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Law Review

Cuomo Accepts Campaign Donations From Firms Whose Clients Have Matters Before Him

Erin Geiger Smith | Nov. 23, 2009, 10:03 AM | 96 | 

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Boies Schiller represents former AIG CEO Hang Greenberg. New York attorney general Andrew Cuomo is going after Greenberg for civil fraud. Boies Schiller donated \$35,000 so far this year to Cuomo's political campaign.

Firm contributions to political campaigns are often just a regular part of their budgets. It's not surprising and it's not illegal, but it still raises some eyebrows.

Bloomberg's Linda Sandler and Karen Freitfeld have a lengthy [report](#) today on lawyers and law firms contributing to Cuomo's political pocketbook, even when their clients have matters pending with his office or Cuomo is actively investigating them.



Bloomberg: Cuomo's donation forms ask contributors to sign a statement saying they have no "matter" pending with him. That rule "does not extend to attorneys representing persons or entities with matters before the NYS Attorney General's office," the form states, mirroring his predecessors' policies. The exception creates the appearance of impropriety, ethics experts said.

"If Cuomo doesn't want to accept contributions that have the appearance of being corrupting, then he would need to include those attorneys as well," said Allison Hayward, a former Federal Election Commission chief of staff and counsel who teaches legal ethics at George Mason University School of Law in Arlington, Virginia.

Cuomo raised \$974,000 in 2006 and 2008 from lawyers and lobbyists, the article noted. He raised a total of \$18 million during the same period of time. Cuomo is often named as a likely candidate for governor.

It may seem like murky waters, but the fact is that in systems where judges and attorneys general are often elected, lawyers contributing to their coffers is a political reality.

Contributors to Cuomo include a who's who of law firms and their attorneys. In addition to Boies, Patterson Belknap, Paul Weiss, Sullivan & Cromwell, Skadden Arps, Kramer Levin, Mayer Brown and O'Melveny & Myers are named in the article as contributors or event sponsors.

Read the entire article, which discusses contributions and relevant client matters in detail, [here](#).



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