

RELEASE IN PART  
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**Sent:** Tuesday, March 6, 2012 2:16 PM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** FW: Obama administration hires lobbyist it attacked in 2008

**From:** Toiv, Nora F  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 06, 2012 10:51 AM  
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**Subject:** Obama administration hires lobbyist it attacked in 2008

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## Obama administration hires lobbyist it attacked in 2008

Made millions lobbying for Fannie Mae, General Motors

BY: Andrew Stiles - March 5, 2012 3:08 pm

The Obama administration has hired former lobbyist Steve Ricchetti to serve as counselor to Vice President Joe Biden, Politico's Mike Allen reports.

Ricchetti, who served as deputy chief of staff under President Bill Clinton, was a registered federal lobbyist for nearly a decade. In 2001, he founded Ricchetti, Inc., described as "one of the most successful and respected boutique government relations firms in Washington."

Ricchetti's firm made millions lobbying on behalf of clients such as Fannie Mae and General Motors, both of which have been on the receiving end of taxpayer-funded bailouts.

Biden's office, in a release announcing the hire, applauded Ricchetti's extensive experience in "public service, business and political life," which included "10 years at the helm of an independent public affairs firm."

Given the critical stance taken by the Obama-Biden campaign in 2008—against lobbyists in general, and Ricchetti in particular—the hiring has raised eyebrows.

"I am in this race to tell the corporate lobbyists that their days of setting the agenda in Washington are over," Obama said on Nov. 10, 2007 in Des Moines, Iowa. "They have not funded my campaign, they will not run my White House, and they will not drown out the voices of the American people when I am president."

Obama also promised voters "lobbyists won't find a job in my White House," a claim the nonpartisan watchdog website Politifact.com has rated a "promise broken."

As Politifact notes, although the president signed an executive order codifying this pledge on his first full day in office, the administration has made use of a loophole in the order that permits "waivers" for former lobbyists to serve. In some cases, the administration has hired former lobbyists without a waiver and without disclosing details to the public.

In 2007, an Obama campaign memo obtained by Ben Smith singled out Ricchetti for his role as a bundler for Obama's primary opponent, then-Sen. Hillary Clinton (D., N.Y.).

1. Five Of Clinton's \$100,000 Bundlers Are Federally Registered Lobbyists. Five of the "HillRaisers" listed on Clinton's web site are federally registered lobbyists: Steve Ricchetti, John Merrigan, Yashar Hedayat, Matthew "Mac" Bernstein, and Gary Mauro. HillRaisers are defined as anyone who raises more than \$100,000 for Clinton's campaign. [Clinton Bundling List; Senate Office of Public Records]

Another campaign memo, from March 2008, blasted Clinton for her connections to Ricchetti.

"We know that Clinton has requested at least two earmarks linked to top fundraisers and donors—GM lobbyist Steve Ricchetti and billionaire Alan Gerry," the memo states. "Will her campaign release the other earmark requests she has made that are linked to fundraisers, campaign donors, or donors to the Clinton Library?"

The Obama administration's relationship with the lobbying community has come under increased scrutiny recently. The *Washington Free Beacon* discovered last month that a prominent bundler for the president's reelection campaign was a registered federal lobbyist.

Former Rep. Ron Klein (D., Fla.), who helped steered millions of dollars in federal stimulus funding to campaign donors in 2009, claimed he accidentally registered to lobby on behalf of Spirit Airlines, Inc., and has since deregistered.