

## **GOP House Contenders Both Have Disturbing Tobacco Ties; Blunt Was Sneaky - Boehner Distributed Payoffs**

The two major contenders to become the next House majority leader both have disturbing ties to the tobacco industry, and have done favors for it in the recent past.

One, Roy Blunt of Missouri, tried to sneak a pro-tobacco provision into the homeland security bill at the behest of Philip Morris, but even Speaker Dennis Hastert [R-IL] and then-majority-leader Tom DeLay [R-TX] would not stand for it. Since 2001, the company has paid \$150,000 to committees affiliated with Blunt. Blunt's son Andrew also works as a lobbyist for Philip Morris.

According to the Washington Post: "Several Republicans told the Post they felt a pro-tobacco provision had very little support and that Blunt's actions could have proven 'embarrassing' to the party and its new Whip. Some Republicans also expressed concern that Blunt's close personal relationship with a Phillip Morris lobbyist named Abigail Perlman may have influenced his actions."

The other contender, Rep. John Boehner [R-OH], distributed campaign checks from a tobacco political action committee on the very floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996. Later he admitted that what he had done was wrong, and promised that he would never do it again.

"It's shameful that the Republican Party, already rocked by the Scooter Libby indictment, the resignation by Tom Delay, and the looming fallout from the Abramoff plea agreement, must field candidates who not only have very close ties to one of the most powerful and malevolent lobbies, but also have history of doing their dirty work," say public interest law professor John Banzhaf, Executive Director of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), a national antismoking organization. ASH takes no view on which of these two contenders should become the next House majority leader.

**PROFESSOR JOHN F. BANZHAF III**  
Executive Director and Chief Counsel  
Action on Smoking and Health (ASH)  
2013 H Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006, USA  
(202) 659-4310 // <http://ash.org>