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McCain Campaign Staffed By Telecom Immunity Lobbyists

Posted by [Kurt Opsahl](#)

Senator John McCain's presidential campaign has strong connections to the high-powered lobbyists employed by AT&T and other telecommunications companies to escape from responsibility for violations of federal law, with paid lobbyists occupying prominent positions in the upper echelons.

Last fall *Newsweek* [reported on](#) the telecom's "secretive lobbying campaign to get Congress to quickly approve a measure wiping out all private lawsuits against them for assisting the U.S. intelligence community's warrantless surveillance programs." The magazine named some of the chief telecom immunity lobbyists:

Among the players, these sources said: powerhouse Republican lobbyists Charlie Black and Wayne Berman (who represent AT&T and Verizon, respectively), former GOP senator and U.S. ambassador to Germany Dan Coats (a lawyer at King & Spaulding who is representing Sprint) ...

All three are now working with McCain. Charlie Black is now the chief political adviser for McCain. In March, Black left BKSH & Associates, a lobbying firm he helped found. Up until Black left BKSH, he was paid by his lobbying firm, while his firm was paid by AT&T [[BKSH Lobbying Disclosure](#)]

Wayne Berman is McCain's national finance co-chairman, and Managing Director of Ogilvy Government Relations, a prominent lobbyist for telecom immunity in the FISA legislation. [[Ogilvy Lobbying Disclosure](#)]. John Green, a founding partner of Ogilvy, and another paid lobbyist on FISA for AT&T, [is now](#) "a full-time liaison between McCain's presidential campaign and Republicans in the House and the Senate."

Dan Coats is a member of [McCain's Justice Advisory Committee](#), and has [campaigned](#) for McCain, and was joined by former Senator Trent Lott. After leaving the Senate in 2007, Lott became a [paid lobbyist](#) for AT&T, seeking immunity for the telecoms.

Accordingly to the [Arizona Republic](#), Bryan Cunningham is a McCain fundraiser. He is also a paid lobbyist at Barbour Griffith & Rogers, working on "FISA reform" for AT&T. [[BG&R Lobbying Disclosure](#)]. Kirk Blalock is a fundraiser and chairman of Young Professionals for McCain. He too is a paid lobbyist, working at Fierce, Isakowitz &

Blalock and lobbying on FISA for Sprint. Blalock's colleague Kirsten Chadwick is the finance director of Young Professionals for McCain, as well as a lobbyist for Sprint on the FISA Amendments Act. [[FI&B Lobbying Disclosure](#)]

McCainSource.com has [compiled a list of lobbyists](#) on the McCain campaign, including fundraisers Philmore B. Anderson and James L. Pitts ([DC Navigators LLC lobbyists](#) on "FISA Legislation, all provisions" for AT&T), Juleanna R. Glover Weiss, of the Women for McCain Steering Committee (lobbyist with the [Ashcroft](#) Group for AT&T) and fundraiser Paul Martino ([Alston & Bird, LLP lobbyist](#) on FISA for AT&T).

Telecom immunity lobbyists are not the only connections between the McCain campaign and telecom lobby. [USA Today](#) reports "Of the 66 current or former lobbyists working for the Arizona senator or raising money for his presidential campaign, 23 have lobbied for telecommunications companies in the past decade." USA Today also notes:

People who lobbied for telecom companies on those issues include McCain's campaign manager, his deputy manager, his finance chief, his top unpaid political adviser and his Senate chief of staff. Telecom companies have paid the lobbying firms that employed those top five McCain advisers more than \$4.4 million since 1999, lobbying records show.

According to the [Washington Post](#), McCain's "campaign manager, Rick Davis, co-founded a lobbying firm whose clients have included Verizon and SBC Telecommunications," and "McCain's top fundraising official is former congressman Tom Loeffler (R-Tex.), who heads a lobbying law firm called the Loeffler Group." The Loeffler Group lobbies for AT&T. Loeffler has since [resigned](#) from the McCain campaign.

Christian Ferry, McCain's deputy campaign manager, "worked from 2003 to 2005 at Davis Manafort, where his clients also included SBC Telecomm [and] Verizon," Timothy P. McKone, a fundraiser, is "a lobbyist for AT&T," and John Timmons, another fundraiser, "has lobbied on behalf of ... AT&T," according to the [Arizona Republic](#).

The strong connections between the telecom immunity lobbyists and the McCain campaign raise serious questions about McCain's [about-face](#) on warrantless wiretapping. As recently as November 2007, [McCain told CNET News](#) (emphasis added):

When companies provide private records of Americans to the government without proper legal subpoena, warrants, or other legal orders, their heart may be in the right place, but **their actions undermine our respect for the law.**

...

If retroactive immunity passes, it should be done with explicit statements that this is not a blessing, there should be oversight hearings to understand what happened, and Congress should include provisions that ensure that Americans' private records will not be dealt with like that again.

Six months later, McCain has become an "unqualified" supporter of telecom immunity, claiming in [a statement to the National Review](#) that "neither the Administration nor the telecoms need apologize for actions that most people, except for the ACLU and the trial lawyers, understand were Constitutional and appropriate." Actually, [former government officials and law professors](#), [think tanks](#), and [various scholars](#) have concluded the NSA warrantless surveillance program was illegal.

The revised statement, issued after an apparently [off-message talk](#) at the Computers Freedom and Privacy conference, reads a lot like the talking points that a telecom lobbyist might employ.

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