were elected to the U.S. Congress.</p> <p>The House ethics committee has publicly admonished DeLay on three counts:</p> <p>1) For offering to "endorse Representative [Nick] Smith's son [in his congressional campaign] in exchange for Representative Smith's vote in favor of the Medicare Bill." (Smith originally told the media that DeLay also offered \$100,000 for his</p>	<p>Drafted the ethics complaint against DeLay filed by former Rep. Chris Bell (D-Texas) alleging that DeLay laundered corporate donations to Texas legislature candidates, improperly used a federal agency to track down Democratic legislators in Texas and illegally solicited political contributions in exchange for official action on behalf of Westar Energy. The complaint, which resulted in the committee's latter two admonishments, stated, "Since first assuming a position in the House Leadership, Representative Tom DeLay has engaged in a concerted and relentless effort to use the official resources of office to advance and underwrite a program of blatantly partisan political activities in violation of rules, statutes and standards of conduct applicable to</p>	<p>Was forced to step down as speaker of the House and later resigned from Congress. Is currently being investigated by the DOJ and is awaiting trial in Texas. If convicted of criminal conspiracy for funneling corporate donations to Texas legislature candidates, DeLay could face up to two years in prison and fines of as much as \$100,000.</p> <p>In July 2006, the FEC shut down DeLay's Americans for a Republican Majority PAC and fined it \$115,000.</p> <p>The DOJ is also currently investigating whether DeLay's wife received a salary from lobbyists for a job she allegedly did not hold.</p> <p>Two of DeLay's former aides have pleaded guilty to</p>

	<p>son's campaign, but later retracted.)</p> <p>2) For asking the Federal Aviation Administration to locate a plane carrying Texas Democrats who had fled Austin to prevent the passage of the redistricting plan.</p> <p>3) For participating in Westar Energy's golf fundraiser just as major energy legislation was about to come before Congress, thereby creating the appearance that political donations had led to "special treatment or special access" to DeLay.</p>	<p>Members."</p> <p>Sued the FEC for failing to respond to a FOIA request for information regarding Westar Energy's campaign finance contributions.</p> <p>Requested that the IRS audit two of DeLay's PACs for failure to comply with federal tax laws.</p> <p>Requested a DOJ investigation into DeLay's alleged bribery and extortion of former Rep. Nick Smith (R-Mich.). Once the DOJ investigation became publicly known, the House ethics committee admonished DeLay.</p>	<p>Abramoff-related conspiracy charges. Though DeLay denies any involvement in or knowledge of Abramoff's wrongdoing, he once called the lobbyist "one of my closest and dearest friends." The Department of Justice is reportedly investigating DeLay's ties to Abramoff.</p>
Rep. Mark Foley (R-Fla.)	Has admitted sending sexual e-mails and instant messages to minors in the House page program.	Received Foley emails in July 2006 and immediately sent them to the FBI. It appears the FBI did not investigate until months later when asked to do so by the House leadership, after the scandal had broken in the media.	<p>Resigned from Congress. Under investigation by federal and Florida authorities.</p> <p>The House ethics committee ruled in December 2006 that Republican lawmakers had failed to protect teenage</p>

		<p>In October, CREW asked the DOJ's Inspector General's office to look into whether and why the FBI failed to investigate Foley when it received the emails from CREW.</p> <p>The FBI has claimed that the Foley emails forwarded by CREW were heavily redacted and that CREW refused to provide some information about them. CREW vehemently denies this, and has asked that the DOJ Inspector General's office also investigate whether the FBI "disseminated a cover-up story" to explain their inaction.</p>	<p>pages from Foley for a decade, but declined to punish anyone, saying no rules had been broken.</p> <p>Foley's vacated seat was won by Democrat Tim Mahoney, helping to shift the balance of power in the House.</p>
<p>Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.)</p>	<p>Frist violated campaign finance laws by failing to disclose a \$1.44 million loan that his campaign committees took out in 2000.</p> <p>In June 2005, Frist sold all of his stock in his family's hospital corporation, HCA, shortly before its value dropped 9%. Frist's brother is</p>	<p>Filed complaint with FEC alleging that Frist deliberately concealed the loan "to hide the fact that his 2000 campaign was over \$1 million in debt."</p> <p>Filed complaint with the Senate ethics committee</p>	<p>Fined \$11,000 by the FEC for failing to disclose the \$1.44 million loan.</p> <p>Decided not to run for re-election. Also abandoned a potential presidential run. Under investigation by the Securities and Exchange</p>

	<p>on the corporation's board of directors, creating the appearance that Frist may have engaged in insider trading.</p>	<p>urging it to investigate Frist's sudden sale of HCA stock, alleging that Frist "may have sold the stock based on insider knowledge" and that such behavior constituted "improper conduct reflecting on the Senate."</p>	<p>Commission and federal prosecutors for insider trading.</p>
<p>Rep. Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.)</p>	<p>After securing federal funding for a highway near a property he owned, Hastert sold it for a \$2 million profit.</p> <p>A week after his PAC received \$21,500 from Abramoff and his tribal clients, Hastert tried to convince then-Interior Secretary Gale Norton to reject a request for a new casino strongly opposed by two of Abramoff's biggest tribal clients. Between 2001 and 2004, Hastert received more than \$100,000 in political donations from Abramoff and his tribal clients.</p> <p>In October 2006, two former House Appropriations Committee investigators alleged that Hastert's chief counsel had blocked an investigation into mismanagement, bid-rigging and kickbacks in Capitol Hill security upgrades, which</p>	<p>Urged the DOJ to investigate Hastert's "sweetheart" land deal, alleging he had committed "an egregious abuse of his legislative authority" in personally profiting from a bill he championed. CREW also urged the new Congress to enact ethics legislation "prohibiting members from inserting earmarks for their own personal financial benefit."</p> <p>Sent a letter to the Attorney General requesting an investigation into whether Hastert's office tried to block the Appropriations Committee's investigation into waste and abuse in the management of the security</p>	<p>Decided not to run again for Republican leadership position.</p> <p>Early last year, Hastert relinquished about \$70,000 of campaign contributions from Abramoff clients, donating the money to charity.</p>

	Hastert's office oversaw.	upgrades.	
Rep. William Jefferson (D-La.)	<p>In the summer of 2005, the FBI videotaped Jefferson accepting \$100,000 from an informant, \$90,000 of which was later discovered in his freezer. Jefferson allegedly planned to use the money to bribe a high-ranking Nigerian official to guarantee the success of a business deal in the country.</p> <p>In addition, businessman Vernon Jackson, owner of the firm iGate, has admitting giving Jefferson more than \$400,000 to promote the company's broadband technology to African officials.</p> <p>In response to these allegations, in May 2006, the FBI raided Jefferson's Capitol Hill office, the first raid of a congressional office in U.S. history.</p>	Drafted ethics complaint alleging that Jefferson broke federal bribery laws and House rules. "Rep. Jefferson's conduct shows a blatant disregard for the rule of law and the integrity of the House of Representatives," said Melanie Sloan, executive director of CREW.	<p>Won his re-election campaign by a large margin.</p> <p>At the urging of then-minority leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) House Democrats voted to remove Jefferson from the House Ways and Means Committee prior to the Democratic victory in November.</p> <p>Under federal investigation on charges of bribery. The House ethics committee is also currently investigating him.</p> <p>Vernon Jackson pleaded guilty to bribing Jefferson and was sentenced to seven years in prison. A former aide to Jefferson also pleaded guilty to bribing the congressman and was sentenced to eight years in prison.</p>

Rep. Sam Johnson (R-Texas)	<p>In 2004, Johnson sent a letter to the IRS requesting an investigation of Texans for Public Justice (TPJ), the nonprofit group that uncovered former Rep. Tom DeLay’s alleged conspiracy to hide illegal corporate donations to Texas state legislature candidates in 2002. In response to Johnson’s claim that the group had violated its nonprofit status, the IRS audited TPJ, but found no evidence of tax violations. Critics claim that Johnson instigated the audit in retaliation for the group’s role in taking down DeLay. TPJ’s director, Craig L. McDonald, told <i>The Washington Post</i>, “Enlisting the IRS to intimidate critics is a dirty trick reminiscent of Richard Nixon.” Johnson sits on the House Ways and Means Committee, which oversees the IRS.</p>	<p>Filed a complaint with the House ethics committee (despite House rules barring outsiders from doing so) saying that Johnson may have violated several laws by using “executive branch resources for partisan political purposes.”</p>	<p>Won re-election campaign.</p>
Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-Calif.)	<p>Having received \$480,000 in contributions from lobbyist and former congressman Bill Lowery and his associates since 2000, Lewis approved hundreds of millions of dollars in federal projects for Lowery’s clients. Two Lewis staffers have gone on to work for Lowery, one of whom then returned to Lewis,</p>	<p>Filed a complaint with the DOJ stating that Lewis may have violated federal bribery laws and characterizing Lewis and Lowery’s relationship as “remarkably similar in nature to relationships between former lobbyist Jack Abramoff and</p>	<p>Lewis is under federal investigation for his relationship with Lowery.</p>

	further giving the appearance of an improper relationship between the congressman and the lobbyist.	other Members of Congress.”	
Rep. Gary Miller (R-Calif.)	<p>After profiting \$10 million by selling land to the city of Monrovia, Miller, one of the wealthiest members of Congress, told the IRS that the sale was forced (despite evidence to the contrary), thereby delaying the payment of capital gains taxes. Using this money, he subsequently bought two other properties and sold them to a nearby city, once again claiming that the sales were forced under threat of imminent domain and again delaying the payment of taxes.</p> <p>Miller also reportedly pushed for a legislative provision allowing the city of Rialto to shut down its airport, disregarding normal FAA rules. Miller’s business partner and one of his top campaign contributors, Lewis Operating Corp., then purchased the land to develop a 2,500-home planned community called “Renaissance.”</p>	Filed complaint with the IRS stating that the “serious nature of the tax law violations” Miller allegedly engaged in warranted an investigation.	<p>Ran unopposed in 2006 election.</p> <p>The FBI is currently investigating Miller’s allegedly improper land deals. Media outlets nationwide have credited CREW’s IRS complaint for instigating the investigation.</p>

<p>Rep. Richard Pombo (R-Calif.)</p>	<p>As chair of the House Resources Committee, Pombo oversaw hearings on tribal-related legislation. On multiple occasions, he reportedly accepted generous donations from tribes around the time his committee considered legislation in their favor.</p> <p>Though Pombo has denied ever being lobbied by Abramoff, the Northern Mariana Islands recently released records showing that Abramoff billed for at least two instances of contact with the former congressman. The Marianas government had hired Abramoff in the 1990s to block Democratic efforts to improve work conditions and increase the minimum wage for garment industry and other workers on the islands. In 1996, three days after Abramoff billed for a call to Pombo's office, Pombo voted against a Marianas measure opposed by Abramoff. Subsequently, he reportedly received \$7,500 in campaign donations from the lobbyist. Later, in 2003, as chair of the House Resources Committee, Pombo declined to hold hearings on Abramoff's involvement with the Marianas.</p>	<p>Drafted a thirteen-count ethics complaint alleging that Pombo may have violated federal bribery laws, among others, and filed an IRS complaint accusing him of disregarding tax laws. "This pattern of unethical and likely illegal conduct shows that Rep. Pombo believes himself above the law," said Sloan.</p>	<p>Lost reelection bid in a major upset for Republicans.</p>
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	In 2004, Pombo's aides reportedly asked the Department of the Interior to suspend environmental guidelines opposed by the wind-power industry, without disclosing that the congressman's parents had received hundreds of thousands of dollars in royalties from wind-powered turbines on their ranch.		
Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.)	Not long after Santorum was appointed to lead the Republican ethics reform effort early last year, he himself came under scrutiny for possible ethics violations. The <i>Philadelphia Daily News</i> reported that Santorum had received a \$500,000 mortgage from a private Philadelphia bank run by a major campaign donor. It was the bank's policy only to lend to its affluent investors, which the senator was not. It therefore appeared that Santorum had received the loan because he was a senator, thereby accepting a loan not available to the public, which is a violation of the Senate gift rule.	Filed a complaint with Senate ethics committee alleging that in accepting the loan, Santorum had created "exactly the sort of appearance of impropriety that the Gift Rule was designed to address."	Lost re-election bid.
Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.)	Sensenbrenner, who has accepted more private funding for public travel than any other lawmaker, reportedly asked the International Management	Asked the DOJ to investigate whether Sensenbrenner had "violated the federal law that prohibits Members from	Won re-election campaign.

	and Development Institute (IMDI) to fund a trip for him and his wife to Germany and Liechtenstein at a cost of nearly \$12,000.	soliciting a gift from any person who has interests before the House.”	
Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas)	Sessions reportedly took official action on behalf of Abramoff’s tribal clients and then accepted campaign contributions totaling \$20,500 from the Indian tribes. In addition, Sessions’ 2002 trip to Malaysia may have been illegally paid for by a foreign Abramoff client.	Filed complaint with DOJ requesting an investigation into whether Sessions had violated federal bribery laws. “It appears that, like other Members of Congress, Rep. Sessions got caught up in Mr. Abramoff’s web of corruption in which legislative assistance was exchanged for significant contributions to election campaigns and political action committees,” the complaint said.	Won re-election campaign.
Sen. Richard C. Shelby (R-Ala.)	Like former Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas), Shelby reportedly solicited campaign donations from Westar Energy in exchange for legislative action in the company’s favor.	Filed a complaint with the Senate ethics committee, saying that Shelby may have violated a federal bribery statute and the Senate ethics code in allegedly “providing legislative favors in exchange for campaign contributions.”	Awaiting action by the Senate ethics committee.
Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.)	In 2004, Specter reportedly offered appropriations deals to various local officials in exchange for their support of his candidacy for re-election.	Asked the U.S. attorney’s office to investigate Specter’s appropriations requests, admonishing them that “the	Herson is under investigation by the FBI.  Specter announced that his

	<p>Specter earmarked almost \$50 million for clients of the lobbyist husband of one of his top aides, Vicki Siegel Herson. Her husband's firm earned nearly \$1.5 million from those clients, suggesting that Herson, who works with the defense subcommittee where the earmarks originated, may have used her position to enrich her family, a violation of Senate ethics rules.</p> <p>Specter is also accused of furnishing a \$200,000 earmark to a client of lobbyist Eric Wallace, the son of another Specter aide.</p>	<p>government's failure to enforce the laws prohibiting such quid pro quos only serves to diminish public expectations and investment in our political process."</p> <p>Filed complaint with Senate ethics committee asking for an investigation into whether Herson was involved in Specter's earmarks to her husband's clients.</p>	<p>office would no longer engage in official business with lobbyists related to members of his staff.</p>
<p>Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska)</p>	<p>In 2001, Stevens reportedly accepted campaign contributions from Boeing executives a month before inserting language in an appropriations bill calling for the government to lease 100 Boeing 767s to the Air Force as refueling tankers.</p> <p>Stevens, the former chairman of the appropriations committee and the Senate's senior Republican, has openly touted his goal to steer federal funding to Alaska. In 2005, he was widely ridiculed by critics on both</p>	<p>Filed complaint with Senate ethics committee accusing Stevens of "illegally providing legislative favors" to Boeing in exchange for campaign contributions, thereby creating "the appearance that wealthy donors can gain legislative favors denied to the general citizenry."</p>	<p>Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) led an investigation into the tanker deal, which revealed additional scandals, resulting in the resignation of Boeing's CEO, the imprisonment of Boeing's CFO and an Air Force official, as well as the retirement of the secretary of the Air Force.</p>

	sides of the aisle for allotting \$223 million for “the bridge to nowhere,” a roadway connecting a small Alaskan city to a sparsely populated island.		
Rep. Charles Taylor (R-N.C.)	<p>Taylor founded and chairs a bank that made fraudulent loans to his long-time friend and political supporter, Charles Cagle.</p> <p>Taylor also reportedly accepted funds from Abramoff and his clients around the same time he wrote a letter to the Interior department (with former Sen. Conrad Burns (R-Mont.)) supporting an Abramoff tribal client’s request for school funding.</p>	Drafted ethics complaint alleging that Taylor “may have engaged in the crimes of conspiracy to commit bank fraud, bribery and honest services fraud” and “violated numerous House ethics rules.” Asked the DOJ to investigate whether Taylor “received improper preferential treatment” in the investigation of the fraudulent loans.	<p>Lost his bid for re-election, despite outspending the winner by over \$2 million.</p> <p>Both Cagle and the former president of Taylor’s bank have pleaded guilty to fraud and money laundering, and both claim that Taylor was aware of the scheme. Still, Taylor has not been charged.</p> <p>In December 2006, the FEC fined Taylor \$91,000 for failing to report in a timely manner \$800,000 of his own money that he put into his 2004 campaign.</p>
Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.)	<p>Weldon’s daughter’s consulting firm has won more than \$1 million in contracts from foreign clients seeking her father’s political assistance, giving the appearance that Weldon may have used his political influence to benefit her financially.</p> <p>Weldon reportedly used his influence</p>	Sent letter to DOJ requesting an investigation into whether “the suspicious timing between Congressman Weldon’s official assistance and the award of lucrative contracts to his daughter” violated federal bribery law.	<p>Lost his re-election bid to a Democrat, helping to shift the balance of power in Congress.</p> <p>In October 2006, the FBI raided Weldon’s daughter’s Philadelphia home and office as part of an ongoing federal</p>

	<p>to secure a job for his other daughter at a PR firm that had just won a Pentagon contract with Weldon's support.</p>	<p>More recently asked the DOJ to investigate whether Weldon threatened those who made contributions to his opponent.</p> <p>Weldon himself acknowledged CREW's role in his troubles, blaming "a woman who runs an organization called CREW" for the FBI's investigation of him.</p>	<p>investigation into whether Weldon used his position in Congress to steer business to her firm.</p> <p>In early January, the House ethics committee concluded that Weldon violated the gift rule by allowing donors to pay for a 2003 family vacation that was connected to official business and ordered him to return over \$23,000.</p>
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\*Only members of the House of Representatives can file ethics complaints with the House ethics committee (officially, The House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct); outside groups such as CREW are unable to do so. However, outside groups can file ethics complaints with the Senate ethics committee (officially, the Senate's Select Committee on Ethics).