



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on June 12, 2009

Obama Fires Inspector Who Found Misuse

[AP reported on June 12](#) that Obama was citing his loss of confidence in Walpin to explain the firing. While the acting U.S. attorney in Sacramento had criticized Walpin for how he conducted the investigation, prosecutors did find fault with St. HOPE Academy's sloppy record keeping and reached a settlement. The Academy maintained its innocence, yet it still agreed to return about \$424,000 out of the \$850,000 it had received. At this point, the president stepped in to fire Walpin without listing any substantial reasons.



What makes Obama's action questionable is that Johnson is a big supporter of the president. As soon as Walpin finds that Johnson is using AmeriCorps grant money to pay volunteers to engage in school-board political activities, to run errands, and to wash his car, the president gets involved and cans Walpin. He could have at least waited so as not to give the impression of seeking retribution against Walpin.

Not only that, but Obama himself sponsored the Inspectors General Reform Act in 2008. The act is meant to give inspectors general some protection from interference as they do their jobs, especially interference by the White House. It stipulates that the president shall give 30 days' notice before dismissing an inspector general, and also requires him to state the reasons for his decision. At this point, Obama may be allowing the 30 days, but he is not supplying any objective validation for his action.

[The \(Washington\) Examiner on June 11](#) quoted a letter from Senator Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) to the president saying that he "was troubled to learn that [on the night of June 10] your staff reportedly issued an ultimatum to the AmeriCorps Inspector General Gerald Walpin that he had one hour to resign or be terminated." This hints at an effort to avoid even the 30-day requirement by strong-arming Walpin into leaving. But Walpin would not go quietly.

Walpin's statements, noted by *The Examiner*, indicate that the criticism from the U.S. attorney in Sacramento was an effort to discredit Walpin after the attorney's office failed to stifle the suit. Walpin found "six specific instances of diversion and misuse of [AmeriCorps] grant funds," yet Johnson failed to present "a single fact to dispute those findings." Even the settlement for \$424,000 is not all it's cracked up to be. Walpin points out: "As St. HOPE is insolvent, the absence of any obligation imposed on [Johnson], and the absence of any guarantee or security to ensure payment, makes the settlement a farce."

Senator Grassley wrote in his letter to the president that "there have been no negative findings against Mr. Walpin by the Integrity Committee of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency," that "he has identified millions of dollars in AmeriCorps funds either wasted outright or spent in violation of established guidelines," and that "it appears he has been doing his job."

The full story remains to be told, but President Obama could have avoided the appearance of



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impropriety by not being in such a hurry to get rid of someone who apparently caught one of his supporters red handed. Unfortunately, no one is paying attention to the millions of dollars in other waste or violation that Grassley said Walpin has found. This waste, fraud, and abuse is the price of trusting government to run programs like AmeriCorps.

By putting government in charge of volunteer service or any other unconstitutional program, not only are millions of taxpayer dollars wasted or stolen, the effort to police how funds are used eats up even more of the taxpayers' money. If there were no AmeriCorps, the government wouldn't need an inspector general to watch over it. Walpin would no doubt find employment in the private sector, and President Obama would surely benefit by not having this particular reason to make himself look bad.



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