

Andy Shaw on CNN June 15, 2010



GRIFFIN: Let's get back to the story we were talking about on our political list today. Before we took a break we were talking about the GOP allegations of jobs appointments offered by the White House to lure candidates out of political races.

Republicans demand an investigation. Dems say this happens all the time, not a big deal. Let's find out what a political expert thinks. It is Andy Shaw, executive director of the Better Government Association, former political reporter right there in Chicago.

Andy, there's a famous guy going on trial right now about a job in Chicago. We can't ignore that fact. But does this really happen all the time and we're just hearing about it?

ANDY SHAW, FORMER POLITICAL REPORTER, WLS, CHICAGO: Let me first, Drew, talk about the delicious irony of a drew interviewing an Andy about the transgressions of an Andrew. This seems like we're on top of all of it.

(LAUGHTER)

GRIFFIN: It's perfect.

SHAW: I wish I could feel a sense of outrage because as the head of a good government organization, I like nothing better than to call out politicians and public officials for transgressions. But by Chicago and Illinois standards, this is a joke.

This is an administration which needs allies in the Democratic Senate basically taking a public official, a distinctive public official who is the speaker of the Colorado house, and trying to find a fit for him for a job in some foreign affairs-related area.

He comes from Colorado, which has a large Latino population.

In a sense, this is just the essence of politics. Would you not expect the president to try to maintain a friendly Democratic senator in a state rather than take a chance on a competitor?

Now, if money had been suggested here, some kind of quid pro quo that was financial in nature, retire a campaign debt, something like that, then this would definitely be untoward.

But a conversation about seeking a job which, by the way, Mr. Romanoff, had been looking for anyway, a conversation about an appropriate job for a qualified individual, that's not pay to play. That would be laughed off the pages of the newspapers and off the screens of television here in Chicago because this is just basic everyday politics.

GRIFFIN: I get that. But he's -- ten months beforehand, he applied for this job. It's only when he becomes a Senate candidate that he gets a call from the White House.

And you say there's no money involved. These are jobs of \$150,000 and north of there. It's not money coming out of a back pocket. If not illegal, isn't it somewhat unethical or hypocritical for this hope and change government administration to be doing this kind of stuff?

SHAW: Well, that's the hot button you have pressed. It is a question of business as usual. And yes, in fact, this is business as usual.

So if Obama's being held to a different standard, that is, that the hope and change mantra was supposed to be accompanied by a politics that was above this sort of thing, you're absolutely right. It's untoward by those standards.

But that's not realistic. Rahm Emanuel, David Axelrod, Valerie Jarrett, they come out of the crucible of Chicago politics. They understand hardball. If you haven't broken the law, then you really aren't culpable. You're being accused of business as usual and something that may raise an ethical question, that's different, yes.

If you want to go hold a higher standard, he hasn't met it here. He didn't meet it with Joe Sestak. But it's so far from criminal or really serious and so far from needing an investigation, I would urge the Republicans to focus on the problems in the Gulf and the other problems with the Obama administration and not waste a lot of time and energy on this one because it's almost laughable.

I'm covering the corruption trial of a governor accused of virtually selling the state to the highest bidder. This is hardly that.

GRIFFIN: Right. Rahm Emanuel may be involved in that as well. We can get that on

another day. Let me ask you this -- couldn't the administration clear this up if they just answered the Republican's calls to release the memos, release the details, get Bill Clinton to say what he actually said to Joe Sestak?

It seems they've gone into this huddle in a cave and they're not talking about it hoping it will just go away. And quite frankly, it might go away if we stop talking about it.

SHAW: Well, you know, I always think it's a mistake for politicians to circle the wagons, because at the end of the day, you get in much less trouble for being forthcoming than you do when you hunker down.

I think when you hunker down with a bunker mentality, it looks like you're trying to cover up the truth. And when that happens, I think it's much worse than being forthcoming.

There have been e-mails released, the stories out there, I agree with you. Just tell it straight up that you're talking about maintaining a good ally there and you're offering a job to someone who is eminently qualified based on years of government experience. If someone wants to make an issue out of it, go ahead.

GRIFFIN: Andy Shaw, thanks for joining us. See you later, man.

SHAW: Drew, thank you.

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