

Buying, selling political influence

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The recent "Embarrassing disclosure" editorial was great, but it understated the problem a bit.

Grover Norquist's organization's role as the fiscal intermediary between a pro-gambling Indian tribe and the anti-gambling Christian Coalition of Alabama reflects what is going on with the philanthropic activities of Jack Abramoff (and his Capital Athletic Foundation), House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (and the DeLay Foundation for Kids) and others. These are poster children for the misuse and abuse of charitable institutions for the buying and selling of political influence, camouflaged by the confidentiality of nonprofit operations.

Every nonprofit, and certainly every philanthropic institution, ought to be outraged at the political manipulation of charity and philanthropy and should call for sharply higher levels of transparency and accountability whenever politicians and their lobbyist friends control nonprofit institutions. At risk are the trust of the American public in the nonprofit sector and its ability to deliver on crucial programs and services, neither of which is served by the unfortunately tax-exempt political charades of Norquist, Abramoff, DeLay and the Christian Coalition of Alabama.

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