

Ben Eikey:

Welcome to Oversight Matters, a podcast that gives you a behind the scenes look at legislative investigations and the people involved. This is Ben Eikey and I am your host. This podcast is brought to you by the Levin Center at Wayne Law in Detroit.

Ben Eikey:

So on this episode of oversight matters, I'm interviewing Pablo Carrillo who, back in the day, served as chief investigator for US Senator John McCain in a two year investigation in the lobby and abuses targeting multiple Native American tribes. Pablo later became Senator McCain's chief of staff. From 2004 to 2006, Senator McCain spearheaded a bipartisan fact-based in-depth Senate inquiry in the lobby and abuses by Jack Abramoff and Michael Scanlon, two big-time Washington lobbyists who deceived more than half a dozen tribes into paying them lobbying fees totally more than 66 million. Following the facts wherever they led, Senator McCain compelled Congress to acknowledge Mr. Abramoff's corrupting influence, exposed his exploitation of Native Americans, sparked criminal prosecution of the wrongdoers, and helped enact lobbying and ethics reforms. The Abramoff inquiry demonstrates how Congress with appropriate leadership and bipartisan backing can confront and curb corruption in the political process. Join us for our conversation covering the Abramoff investigation and lessons for today's Congress. Pablo, thank you so much for joining.

Pablo Carrillo:

Thank you, Ben. It's a pleasure. And thank you for saying my last name well with the rolling of your R. [inaudible 00:01:41]

Ben Eikey:

I was going to ask you before, and then I just kind of did it. I took some Spanish in undergrad.

Pablo Carrillo:

No, well done. Well done. I've heard my first name and last name distorted so awfully over the years, that's refreshing to see. An absolute pleasure to talk with you on behalf of the Levin Center, obviously had great respect and affection for Senator Levin, and he was such a great partner to Senator McCain, particularly in terms of oversight investigations. And so it's an absolute pleasure talking with you today.

Ben Eikey:

Thank you so much. So let's start off by going behind the scenes of this investigation. How did Senator McCain go about investigating the lobby and abuses, and what was your personal role in the investigation?

Pablo Carrillo:

Absolutely. Let me just say it's a quick threshold matter. Any opinions I express are on my own and not attributable to the firm or its clients. So Senator McCain has always had an interest in educating the American people on big issues of the day about which he was troubled. And one of them, as you probably know, maybe your listeners don't as much, has been in the area of earmark abuse. And the Abramoff investigation was actually almost a logical continuation of the earmark abuse that he saw in a very significant investigation that we did proceeding the Abramoff matter. And that was an investigation into a \$30 billion deal by which the Air Force sought to procure from the Boeing Company, Air Force

refueling tankers. And at the end of the day, they generated evidence that led to the conviction of the CFO for that prime contractor, as well as a senior acquisition official at the Air Force.

Pablo Carrillo:

So this is an area where particularly given his interest in campaign finance reform, that was rather logical. And about this period, there was a good amount of public reporting on matters regarding Mr. Abramoff and his outreach to these Indian tribes and ultimately resulted... And I think it was a very prominent A1 upper fold article from the Washington Post reporter, Susan Schmidt, that caught his eye. And asked me to come on over and said that this is what we were going to get into. So at that point, to answer your other question, I'd been his chief investigative counsel through the proceeding investigation that he asked me to take on the role of leading this investigation for him.

Ben Eikey:

Thank you. Now, what were some of the abuses that you were able to uncover? Were there any facts along the way that sort of surprised you?

Pablo Carrillo:

Well, the facts about which that we really focused on or that we deduced at the end of the day, was kind of a function of the scope of the investigation. And for reasons that we'll talk about subsequently, the scope of the investigation was quite narrow. The scope of the investigation was whether or not these Indian tribes, with which these business entities that were older controlled by both Mr. Abramoff and his PR partner, Michael Scanlon, whether or not the tribes extracted the intended value of the monies, the proceeds that they had paid to those organizations.

Pablo Carrillo:

Realizing at the end of the day, we had at least preliminarily found that there appeared to be undisclosed conflict of interest between two, from an arrest and relationship between two that was disclosed to the tribes. So really kind of the most significant factual finding at the end of the day was, as you referred to, Ben, the \$66 million that I believe that was paid by, I think it was, correct me if I'm wrong, six Indian tribes to entities that were owner controlled by Mr. Abramoff and Mike Scanlon and the fact that the tribes had not received the intended value associated with those proceeds.

Ben Eikey:

That's correct. It was about six Indian tribes. There was lots of details that were brought up throughout the investigation, Mr. Abramoff finding ways to sort of threaten the Saginaw Chippewa when they dared to question his invoices, trying to figure out what he was doing during the time that he was billing.

Pablo Carrillo:

A notable kind of subsidiary finding, which was really quite interesting, and this is laid out of the report, of course, is how the two insinuated themselves into tribal politics in a manner for which they sought to secure these contracts. It's really quite interesting. I find it interesting because certainly in the conduct of the investigation, this is actually something we were very concerned about in terms of the investigation. And that is that we'd not conduct the investigation in a way that unduly insinuated ourselves or the investigation into tribal politics. We were very mindful. Tribal politics can be very dynamic. They can be very volatile. And we wanted to leave as modest, if you will, a footprint on any

political dynamics within these tribes as possible, just do what we could to extract the information that was needed to further the investigation, but in a way that did not duly impact intra-tribal political dynamics, which is kind of, very much, if you will, kind of the opposite of what they did in connection with their contract procurement activities.

Ben Eikey:

Which makes me kind of want to skip to that next question, thinking about just how the committee was able to build that sort of trust with the tribes. Was there just a little bit of a gap there? Perhaps some tribes were not even aware that this was happening or maybe they were even potentially a little embarrassed and didn't really kind of want to talk about it at all?

Pablo Carrillo:

Yeah. All of the above. Remember of course that the Indian tribes by their very nature are sovereign nations. And so when we're interacting with them, it's as if you're interacting with a foreign government. As a technical matter, it's well within their prerogative to cooperate as little or as much with the investigation as possible. So as you know, quite rightly then it was our ability to work effectively with them really derived from the trust we were able to achieve with them, which was actually derived itself from Senator McCain's longstanding interest in our legislative activities with regard to Indian gaming that he was a cooperative, a new regulatory act. And I'd actually known particularly with the Mississippi Choctaw tribe that was reasonably well acquainted with leadership, incumbent leadership at the tribe and the tribal council there, with regard to those tribes with which he did not have as much of a prior relationship.

Pablo Carrillo:

It was indeed a matter of assuring them, once again, that this was a matter that was a keen oversight interest to the committee, that the committee had jurisdiction over this issue, but we wanted to do it in a way that did not, once again, unduly impact intra-tribal political dynamics. And we didn't want to impune the judgment of the incumbent tribal leadership or the tribal council or anything like that. So it was just a matter of, once again, establishing that trust. By that point, of course, as just by way of recollection and Senator McCain was obviously, his reputation is bonified with any country generally long since it's been established. So it was just kind of a matter of leveraging that to bring the tribes to a level of comfort.

Ben Eikey:

It sounds like just getting to that point to be able to start the investigation, there was just, again, a lot of positive momentum already with tribal leadership to be able to get ourselves at a position where we can kind of go... And then another unique challenge that I was thinking about with this investigation, whereas you navigated an investigation that appeared likely to ensnare members of Congress and senior administration officials. Did that kind of have an impact in the way you sort of went about doing this investigation? Because that's a little bit of a different situation when you're kind of seeing an investigation that might reflect back on the institution in of itself.

Pablo Carrillo:

Yeah. It was a very important factor. It was a common understanding of that potential implication, and how it would be addressed by the investigation, was actually critical to the ability to achieve a bipartisan agreement on, once again, the fact that an investigation will be conducted and, once again, how that

investigation be done. And there Senator McCain had just a tremendous partner in then Senator Byron Dorgan. And the way we ultimately navigated that issue is, once again, up front coming to an agreement as to the scope of the investigation and under were the facts that really kind of governed the jurisdiction of the committee as it sought to pursue the investigation.

Pablo Carrillo:

In that context, there was an agreement that was reached or understood that were not the ethics committee. And so it was very, very important to, once again, a meeting of the minds as to what that scope investigation was going to be. And in that regard, it was exactly what I described just a moment ago. And we actually made reference to this quite a bit in the report to make sure that folks knew of where we were coming from with the scope would be limited to determining whether or not these union tribes extracted, for which these monies were extracted by companies owned or controlled by these individuals extract the intended value of having to make those proceeds. So it's relatively narrow. But within that narrow jurisdictional, that scope, lots of facts that we need to invest.

Ben Eikey:

No, it's really an interesting way to put it where it's like this narrow scope, but inside that scope, there's all sorts of different ways to try to approach and take a look and try to gather facts. You kind of talked about it just briefly, but could you just give a little bit more about just the role that bipartisanship played throughout this investigation?

Pablo Carrillo:

It was absolutely key. All of Senator McCain's investigations, particularly those for which I was responsible, bipartisanship was an absolute [inaudible 00:11:11]. Senator McCain quite rightly understood that if you don't have a chief bipartisanship up front, what you'll end up having is a majority report and a minority report, each one of which will be focused on in each party and essentially cancel out each other. And so it's a proverbial tree falling in the forest going around and it achieves very little good. And particularly for those issues that he focused on, which again, intended to describe how stuff gets done in Washington, particularly things that happen in Washington, that gave right about what he was very concerned, be it earmark abuse, or really, really big defense contracts or what have you.

Pablo Carrillo:

These were stories in his view that needed to be told about which the electorate American citizens needed to be educated on. And so, I think he naturally picked subject matters for which that it was likely going to be bipartisan interest. And even those, like this one, where there may have been some angles to them that could present some complexity or difficulty from a bipartisan perspective, but structured in a way up front to make sure that we can do it in a way that achieves a bipartisan result. So it was a very, very important quality for this and his other investigations.

Ben Eikey:

Well, it's just so unique, being able to be in a situation where you have a legislature that has that power to be able to gather and find facts, to be able to leverage differences, to be able to embrace the fact that we might see an issue a little differently, and then be able to come together on facts on a report that I believe it was universally held, correct?

Pablo Carrillo:

Oh, absolutely.

Ben Eikey:

I believe every member on the committee signed off. I mean, that's the most powerful fact finding endeavor we have as a society, in my eyes.

Pablo Carrillo:

And it really describes the importance of achieving alignment and, if you will, rules to the road that can effectuate that alignment throughout the life cycle of the investigation up front, and making sure the investigation is conducted in a manner that heeds to that agreement at all times to present mission [inaudible 00:13:13], stuff like that. So it was absolutely... And also bear in mind, Senator McCain, he was always mindful of the institutional integrity of the body and held very strongly the relationship he had with his fellow colleagues in the United States Senate. Which, once again, he presented a kind of command climate that required us to make sure that, once again, we heed to those elements. In other words, the investigation would be conducted in a way that always reflected well on the institution of the United States Senate, and furthered the spirit of bipartisanship and collaboration between him and whoever his partner and the other side is, be it Byron Dorgan, be it Carl Levin, be it others. And so, Senator McCain really, really set the tone in very, very many more ways.

Ben Eikey:

It's so important to have that kind of discipline from the word go, if you're really going to have a great investigation. I'm going to pivot to talking about these hearings now. So, the committee had ended up holding five hearings. And how did you decide on that number of hearings or on the witnesses, the overarching topics, and who kind of made those decisions?

Pablo Carrillo:

Those were staff recommendations, of course. So Senator McCain probably goes to just the significant legacy, this literary heritage in Ireland, but he was a natural storyteller. And one thing that we always thought about is, let's not let the investigation get in the way of what is just an amazing story, from a humanistic standpoint. And I think if you look at his opening statement, I think that really kind of describes what I'm talking about. It was the only opening statement, by the way, that I've ever seen receive an ovation from the audience.

Ben Eikey:

I did not know that.

Pablo Carrillo:

I've never seen that before. While the scope was narrow, within that scope, it was absolutely massive. We're talking about five to six tribes, multiple transact... It was just lots of facts. And so the question was, with regard to this investigation about which there was a good amount of developing public interest, how can we tell it in a way that was coherent and a way that will also tell the story from an effective way, but also maintain public interest over time. So we broke it up into five hearings. We basically reflected the five tribes. Each hearing went to the allegations of misconduct, relative to each one of the tribes, Choctaw, Tigua, [inaudible 00:15:43] et cetera. So, that was kind of a natural fit.

Pablo Carrillo:

And so we tried to do one, don't pin me down on this, Ben. I think we did one at least once every four to six months. I can't recall. But it was over a year and a half period, two year period. So, with the last hearing actually necessitated, that was by a last hearing where there was one witness, a woman by the name of [Talia Federici 00:16:09], with whom we were having difficulty having to testify. And so our ultimate remedy there was staff certification was, and certain can accept the fact, well, we kind of left her an empty seat when she did decline to testify at the hearing for which she was subpoenaed. And so we held over our last hearing to have her test testify solely so that that accounted for the last hearing, so.

Ben Eikey:

Wow. When questions were being designed, was the focus more to try to help the public and other members understand what happened here or think about necessary legislation, or was the focus directed towards law enforcement? It's kind of the way you would prepare a question it'd be different.

Pablo Carrillo:

Yeah, interesting. Definitely not law enforcement, the function of congressional oversight investigative prerogative of another constitution is fundamentally different from the law enforcement responsibilities by the relevant federal agencies. We always had a sense that there could be a legislative... That these issues that we were addressing could at the end of the day affect legislation. And indeed there was an earmark reform bill that was passed, that tried to address some of the issues that came out to the investigation. At the end of the day, Senator McCain thought that the legislation was insufficient, so he did not support it.

Pablo Carrillo:

But, in terms of the questions themselves, he's telling the story, he's telling the story. And in some cases, it was just kind of setting up the witnesses to, it's one thing to have the members speak, but it's another thing to just elicit from the witness facts that necessarily tell the story. At that point, all depositions had been done. All witness interviews had been done. We knew the answers to most of the questions that were being asked. So it's just a matter of structuring that [inaudible 00:17:48] a way that could probably present a story and do it in as persuasive and as compelling a way as possible.

Ben Eikey:

So when you say that you knew most of the answers to the question were going to be asked, was there anything that happened during these hearings that really surprised you, kind of knocked you back on your heels a little bit? Or was it pretty well prepared? So you knew where it [inaudible 00:18:08].

Pablo Carrillo:

Every one. It was perfect execution of the legal adage, you don't ask a question of an open forum to which you don't really know the answer.

Ben Eikey:

Every time.

Pablo Carrillo:

I don't think there was any... Even there was statements by Miss Federici, for example, that were pretty aggressive, another ad homonym, but then [inaudible 00:18:26] assert herself in that regard during her deposition. So I don't think there was any surprise, per se.

Ben Eikey:

Yeah. Do you remember any memorable staff or a committee member that developed sort of an expertise and an aspect of this inquiry, and then maybe used that for questioning, make some sort of a positive impact in the investigation as a whole? Was there a member that just when they first started didn't really know anything about this topic and then just really kind of surprised you over the time that you were like, wow, this person really--

Pablo Carrillo:

Not really, not really. As you might imagine, Senator Dorgan and his staff, who were quite excellent, were just tremendous partners. And we were absolutely transparent with them on everything that we did, of all the reasons that we described a few minutes ago, witness interviews, depositions, interview notes. Everything. So it was at very much [inaudible 00:19:13]. And I think that probably helped Senator Dorgan be very, very prepared. And so that partnership I think was very clear, publicly. There were other members that took a natural, very, very strong interest into matters being investigated. Ken Conrad in particular. But the two, Senator McCain and Senator Dorgan really did most of the work there.

Ben Eikey:

Wow. Thinking about the fourth hearing here, you had the interior department, deputy secretary, pretty senior official, [Steven Grouse 00:19:44], who lied about the connections to Mr. Abramoff. Another witness contradicted him. It was pretty dramatic. And as a result, Mr. Grouse was convicted of obstructing the investigation, demonstrating that individuals who lie to Congress can be successfully prosecuted, including federal officials. Did you know ahead of time that these other witnesses were going to be contradicting Mr. Grouse?

Pablo Carrillo:

Not necessarily. Without kind of parsing which issues you're referring to, the information that we obtained suggested significant disagreements or significant areas that needed to be resolved and was all that basis that we called them over. We had a sense of what they were going to say, of course. And we had a sense of, in what ways their testimonies were contradicting each other. But at the end of the day, who's telling the truth, who's lying, those are legal findings that align with... And whether or not those lies constitute crimes. So those are conclusions of law that align to law enforcement at the end of the day.

Ben Eikey:

Yeah, definitely. Last question I have on the hearings, Mr. Abramoff was called to the first hearing, plead to the Fifth. Of course, people's constitutional rights must be respected. However, what should an investigation do when the person, more or less at the center of an investigation, refuses to answer questions? How do the committee continue to build the inquiry, keep interest high, despite such an important person refusing to answer questions or, in other cases, not testify at all?

Pablo Carrillo:

Yeah, Senator McCain felt very strongly about this. Quite rightly, it's within the constitutional prerogative of any US citizen to not self incriminate themselves. And so when he publicly stated that during the hearing, done, we're done. Now, I think there was some questioning that went on to make sure that we understood the full contours as to those issues for which he asserted that they declines to answer, but there was no badgering. There was no harassment. This is something that Senator McCain felt very, very strongly. We were obviously loaded for bear. We were ready to go. But he's asserting his constitutional prerogative to do so, we're done. And it didn't really affect the conduct of the investigation at all. It lied within the prerogative of any of the individuals whose activities we were working into to do so. If I'm not mistaken, I think he may have been the only one who declined to answer, asserted his rights under the Fifth Amendment, but I don't think it affected the investigation at all.

Ben Eikey:

So that was a little over 10 years ago with the Abramoff Inquiry. Let's talk about today. Let's do this. So what lessons do you think the Abramoff Inquiry has for Congress today?

Pablo Carrillo:

That's a great question. It's something that I've actually thought about a lot, given recent developments. I think the big biggest proposition for which the investigation stands is this. There's almost no issue that Congress can't investigate. But, big caveat, it requires a member on each side, chairman ranking member, of goodwill to want to look into it. Now, once they've made that threshold decision, the question is not if, it's how. And that goes to some of the issues that I described. Can we structure the scope of the investigation in a way that engenders and furthers the spirit of bipartisanship? What are going to be the rules of the road? Even on the front end, you can think about where the possible rabbit hole or trip falls could be in a way that could undermine that, whether bipartisan willingness to pursue the investigation. So doing what you can to structure the investigation up front, to make sure that its conduct throughout its life cycle engenders and maintains that bipartisanship, is really, really important.

Pablo Carrillo:

And if done, there's almost nothing. I don't care how politically sensitive the investigation might be or what its implications might be. There's almost nothing that Congress can't look at from an oversight investigative perspective. It just requires a willingness up front to do so. And by the way, it also requires staff to understand a friend of mine once said this, I love this quote. You're an insulator of electricity, not a conductor of it. So you've got a sense of what the priorities of your boss are, with respect to bipartisanship, with respect to his relationship with members on the other side, with respect to the institutional integrity of the body. There are meta issues. There are broader issues, particularly for politically-sensitive investigations, that you always have to be mindful of. And you always have to make sure that the investigation is being pursued in a way that's mindful of those priorities. But once you've kind of gotten all that, once again, it's a matter of how and not if.

Ben Eikey:

Now, that Abramoff Inquiry was triggered by a press article that was read by Senator McCain. And we know the media environment's changed a lot since the 2000s, but do media articles still tip Congress to potential investigative topics?

Pablo Carrillo:

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. More so I think in a social media environment, it could be almost anywhere. I've seen a significant increase in nonprofits using social media in this way, in a way that really, it seems to appeal to lots of members in terms of oversight and investigations, but all sources of information. It could be a whistle blower. It could be, once again, traditional newspaper publications. But now social media I think has really kind of added a dimension to this, good sides and bad sides too. But absolutely.

Ben Eikey:

Yeah, sometimes the social media post could be missing key context for something that happens. I think the example that was brought up was with Uvalde with the cell phone cop, where he was receiving texts from his wife and people were like, "Oh, he is looking at the Punisher logo. LOL." People jumped to conclusions very quickly. And even more people got hurt in the process because of that. But at the same time, you can see social media be used for good.

Ben Eikey:

The example that we always think about was a few years ago when March Madness was going on and you had one of the girls that was playing on the basketball team that took a picture of their weight room. There was nothing there. There was barely a set of weights, when you can all imagine the way the guys' rooms look. And because of that, it was this viral moment and the NCAA stepped in and provided way more information and way more equipment for the women to use as well. So there's positive things that can come out of it, but it's, again, one of those things where sometimes it's good, sometimes it can really result in people getting hurt.

Pablo Carrillo:

Totally. And I think one thing it requires of senior staff, it imposes on them, I think, an obligation that it's actually imposed on any consumer of social media and information that comes from social media. And that's critical thinking. Social media can be a very low fidelity source of information, to put that [inaudible 00:26:32]. And very many times, it will not necessarily so much impact, but reflects public interest. And so in a way that may align with political or partisan proclivities. So when you see something like that, it could be really, really kind of sexy. Kind of aligns with my thinking, not necessarily reliable, but lots of people are interested in it. Let's get into this. And I've actually seen members... It's very unfortunate, but to kind of really kind of pull thread on this observation, in the new kind social media environment, I've seen... Let me back up for a second.

Pablo Carrillo:

As we know, Ben, the constitutional oversight investigative prerogative runs to congressional committees of jurisdiction, not individual members of Congress. And I've actually seen members of Congress issue investigative type letters themselves, not under the imprimatur or the force of effect of a proper committee of jurisdiction. And they've done so because they want to extract the PR benefit upon themselves. And even if the company or the individual whose activities are being targeted under that inquiry quite rightly declines to participate because this is not once again a legally effective document, the request for documents or information coming from the member, they will take that letter and blow it out on social media for click bait. So it's really quite troubling.

Ben Eikey:

That's a fascinating observation. I've never really thought through it all the way through that narrative like that. Because when I'll see those, they'll be posted on Twitter and I'll see they get a ton of attention,

a ton of following and I'm thinking, but that's not how it works. Why are you doing this? But you're right, from the PR angle.

Pablo Carrillo:

Exactly. This is a development that you just didn't see 10 years ago in the absence of a robust social media. It's a bit troubling.

Ben Eikey:

Very. So since the release from prison, Mr. Abramoff has tried to recast himself as a reformer. He's using his insider status to sound an alarm on lobbying corruption in DC, indicated the lobbying abuses he engaged in are still very much occurring today. Did the Abramoff lobbying reforms have an effect on lobbying in Washington today? Is Congress still capable of a bipartisan fact-based inquiry into harmful lobbying, and should lobbying abuses be a topic of any sort of a future inquiry?

Pablo Carrillo:

What Ms. Abramoff and Mr. Scanlon were convicted of, at the end of the day, was fraud, was criminal fraud. There's just no relationship between that and lobbying. I'm actually unaware of any kind of lobbying abuses, per se. Everyone that I know who lobbies, administration or Congress, I think present themselves quite appropriately as upstanding professionals. And indeed you have to because your ability to advocate the interest of your clients' function of your own credibility and your professionalism. And so, I think there are natural, very, very strong reasons why a lobbyist would not assert himself in any way that even approaches the types of misconduct which these individuals were convicted. And once again, that was just, it's another new lobby [inaudible 00:29:40].

Ben Eikey:

I strongly agree. Yeah. All right, here we go. My last question. What are your thoughts about the January 6th investigation and what lessons from the Abramoff trial lobbying scandal do you believe those working on the January 6th investigation ought to take to heart?

Pablo Carrillo:

I'm not sure they should take very much to heart because I have been really impressed.

Ben Eikey:

Me too.

Pablo Carrillo:

Just in terms of the trade craft. Clearly it was... And I don't know their staff at all. I may know some of them, I just haven't run them on Google, but there may be some old hands there. But it is very clear to me that the chairman and the vice chairman did the kind of work that we're talking about upfront to make sure that the scope of that investigation is sufficiently narrow and specifically one that will further bipartisan interest in the conduct of the investigation. And you hear it all the time, right? You hear members of the committee in the news media, cable news, constantly say, well, that's not really what we're looking at. That's not... Even the members, the rank and file members who are presenting themselves in news media are very disciplined in their messaging. There's some new things that they've done that I've never seen before that I quite like.

Pablo Carrillo:

I like their use of B-roll from their tape depositions and witness interviews, and they're presenting them during the hearings. That's very interesting. Very, very novel. May represent a piece of the trade craft that may be replicated going forward. The fact that they have Republicans out in front that obviously the only two that are members of the committee is very important, but I think those two members have asserted themselves publicly in terms of the investigation and the facts being investigated in a very even-keeled way. They'd let the facts speak for themselves. I have no reason to think that anyone who looks at those hearings from an objective standpoint would arrive at any other conclusion. My only slight reservation in last night's developments in terms of the Wyoming primary given rise to this, especially when it comes from [Cheney 00:31:50]. Now she has basically transferred all the monies from her campaign into a leadership pack.

Pablo Carrillo:

And the purpose of which, I think it's called the Great Task, will be to essentially to prevent the previous president from returning to office. That is so fundamentally different from, if you will, her pre-primary persona and is so fundamentally driven to an outcome with regard to the former president whose activities are being investigated by the committee, that I hope that that doesn't have the committee lose credibility or affect its efficacy going forward. There just seems to be a fundamental conflict between her post-primary persona and organizations being funded by her supporters, and the facts being investigated into that investigation. And I say that because, of course, as we all know, publicly, the committee has said that they will continue the investigation, continue hearing when we get back after Labor Day. And so, I have a bit of concern I don't know how that will be navigated or, in a very minimum, I think it just gives opponents and natural critics of the investigation a place to go. So that's just something to think about in light of recent developments.

Ben Eikey:

No, that's a really good observation. I haven't had a chance to reflect on last night's results quite the same way, but I did notice, and certainly a very change of tone, I would say, from that point forward. It will have some sort of an impact in the investigation as a whole. I do necessarily will. It's the same person that's saying these things. So I will be watching very closely and see how things kind of unfold at this point forward.

Pablo Carrillo:

Does the result... Maybe, Kissinger will take a more prominent role. Maybe she'll kind of recede to the background. I'd like to think that leadership appreciates this and will do what needs to be done to maintain the credibility of the investigation and its effectiveness. I don't think it's converting folks, necessarily. I think it's making folks at the margins, presenting them with facts that are making them more mindful of the possible disadvantages of next term with the president, because it's too much. It's just too... But even there. Politics is a game of inches. But in terms of the undertaking, how it's structured, it gets use of trade craft, the effectiveness of the hearings. I didn't expect it. Didn't expect it. Pleasantly surprised [inaudible 00:34:19].

Ben Eikey:

As am I. But not surprised at all, this was a great podcast.

Pablo Carrillo:

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Yeah, yeah.

Ben Eikey:

Thanks again, Pablo. I really appreciate it.

Pablo Carrillo:

My pleasure.

Ben Eikey:

Thanks for listening. I really enjoyed my conversation with Pablo, and I'm thankful we were able to share some time together. Keep an eye out for the Levin Center's portrait and oversight on John McCain and the Abramoff tribal lobbying scandal, scheduled to be released in late September. The portrait will be available on our website alongside other portraits on important congressional oversight investigations, as well as key past figures in oversight. Until next time, my name is Ben Eikey and this is Oversight Matters, a podcast on legislative oversight.