



Editorial by Dave Larson
Guest Soapbox Contribution

Representative Lewis Not Fit to Represent Constituents

A member of Congress has a sworn duty to represent their constituents, the citizen's who reside within the district they serve, and to meet with those constituents to resolve issues with federal government agencies. Representative Jerry Lewis is up for re-election in November and recent news articles and media reports have revealed that Representative Lewis is the target of a federal corruption investigation by the Department of Justice and may not be fit to serve the constituents of California's 41st Congressional District.

Like many registered Republicans, I used to faithfully support the party ticket, however in the case of Representative Lewis, constituents would be far better served by ousting this incumbent and voting for fresh leadership, even if it means crossing party lines. The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and other publications have widely reported that Representative Jerry Lewis is under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice, Los Angeles Attorneys Office, and FBI for corruption and his improper ties to lobbying firms. A recent news article recently ranked Representative Lewis as the 5th most corrupt official in Washington.

After disgraced San Diego Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham was indicted on bribery and corruption, investigators began to look at other lawmakers who had ties to the same contractors -- in this case the San Diego-based Brent Wilkes -- alleged to have bribed Cunningham. Lewis was quickly determined to be one of those lawmakers. As reported in the San Diego Tribune, Lewis "greenlighted hundreds of millions of dollars in federal projects for clients of one of his closest friends", lobbyist and former state Congressman Bill Lowery. Additionally, "Citizens Against Government Waste", a non-profit, non-partisan organization ranked Lewis in the top ten for Pork Barrel Projects in 2008. A recent article in the Los Angeles Times also ranked Lewis as the number one abuser of earmarks in all of Congress.

On July 15, 2006, campaign finance documents released by Lewis' campaign office revealed that he had spent \$200,000 of his campaign contributions on legal expenses. Specifically, the money was spent to hire Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP, a law firm that specializes in crisis management and represents both individuals and firms accused of white-collar crimes. As of October 2006, the amount Lewis had spent on legal fees grew to \$800,000. A simple Internet search shows that Wikipedia and sourcewatch.org "Congresspedia" is filled with facts regarding corruption investigations of Rep. Lewis as well as improper ties to lobbyists and abuse of earmarks that benefit Lewis' contributors and cronies. This is not what constituents of the 41st District should be looking for come November. We cannot afford to have someone like this representing "our interests" in Washington. We need change in our district.

Personal experience with Representative Lewis has confirmed his inability to represent his constituents and gives weight to allegations of corruption. As Vice-President of the Flamingo Heights Community Association and as a constituent of Representative Lewis, I sought to meet with Representative Lewis or appropriate staff member to discuss issues within our district and to disclose instances of criminal misconduct and misappropriation of funding by a Defense contractor. Because the Defense contractor had ties to Lewis' lobbying firms and contributors, including Brent Wilkes, Representative Lewis refused to hear the allegations. Over the course of fifteen months, twelve polite letters requesting to arrange a meeting were sent to Lewis' office and numerous phone calls to staffer Sean Dillon were all met with promises of a meeting which never occurred. Eighteen months later, Representative Lewis still has not heard the allegations and has refused all requests to arrange a meeting.

It is clear that Representative Lewis values the needs of his wealthy lobbyists and campaign contributors more than the needs of the constituents he represents in our district. Do we really want a Congressman who is under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice, the target of a federal corruption probe, who refuses to meet with his constituents, who is linked to convicted criminals such as Randy "Duke" Cunningham, and who is ranked as one of the most corrupt officials in Washington? Whether you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat or Independent, when it comes to Representative Jerry Lewis, vote for the other guy in November. The citizens of Morongo Basin and constituents of the 41st Congressional District will be much better represented in Washington by someone fresh, new and less corrupt than Representative Jerry Lewis.

Note: The author, Dave Larson, is a contributing writer, Biomedical Engineering student, FCC licensed operator call sign KI6JJN, founder of Larson Media www.larsonmedia.net, is a member of the Yucca Valley ELK's #2314 and serves as Vice President of the Flamingo Heights Community Association.