



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on July 11, 2016

Congresswoman Corinne Brown Indicted; Faces 357 Years on Corruption Charges

Representing Florida's Fifth Congressional District for nearly a quarter of a century, Congresswoman Corinne Brown (shown) has had numerous brushes with the law, both inside and outside Congress. On Friday [her indictment on 24 charges](#) of milking her charity is likely to end her legislative career permanently.



Assistant U.S. Attorney General Leslie Caldwell, head of the Justice Department's criminal division, provided some of the details:

Congresswoman Brown and her chief of staff [Ronnie Simmons] are alleged to have used the congresswoman's official position to solicit over \$800,000 in donations to a supposed charitable organization [One Door for Education], only to use that organization as a personal slush fund.

Touted as a group dedicated to raising money for student scholarships, it gave out only two, totaling just \$1,200, since its inception. The group's chief, Carla Wiley, pleaded guilty in March to charges of conspiracy to commit fraud, siphoning money from the charity into Brown's and Simmons' bank accounts. She aided in the federal investigation.

The conspiracy to loot the charity also involved the hiring of a "phantom" employee who was paid for services not rendered, with the money reverting back to the two operators.

The IRS was also involved in the year-long investigation. Richard Weber, its criminal investigator, stated:

The defendants are alleged to have committed a multitude of criminal violations, including fraudulently receiving and using hundreds of thousands of dollars in contributions meant for a nonprofit organization for their own personal and professional benefits.

Brown and Simmons pleaded not guilty. Their trials are scheduled to begin in September.

Under House rules Brown was forced to step down as the ranking Democrat member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. But progressives rushed to her defense, including House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, who called Brown "a champion for America's veterans" and said that Friday's indictment was "deeply saddening." Pelosi was joined by Neil Henrichsen, chairman of the Duval [Florida] County Democratic Party, who said that Brown "has been a public servant for decades ... [and that] many people appreciate her public service.... We're disappointed about the indictment and we'll see how the judicial process plays out."

The 53-page indictment provided details of how the money was raised, collected, and then disbursed. A check would be deposited into the One Door checking account and then cash would be withdrawn and deposited into Brown's (or Simmons') personal checking account. Brown used that money to pay bills, for example, a \$2,643 repair bill on her personal automobile, and Simmons did the same, using part of



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his to pay \$1,097 for repairs on his car.

The indictment provided the details of how another \$5,000 was taken from the charity and used to help pay publishing costs for a magazine touting Brown's congressional record in a commemorative issue entitled "Corrine Delivers!"

It also detailed how Brown lied on her tax returns, claiming that she donated more than \$50,000 to One Door and other charities in 2013 and 2014 while, in fact, the real amount she donated came to less than \$8,000.

The "shadow employee" — who later turned out to be a family member — was paid \$735,000 over 15 years, with those funds reverting back to Brown and Simmons. Simmons used about \$80,000 of that employee's pay to buy a boat and to pay down some credit card debt.

Simmons was also indicted on Friday and faces 355 years in jail for his alleged misdeeds.

If Brown and/or Simmons were trying for a place in the "top 10" most corrupt politicians in Congress, they have some heavy duty competition, unfortunately. In late June *The New American* [reported](#) on the conviction of Chaka Fattah (birth name Arthur Davenport) on 23 counts of corruption for using federal grant money to pay off a \$1 million loan to fund his failed campaign for mayor of Philadelphia. In that same article another big name congressman, Charles Rangel, decided to resign before he could be indicted for his various misdeeds.

Former Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert pleaded guilty in April of illegally paying a whistleblower some \$3.5 million to keep him from exposing Hastert's sexual misconduct when he was a high-school teacher.

Representative Michael Grimm, a New York Republican, pleaded guilty of felony tax evasion in 2015. Representative Trey Radel, a Florida Republican, was convicted of possession of cocaine in November 2013. Representative Rick Renzi was found guilty on 17 of 32 counts of committing wire fraud, extortion, racketeering, and money laundering in October 2013.

And then, of course, there's Jesse Jackson, Jr., the Illinois Democrat who pleaded guilty in February 2013 to committing wire and mail fraud in connection with his misuse of some \$750,000 in campaign funds.

There are others in Congress who have been arrested or indicted for various similar crimes or who are currently under investigation; however, the above list of those actually convicted will serve to prove the point: Brown and Simmons are in heavy competition when compared to some of their brothers and sisters in that federal legislative body.

The clever curmudgeon Mark Twain was never more acute than when he claimed, "There is no distinctly American criminal class — except Congress."

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](#), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.

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