ACORN Should Not Receive Taxpayers' Money

by Phyllis Schlafly May 22, 2009

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Several prominent non-Republicans and ex-Republicans have been all over the media giving advice to Republicans about how they should re-brand themselves and which issues they should talk about. Among this unsolicited advice is that Republicans should stop criticizing ACORN.

Au contraire; Republicans should loudly demand that ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) be cut off from all further handouts of taxpayers' money. After all, didn't Barack Obama promise us an ethical administration and an end to the influence of lobbyists and special interests?

ACORN is one of the most successful lobbyists for taxpayers' money, which ACORN uses for very partisan special-interest activities. ACORN and its affiliated organizations (estimated at 270 related corporations and so-called non-profits) are under investigation in more than a dozen states for voter registration fraud, and there's no question about which party and which candidate ACORN supports.

Nevertheless, ACORN and its affiliated organizations (disguised as nongovernmental "neighborhood stabilization" organizations) could receive $3 billion (with a B) from Obama's stimulus package and another $5.5 billion from his 2010 federal budget. That is after receiving $53 million of taxpayers' money over the last 15 years.

Nevada charged ACORN groups with submitting thousands of fraudulent voter registration forms in 2008, and illegally setting quotas for its canvassers and paying them bonuses for signing up more than 21 new voters a day. The Las Vegas

registrar of voters believes 48 percent of registrations turned in by ACORN were fraudulent.

Nevada's Democratic Attorney General said that ACORN's training manuals "clearly detail, condone and ... require illegal acts" such as requiring workers to meet voter-registration targets in order to keep their jobs.

Pennsylvania authorities charged seven ACORN workers with falsifying voter registration forms. The voter registrar said that ACORN submitted at least 1,500 fraudulent registrations during last year's presidential campaign.

Washington State fined ACORN $25,000 after several employees were convicted of voter registration fraud in 2007.

Last year, eight national ACORN board members demanded an audit of ACORN's books. The result was that the eight were removed.

ACORN's blatantly partisan activities with taxpayers' and other non-profit funds make it an appropriate target for a congressional hearing. After first agreeing to hold a hearing, the Democrats then reneged and refused to hold one.

Barack Obama has for years had a close working relationship with ACORN, as a community organizer, as the head of a registration effort for Project Vote (one of ACORN's partners), as attorney for a very important lawsuit, and for get-out-the-vote assistance in his 2008 presidential campaign. When he met with ACORN leaders last year, Obama bragged that he "ran the Project Vote voter registrations drive in Illinois."

In 1995, Obama represented ACORN in a case upholding the Motor Voter Act. That law authorized postcard registration, which proved so useful to ACORN workers in filing false registrations.

In 2008, Obama's presidential campaign reported paying $832,000 to Citizens Consulting Inc., the umbrella group controlling ACORN, for get-out-the-vote efforts in key primary states. ACORN and its affiliated groups put thousands of get-out-the-vote workers in battleground states during the presidential campaign last year.

Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-MN) successfully persuaded the House Financial Services Committee to unanimously pass an amendment to the Mortgage Reform and Anti-Predatory Lending Act prohibiting any organization indicted for voter fraud from receiving federal housing grants. Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) then had a tantrum and got the Democrats to remove it.

Sen. David Vitter (R-LA) tried to prohibit ACORN from getting federal funds through the new Serve America Act. But Harry Reid's Senate killed that constructive idea.

It's not just taxpayers' money that ACORN has had at its disposal; ACORN also has received generous grants from top recipients of federal bailout money. Bank of America (almost $3 million), Citigroup and JPMorgan Chase made big grants to ACORN Housing Corp., one of ACORN's many affiliated organizations.

It is particularly important to expose ACORN's political activities because of its new relationship with the Census Bureau, the agency tasked with compiling the 2010 census. The count of the U.S. population will determine which states gain or lose votes in both the U.S. House and the Electoral College, and which districts get more federal handouts.

American constitutional government cannot survive if the population count is managed and manipulated by organizations with partisan bias. The importance of a fair and accurate count cannot be overestimated because the count can give one party an unfair advantage and control over America for the next decade.

Yet the Obama Administration chose ACORN to recruit counters for the 2010 Census, and they are already canvassing neighborhoods. Rep. Patrick McHenry's (R-NC) effort to sever the Census Bureau-ACORN partnership should be supported by all who want honest elections.