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Tobaccoup Road

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Originally posted Thu, 08/06/2009 - 03:34, bumping back to the top as it is worthy of additional attention during this period of debate over national healthcare reform - standingup

This is the first installment of a collaboration between [deltadoc](#) and [TheFatLadySings](#). Articles will be alternately published under each moniker.

In 1999, speaking to physicians, **Surgeon General C. Everett Koop**, a Reagan appointee, [decried](#) the hold of Big Tobacco on health care legislation.

He called tobacco "the sleaziest, slimiest, most devious industry in the world," whose members "also are the smartest and the richest," and then added.

"...that's a bad combination."*

Koop remarked:

The biggest scandal in Washington was the Republican Senate selling out to the tobacco industry.

Always prescient, Koop was drawing attention to a *coup d'etat*: a bloodless takeover of government by big business...one that would drastically effect us for over a decade and is still derailing healthcare reform efforts today.

Koop warned, "We have lost control of medicine to the business world."

According to Koop, the Senate's failure to hold the tobacco industry to the highest accountability for illness caused by cigarettes was "absolutely shameful, almost criminal..." FDA Commissioner David Kessler, an appointee of Bush 41 retained by Clinton, began to investigate whether new evidence might justify FDA regulation of tobacco as a drug in February of 1994. Bob Dole, Big Tobacco's candidate for President in the 1996 Clinton v. Dole election, campaigned on a platform that cigarettes are not addictive (an assertion that was rejected by voters as ludicrous) and that Koop had been brainwashed by "the liberal media."

Big Tobacco is Big Business. In August of 2006, the industry was judged liable for fraud and deception over half a century of racketeering activities under the Federal Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organization (or RICO) statute. RICO was designed to prosecute organized crime, largely for activities related to narcotics trafficking. The "drug connection" between tobacco and narcotics is not coincidental. Although legal and unregulated, in medical terms, nicotine is a powerful, dangerous, profitable and highly addictive drug.

The GOP's alliance with Big Tobacco is well-known (see chart, "Tobacco Industry Contribution Trends," below). This article breaks new ground about its start, bringing to light a set of memos memorializing formation of a partnership between top GOP leaders and tobacco industry executives in 1994 that would guarantee success for the Republican Revolution™. This partnership began to protect the tobacco industry from the imminent liability and regulatory threats to its survival caused by growing public awareness of fifty years of deliberate, lethal fraud. The consequences of the hidden compact agreed to between Republican leadership and executives of industry continue to impact our health and our healthcare delivery system today.

[Craig Fuller](#), a former inner circle member of the Bush/Reagan White House turned Senior VP of Corporate Affairs at Philip Morris, described in ebullient terms his progress towards securing Republican majorities on behalf of the industry in upcoming national elections. In their turn, Republicans waved the banner of deregulation to prevent the FDA from reining in harmful industry practices, and to limit the impact of liability on profits.

The following excerpts, primarily taken from Fuller's memos to Philip Morris' management, include Newt Gingrich's cheerful plan to "create a safe future for our generation and our children" without any expression of concern on Fuller's part for the youngsters being deliberately lured into addiction, or the 400,000

individuals condemned to excruciating tobacco-related deaths each year. Later memos detail the increasing marriage of tobacco executives' activities with long-range planning of the Party's national leadership. The GOP/Philip Morris partnership would continue beyond Craig Fuller's tenure.

The Tobacco racketeering alliance functioned like a Drug Cartel. However, because tobacco was both legal and unregulated, the cartel was able to express its coercive interference politically, through bureaucratic rather than overtly violent means. Individuals who thwarted the cartel's agenda such as Dr. David Kessler (FDA) and C. Everett Koop, or health researcher [Stanton A. Glantz](#) became targets of character assassination, litigation, or attacks on research funding. Gangs of astroturf activists, such as those [associated with Freedomworks**](#), could be easily dispatched to heckle wayward legislators. These campaigns, which served to intimidate politicians, judges, researchers, bureaucrats, etc., were at least partially funded through the "soft" Tobacco money described in the memos below.

The tobacco strategy amounted to an invisible *coup d'etat*.

[July 15, 1994](#)

Dole/Gingrich Meeting. Senator Dole, Congressman Gingrich, RNC Chairman Haley Barbour, several senior corporate representatives and half a dozen major trade association leaders met privately late Thursday to discuss a "road show" to communicate the remarkable opportunities that exist to make some changes in the Congress...Additionally, the Republican leadership has been an important ally in standing against taxes and more regulation...**I believe this program should have some tangible benefits for us...**

[Throughout the excerpt series, emphasis is ours.]

[July 29, 1994](#)

...Bob Dole, Newt Gingrich and Haley **are very grateful for the help we are giving them...**

[August 12, 1994](#)

3. August 16 RNC Luncheon. Bill and I are attending a lunch on Tuesday in New York with Bob Dole, Newt Gingrich, RNC Chairman Haley Barbour and a select group of senior corporate executives. The lunch is one of a series of events this month designed to raise significant corporate "soft" money for the RNC so they can direct their "hard" dollars to fully support the races they believe are competitive this fall...

August 19, 1994

RNC Luncheon. We have received a lot of good feedback from the Wednesday lunch. Senator Dole's top political staff person **has been raving about it** to a few of my friends and was very impressed with **"what Philip Morris did on very short notice."** **Haley Barbour has been very appreciative. He thinks they could raise close to \$3 million** from contacts made during the day. And, Newt Gingrich wants to visit one day in Washington "very soon." All of this, of course just earns us the chance to do more...but, I do think it is worth the investment this year.

On December 18, 1994 Fuller declared in a slideshow presentation after again discussing impact of voters' behavior on the Tobacco bottom line: "In the House, the biggest change can be summed up in two words: **"Chairman Bliley."** Then he deferred to his partner, a lobbying whiz who will be discussed in the next installment. **"Buffy can talk about this in a minute."**

December 28, 1994

The Republican National Committee (RNC) requested a proposal to develop a Leadership Program that could reach the entire country and deliver a clear message of the possibilities of a Republican majority. **A proposal was made, accepted and implemented.** This project was kicked off in New York with a luncheon and briefing that included PM executives with Senator Bob Dole and Congressman Newt Gingrich...We have concluded 1994 with a series of meetings with the Republican National Committee and the Washington Convention Center to discuss the planning and logistics for the 1995 Republican Inaugural for newly elected Republican Congressmen, Senators and Governors. Our Corporate Affairs department is providing all planning and logistical support to make this event a success in February of 1995.

January 10, 1995

Today, Common Cause released a report of soft money contributions to the Republican National Committee which, while negative in tone,

will do a better job making clear the relative size of our contribution than anything we could do on our own.

The bottom line: after Amway which donated \$2.5 million for a media center, Philip Morris was the largest money contributor to the RNC with a reported \$691,547. Other major corporate givers, according to Common Cause were: ARCO at \$443,000; **RJR at \$414,752**; and Merrill Lynch at \$349,500.

As Murray and I discussed this afternoon, the February 9th RNC event in Washington will allow us to put a "face" on the company and our executives who supported this effort.

[January 19, 1995](#)

Yesterday, **RNC Chairman Haley Barbour** and I spent about 2 hours together. He wanted to discuss a number of issues related to the RNC's fundraising effort, which he is revamping for the 1995-96 cycle. **He remains convinced that we helped him with a whole new approach last year.** He is very impressed with the February 9 Gala efforts, and we discussed the dinner. He spent quite a bit of time discussing the **1996 Republican Convention and "new approaches."**

In the course of the conversation, he asked if I would serve on an advisory group he is putting together to assist in planning the convention. **This is useful to us in that it allows me to work with the party's elected leaders.** It also takes little time. There is a fellow Haley has identified to run the convention who will do a good job. This was not something I wanted to do again, although I made it clear we would be supportive.

Haley also said he would like to have a future discussion with me about taking on a role for the RNC which would involve corporate fundraising. We did not talk specifics. This, too, could be **very helpful to us. It is an extension of what we have, in fact, already achieved which is considerable credit for helping make capturing the majority possible.** This role would have another benefit, it would allow me to stay active while having a good reason not to get involved with a specific Presidential candidate. These Presidential campaigns are going to be time consuming and dicey as long as Dole and Gramm both think they can go the distance.

In any event, a voluntary RNC role is interesting and something we should discuss. It would not (and I would not want it to) require taking a leave of absence or anything like that.

March 22, 1995

FYI

At dinner last night, **RNC Chairman Haley Barbour formally asked me for help with the corporate finance effort at the RNC** and then told a small gathering that he was **going to make me corporate finance chairman.**

This function is honorific and allows one to work as hard as one wants to help the RNC raise soft money from companies across the country-- something I had pledged **to help Haley with this year consistent with our strategy to hold the House and Senate majorities.**

This identity does give us the advantage of getting recognition with the leadership in the House and Senate. Frankly, as I've mentioned, it also allows me to keep presidential campaigns at bay with regard to my personal involvement.

March 24, 1995

What a ride! Gingrich and I spoke non-stop from NY to Washington. What an energy level he maintains.

He started by saying he has got to decide whether to be himself or change his style. He gave me a 92 page presentation, page by page. He asked for a critique of the presentation sometime next week. He asked what he should do differently. He asked if I would help him reach out to CEO's around the country with the presentation which is entitled "**The American Challenge: Creating a Safe Future for our Generation and our Children.**"

He now wants me to try to give him and his team a little time each week or every other week to fine tune their message.

Anyway, it all spells more meaningful contact with the leadership in the House. I did tell him what Haley Barbour has asked me to do and he is very excited about the corporate finance idea and wants to help. He wants to do more satellite feeds with more groups because **he thinks what he did with us was wonderful.**

November 11, 1996

[Composed on the letterhead of the Republican National Finance Committee Chairman]

Mr. Geoffrey Bible

Philip Morris

120 Park Avenue

New York, NY 10048

Dear Geoffrey:

Thank you and Tom Collamore for your strong support in Tuesday's election. We should be pleased that **we retained the majority in both the House and Senate**. This victory was made possible by your generous contributions. **You also helped a great American, Bob Dole, wage a vigorous campaign.**

You should feel great pride in your contribution to our party's and our country's future. We greatly appreciate your valuable help.

Sincerely yours,

Howard H. Leach

cc: Tom Collamore

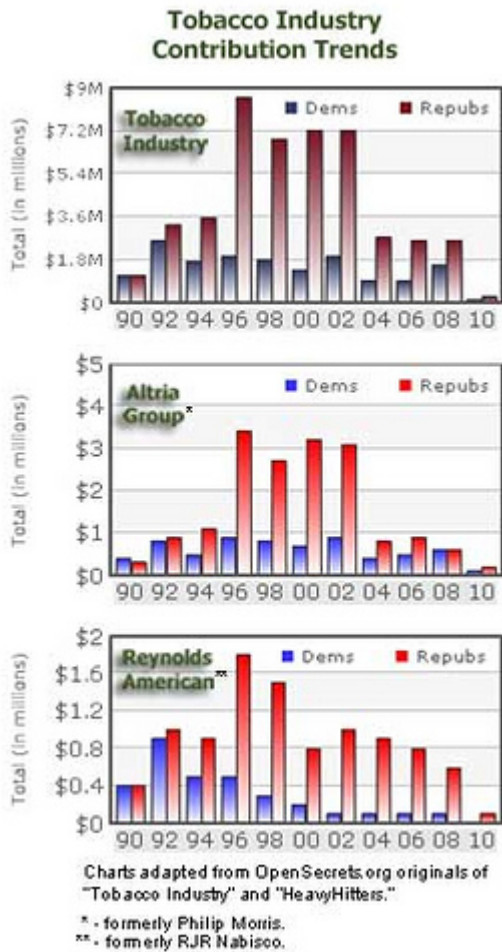
What significance does this series of 15-year-old memos hold in 2009?

Fighting national health care reform and the tobacco excise tax designed to fund it was a winnable battle for "the richest industry in the world," in 1994. But there was unrest amongst the troops. Challenges posed by a tidal wave of leaked documents, Congressional testimony, and actual investigative reporting suddenly presented even the "sleaziest, slimiest, smartest and most devious" cartel with not only the potential of a disappointing quarterly report, but the prospect of the industry's worst nightmare.

Lawyers running the racket knew that the existence of the tobacco industry was threatened by growing evidence that they deliberately manipulated nicotine in order to addict a new generation of "replacement smokers" (known to the rest of America as "kids") to a product that kills 400,000 of its consumers every year.

1994 unleashed the Third Wave of tobacco litigation (the first two waves occurred from the 50s through the 80s), while opening the door to Kessler's FDA investigation into regulating tobacco as the drug delivery device its manufacturers in fact understood it to be. That year, suddenly, the protection afforded by an army of lawyers, think tanks and propagandists was insufficient.

The trend of campaign contributions by Big Tobacco has massively favored Republicans for years. But the shift towards Republicans occurred in 1994, and was designed to both instigate and guarantee the so-called Republican Revolution. Craig Fuller's intimate access to GOP leadership served as a lever, insuring the Republican Party's protection of the rogue industry then, and since.



Judge Gladys Kessler's final opinion in [the Federal RICO case](#) of August 17, 2006, against Big Tobacco underscores the significance of the memo series:

In a democracy, it is the body elected by the people, namely Congress, that should step up to the plate and address national issues with such enormous economic, public health, commercial, and social ramifications, rather than the courts...

Within two weeks of Judge Kessler's opinion, [reports showed](#) that tobacco racketeers continued to jack up their products' addictiveness even as they were preparing for the RICO trial.

The news moved Congress to action that was only possible after the Democrats retook the majority later that year.

In his first six months in office, Obama made history by signing *Congressional* authorization for the FDA to regulate tobacco. This series will suggest that, to move forward, President Obama might first consider looking back.

Our next installment will be published by [TheFatLadySings](#): *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Kills Healthcare Reform*.

[UPDATE: Repaired erroneous Koop boss (thx JesseCW) and added statement of documents source.]

[UPDATE2: 8/12/09 - Cosmetic changes made for emphasis.]

* Tom Groening, Koop Attacks GOP Lawmakers, Tobacco "Biggest Health Care Problem," BANGOR D. NEWS, Apr. 17, 1999.

** Formed [from the merger](#) of tobacco ally 'Citizens for a Sound Economy' and 'Empower America'. Also see ['Americans For Prosperity'](#).

Note: The documents used in this story, and millions more, are publically available at the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library --

<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu>.

[Longterm Republican 'Revolution' Control Financed by Tobacco](#)

GOP Rule financed by sleaziest-slimiest most devious industry since 1994, Big Tobacco.

Longterm Republican 'Revolution' Control Guaranteed by Tobacco Campaign-funding Bias Shifted in 1994

Year	Congress	President	Senate (100)	House (435)
2009	111th	D	D - 55***	D - 255
2007	110th	R	D - 51**	D - 227
2005	109th	R	R - 55	D - 227
2003	108th	R	R - 51	D - 227
2001	107th	R	R - 54	D - 227
1999	106th	D	D - 54	D - 227
1997	105th	D	D - 54	D - 227
1995	104th	R	R - 52	D - 227
1993	103rd	R	D - 57	D - 227
1991	102nd	R	D - 56	D - 227
1989	101st	R	R - 55	D - 227
1987	100th	R	D - 55	D - 238
1985	99th	R	R - 53	D - 253
1983	98th	R	R - 54	D - 269
1981	97th	R	R - 53	D - 242
1979	96th	D	D - 58	D - 277
1977	95th	D	D - 61	D - 292
1975	94th	R	D - 60	D - 291
1973	93rd	R	D - 56	D - 242
1971	92nd	R	D - 54	D - 255
1969	91st	R	D - 57	D - 243
1967	90th	D	D - 64	D - 247
1965	89th	D	D - 68	D - 295
1963	88th	D	D - 66	D - 259
1961	87th	D	D - 64	D - 263
1959	86th	R	D - 65	D - 283
1957	85th	R	D - 49	D - 232
1955	84th	R	D - 48	D - 232
1953	83rd	R	R - 68	D - 221
1951	82nd	D	D - 49	D - 235
1949	81st	D	D - 54	D - 263
1947	80th	D	R - 51	R - 248
1945	79th	D	D - 57	D - 242

■ Republicans
■ Democrats

1989: \$9M R, \$5.4M D, \$1.8M T

20 90 92 94 96 98 00 02 04 06 08 10

Yellow years mark Presidential inauguration.