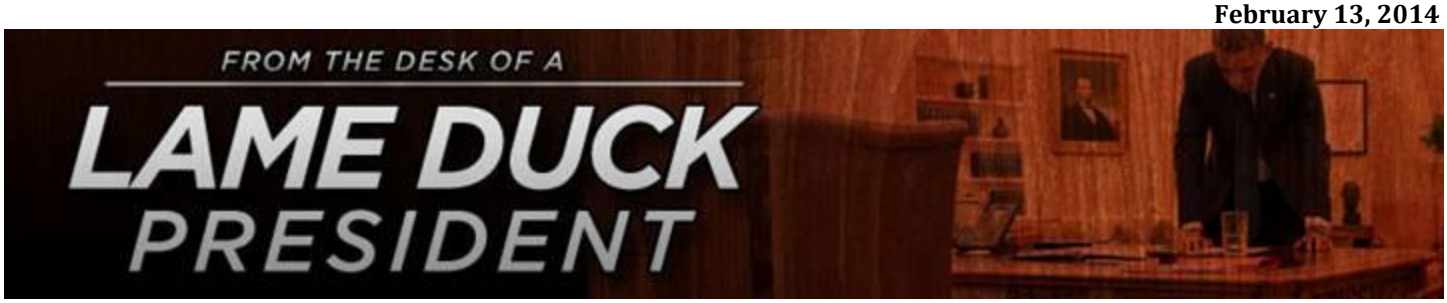
February 13, 2014



Obama's Bundler Blues

As Another Obama Bundler-Ambassador Nominee Prepares To Go Before The Senate, The White House Hopes To Avoid Another "Cringe-Inducing" Performance

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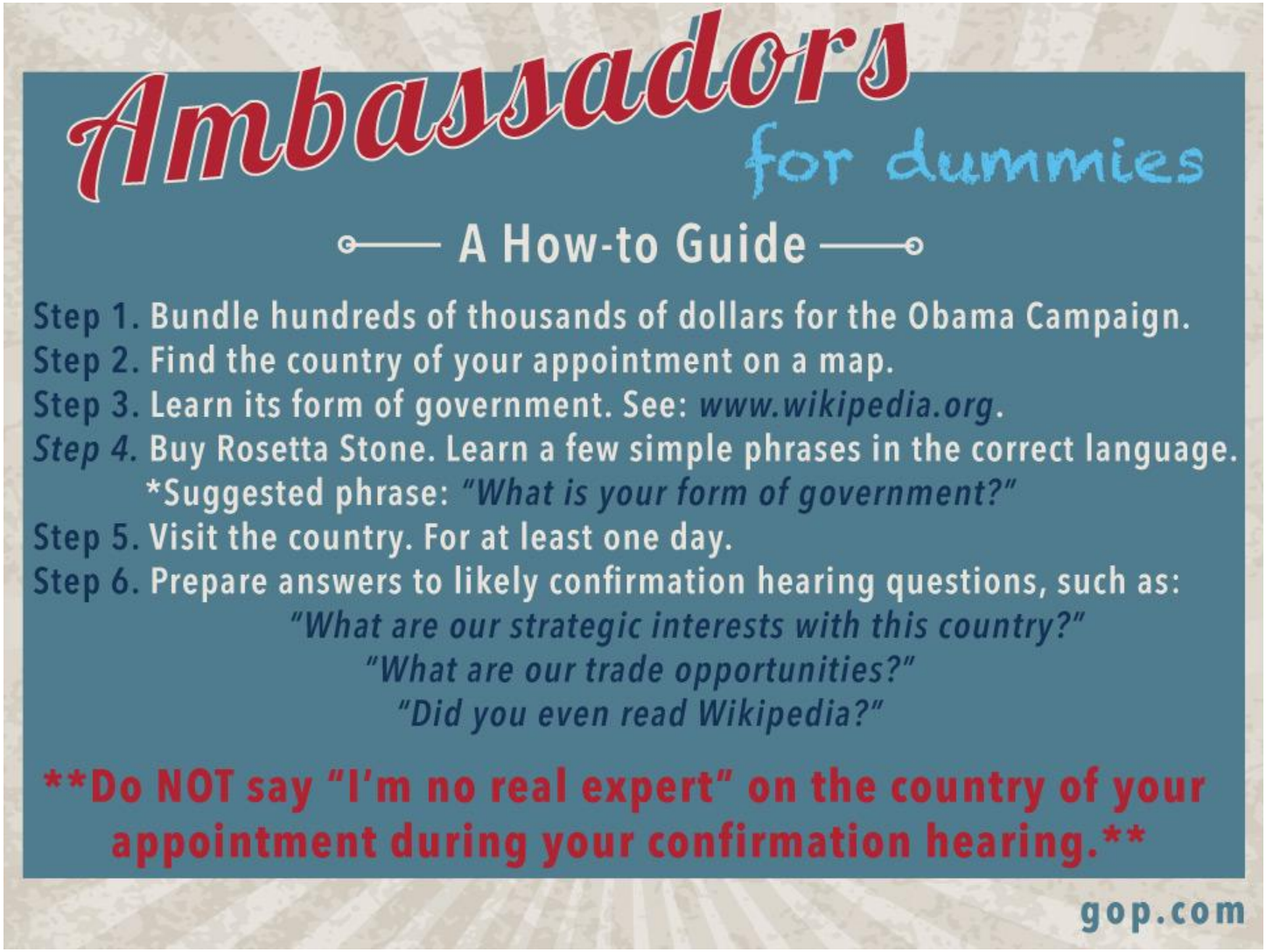

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Another Obama Bundler, Mark Gilbert, Is Scheduled To Appear Before The Senate Foreign Relations Committee For His Confirmation Hearing As Ambassador To New Zealand. (Senate Committee On Foreign Relations, Accessed 2/12/14)

In 2012, Mark Gilbert Raised At Least $500,000 For The Obama Campaign. (Center For Responsive Politics, Accessed 2/12/14)

- **In 2008, Mark Gilbert Raised At Least $500,000 For The Obama Campaign.** (Center For Responsive Politics, Accessed 2/12/14)

OBAMA'S RECENT AMBASSADORIAL PICKS HAVE "REVEALED DEFICIENCIES" THROUGH THEIR "DEVASTATING" CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

"It's Been A Tough Few Weeks For President Obama's Ambassadorial Nominees." (Matt Delong, "A Fix Guide On How Not To Pick An Ambassador," *The Washington Post*, 2/11/14)

- **"This Is The Risk Obama Takes In Rewarding Political Friends With Jobs For Which They Are Ill-Prepared."** (Editorial, "Some Of Obama's Ambassador Picks Are No Shirley Temples," *The Los Angeles Times*, 2/13/14)

The Confirmation Process Has Revealed Deficiencies In The Obama Nominees' Knowledge Of The Countries Where They Intend To Serve. "It's been the confirmation process has revealed deficiencies in their knowledge of the countries where they intend to serve a tough few weeks for President Obama's ambassadorial nominees. For three prominent campaign fundraisers and one former U.S. senator nominated to diplomatic posts,. Here are the roughest moments faced by Obama's nominees (so far)." (Matt Delong, "A Fix Guide On How Not To Pick An Ambassador," *The Washington Post*, 2/11/14)

Obama Mega-Bundlers Have Put Forth "Cringe-Inducing" Performances At Their Confirmation Hearings. "Last month, at a cringe-inducing performance by mega-bundlers for President Obama before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) apparently added a question to the mix: whether the nominees have ever been to the countries where they hope to be stationed." (Al Kamen, "Looking For A Job As An Ambassador? Do Your Homework And Travel To That Country," *The Washington Post*, 2/11/14)

- **"It Was A Devastating Hearing…"** "It was a devastating hearing, especially for Chartwell Hotels chief executive George Tsunis, who hadn't been to — and didn't seem to know much about — Norway, his intended post." (Al Kamen, "Looking For A Job As An Ambassador? Do Your Homework And Travel To That Country," *The Washington Post*, 2/11/14)

"President Obama's A-List Campaign Fundraisers Are Turning Out To Be B-List Ambassador Nominees." (Abby D. Phillip, "5 Most Cringe-Worthy Blunders From Obama's Ambassador Nominees," ABC News, 2/7/14)

***Los Angeles Times* Editorial: Obama Should "Wonder Exactly How Effective Of A Representative" His Nominees Will Be.** "It does no good to pillory Bell for her inability to think on her feet, nor Tsunis for his ignorance — though his failure to absorb rudimentary details about his posting country should make the White House wonder exactly how effective a representative he will be." (Editorial, "Some Of Obama's Ambassador Picks Are No Shirley Temples," *The Los Angeles Times*, 2/13/14)

- **"The Question Is, How Much Confidence Should The American People Have In Obama's Judgment In Ambassadors?"** (Editorial, "Some Of Obama's Ambassador Picks Are No Shirley Temples," *The Los Angeles Times*, 2/13/14)

George Tsunis: Norway

"Generally Speaking, A Senate Confirmation Isn't The Place To Learn About The Country Where You're Hoping To Be The U.S.'s Top Emissary." (Abby D. Phillip, "5 Most Cringe-Worthy Blunders From Obama's Ambassador Nominees," ABC News, 2/7/14)

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Obama Bundler-Ambassador Nominee To Norway George Tsunis Made Some Comments That "Revealed His Knowledge Of The Country Where He Is Trying To Secure A Top Diplomatic Post Is Shaky." "Relations between Norway and the United States are usually a placid affair, going back centuries to when the Norwegian Constitution of 1814 took the U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence as inspiration. However, President Barack Obama's pick for ambassador to Norway seems to be spicing up the diplomatic relationship by sticking his foot in his mouth before even getting to the post. George Tsunis, also a top Obama bundler, recently made comments about Norway's political situation that revealed his knowledge of the country where he is trying to secure a top diplomatic post is shaky." (Luke Johnson, "Obama Bundler, Nominated For Ambassador To Norway, Bungles Questions On Norway," *The Huffington Post*, 1/23/14)

- **According To Norwegian Media, Tsunis Displayed A "Total Ignorance Of Norway."** "George Tsunis, a hotel magnate, was slammed in the Norwegian media for displaying a 'total ignorance of Norway' in his Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing in January." (Abby D. Phillip, "5 Most Cringe-Worthy Blunders From Obama's Ambassador Nominees," ABC News, 2/7/14)

Lehigh University's Henri Barkey: "It Seemed, As Some Later Tweeted, That Tsunis Had Not Even Bothered To Read The Wikipedia Page For Norway." (Henri J. Barkey, Op-Ed, "Obama's Ambassador Nominees Are A Disservice To Diplomacy," *The Washington Post*, 2/6/14)

Tsunis Was Unable To Answer A Question By Sen. Ron Johnson About Trade Opportunities With Norway. "What do you do when you don't have an answer to a question? Well, you keep talking. You can also impress the senators if you mention a lot of numbers: $15 billion, 300 businesses, 60 percent. Finally, giving up on an attempt to answer a question by Sen. Ron Johnson about trade opportunities with Norway, Tsunis ends his answer this way: 'But there are…uh… there are a lot of things that will begin to — there are a lot of markets that will continue to open up… uh,' Tunis says before taking a gulp of water." (Abby D. Phillip, "5 Most Cringe-Worthy Blunders From Obama's Ambassador Nominees," ABC News, 2/7/14)

Tsunis Thought The Progress Party, "Part Of The Center-Right Coalition Government In Norway, With Seven Ministers" Was A "Fringe" Element That The Government Had Denounced. "'What do you think the appeal of the Progress Party was, according to the Norwegian voters?' asked Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), in a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Jan. 16. 'That is a very seminal question,' Tsunis said. 'Generally Norway has, and is very proud of being a very open, transparent, Democratic, parliamentary government. One of the byproducts of being such an open society and placing such a value on free speech is you get some fringe elements that have a microphone that spew their hatred and although I will tell you that Norway has been very quick to denounce them -- ' McCain interrupted, pointing out that the Progress Party is part of the center-right coalition government in Norway, with seven ministers." (Luke Johnson, "Obama Bundler, Nominated For Ambassador To Norway, Bungles Questions On Norway," *The Huffington Post*, 1/23/14)

"Tsunis Also Referred To Norway's 'President,' Despite The Fact That The Country Is A Constitutional Monarchy." "In last week's hearing, Tsunis also referred to Norway's 'president,' despite the fact that the country is a constitutional monarchy." (Luke Johnson, "Obama Bundler, Nominated For Ambassador To Norway, Bungles Questions On Norway," *The Huffington Post*, 1/23/14)

Tsunis Admitted Never Having Been To Norway. "The nominee, a Long Island campaign bundler named George Tsunis, made a fool of himself during his Senate confirmation hearings last month. He was unaware of some of the most basic facts about Norway. He admitted never having set foot in the country, and he seemed to think that Norway, a monarchy, has a president." (Henri J. Barkey, Op-Ed, "Obama's Ambassador Nominees Are A Disservice To Diplomacy," *The Washington Post*, 2/6/14)

Tsunis, CEO Of Chartwell Hotels, Bundled Over $500,000 For Obama's 2012 Campaign. "Tsunis has been a top fundraiser for President Barack Obama and the Democratic party. Tsunis, the CEO of Chartwell

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Hotels, bundled over $500,000 for Obama's 2012 campaign, according to the Center for Responsive Politics." (Luke Johnson, "Obama Bundler, Nominated For Ambassador To Norway, Bungles Questions On Norway," *The Huffington Post*, 1/23/14)

- **Tsunis Also Donated $300,000 To Democratic-Leaning Super PACs In 2012.** "He also donated $300,000 to Democratic-leaning super PACs in 2012, according to FEC records. He attended a state dinner with Prime Minister David Cameron in March 2012." (Luke Johnson, "Obama Bundler, Nominated For Ambassador To Norway, Bungles Questions On Norway," *The Huffington Post*, 1/23/14)

Noah Mamet: Argentina

"Noah Mamet, Obama's Choice For Ambassador To Argentina, It Turns Out, Has Never Set Foot In The Country." "Noah Mamet, Obama's choice for ambassador to Argentina, it turns out, has never set foot in the country. 'I haven't had the opportunity yet to be there,' Mamet revealed when he appeared Thursday before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. 'I've traveled pretty extensively around the world, but I haven't yet had a chance.'" (Mary Bruce And Jonathan Karl, "What Does It Cost To Be An Obama Ambassador," ABC News, 2/7/14)

- **When Asked Whether He Had Been To Argentina, Mamet Replied, "I Haven't Had The Opportunity To Be There."** SEN. MARCO RUBIO: "Yeah, I just want to take off on that point and say that you stated it accurately, Mr. Chairman. And here's what I would add. Mr. Mamet, have you been to Argentina?" MAMET: "Senator, I haven't had the opportunity yet to be there. I've traveled pretty extensively around the world, but I haven't yet had a chance." (Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Nomination Hearing, 2/6/14)

The Day Following His Hearing, The State Department Was Not Sure Whether Mamet Speaks Spanish. Q: "Do you know if – we learned that Noah Mamet, the nominee to be ambassador to Argentina, has never even set foot in the country of Argentina. Do you know if he speaks Spanish?" PSAKI: "I don't have his personal biography in front of me, but what I will convey is that I think, as I said before, judging somebody's effectiveness or what role they'll play or how strong of an ambassador they'll be you can't do until they've spent some time working in the job in the country." (State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki, Daily Press Briefing, 2/7/14)

Mamet Bundled $500,000 For Obama In 2012. "Mamet, for example, is listed by OpenSecrets.org as a 'bundler.' That means that he collected campaign contributions for Obama. Mamet bundled $500,000 for the president in 2012." (Eyder Peralta, "Ambassador To Argentina Nominee Has Never Been To The Country," NPR, 2/7/14)

Colleen Bell: Hungary

Hollywood Producer Colleen Bell, Who Raised Or Contributed At Least $800,000 For Obama In 2012, Was Nominated To Be Ambassador To Hungary. "Colleen Bell, the Hollywood producer behind the TV soap 'The Bold and the Beautiful,' raised or contributed about $800,000 to Obama 2012, according to OpenSecrets.org. So she was picked as ambassador to Hungary — a country that, as we've noted, has vexed Washington of late over human rights and other issues." (Al Kamen, "Obama Ambassador Nominees – Baucus, Bell, And Tsunis – Hit Bumps In Hearings," *The Washington Post*, 1/30/14)

During Her Appearance Before The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Colleen Bell Gave An Incoherent Answer To Sen. John McCain's Question About U.S. Interests In Hungary. "'What are our strategic interests in Hungary?' McCain asked. 'Well, we have,' Bell said, 'our strategic interests, in terms of what are our key priorities in Hungary, I think our key priorities are to improve upon, as I mentioned, the security relationship and also the law enforcement and to promote business opportunities, increase trade …' McCain interrupted: 'I'd like to ask again what our strategic interests in Hungary are.' 'Our strategic interests are to work collaboratively as NATO allies,' she said, 'to work to promote and protect

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the security, both — for both countries and for — and for the world, to continue working together on the cause of human rights around the world, to build that side of our relationship while also maintaining and pursuing some difficult conversations that might be necessary in the coming years.' 'Great answer,' McCain said, dripping scorn." (Al Kamen, "Obama Ambassador Nominees – Baucus, Bell, And Tsunis – Hit Bumps In Hearings," *The Washington Post,* 1/30/14)

THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME OBAMA'S BUNDLER-AMBASSADORS HAVE STRUGGLED

Cynthia Stroum: Former Ambassador To Luxembourg

In 2009, Cynthia Stroum Was Sent To Luxembourg After Raising Half A Million Dollars For Obama. "And then there's the recent case of Cynthia Stroum, Obama's pick to serve in Luxembourg—a Rhode Island-sized NATO ally that has always been a convenient spot to stick political friends and donors. Over the years, real estate moguls, socialites and car salesmen have all washed up in the Ardennes. Stroum, a wealthy Seattle investor, was dispatched there in 2009 after raising half a million bucks to put Obama in the White House (or, $1 for every citizen of Luxembourg)." (James Bruno," "Why Does America Send So Many Stupid, Unqualified Hacks Overseas?" *Politico*, 2/7/14)

- **She Resigned In 2011 After The State Department Found Her Embassy "Has Underperformed For The Entirety Of The Current Ambassador's Tenure." "**She abruptly resigned in early 2011 after a blistering report from the State Department's inspector general noted that her embassy 'has underperformed for the entirety of the current ambassador's tenure.'" (James Bruno," "Why Does America Send So Many Stupid, Unqualified Hacks Overseas?" *Politico*, 2/7/14)

Stroum Raised At Least $200,000 For Obama's 2012 Campaign And At Least $500,000 For Obama's 2008 Campaign. (Center For Responsive Politics, Accessed 2/10/14)

Nicole Avant: Former Ambassador To The Bahamas

A State Department Inspector General's Report Found That Bahamas Ambassador Nicole Avant Brought "Dysfunctional Leadership And Management" To The Embassy Since Her Appointment. "According to a new State Department inspector general's report on the U.S. Embassy in the Bahamas, Ambassador Nicole Avant presided over 'an extended period of dysfunctional leadership and mismanagement, which has caused problems throughout the embassy' since she was appointed by the president in 2009." (Josh Rogin, "Another Obama Fundraiser Turns Out To Be A Bad Ambassador," *Foreign Policy*, 2/23/12)

- **Avant Was "Away From The Embassy An Inordinate Amount Of Time… And When She Was In Town, She Worked From Her Residence Most Of The Day."** "But according to the State Department's internal investigation, Avant was away from the embassy an inordinate amount of time — mainly shuttling back and forth to her home in Los Angeles — and when she was in town, she worked from her residence most of the day." (Josh Rogin, "Another Obama Fundraiser Turns Out To Be A Bad Ambassador," *Foreign Policy*, 2/23/12)

Avant Spent 40 Percent Of Her Time As Ambassador To The Bahamas Out Of The Country. "The inspector general wrote that her tenure was part of 'an extended period of dysfunctional leadership and mismanagement, which has caused problems throughout the embassy.' The report said Avant spent roughly 40 percent of her time out of the country over a two-year period." (T.W. Farnum, "The Influence Industry: Obama Gives Administration Jobs To Some Big Fundraisers," *The Washington Post*, 3/7/12)

- **Avant Was Absent From The Embassy 276 Days Between September 2009 And November 2011, Including 102 "Personal" Days**. "Avant was absent from the embassy 276 days between September 2009 and November 2011, including 102 'personal' days and 77 'work travel' days to

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the United States, of which only 23 were on official orders." (Josh Rogin, "Another Obama Fundraiser Turns Out To Be A Bad Ambassador," *Foreign Policy*, 2/23/12)

A State Department Inspector General's Report Showed That Bahamas Ambassador Nicole Avant Brought "Dysfunctional Leadership And Management" To The Embassy. "According to a new State Department inspector general's report on the U.S. Embassy in the Bahamas, Ambassador Nicole Avant presided over 'an extended period of dysfunctional leadership and mismanagement, which has caused problems throughout the embassy' since she was appointed by the president in 2009." (Josh Rogin, "Another Obama Fundraiser Turns Out To Be A Bad Ambassador," *Foreign Policy*, 2/23/12)

In 2012, Nicole Avant And Husband Ted Sarandos Raised At Least $500,000 For Obama. (Center For Responsive Politics, Accessed 8/9/13)

- **In 2008, Avant Was One Of Four Of Los Angeles Bundlers Who Raised More Than $500,000 For Obama.** "In 2008, Avant was one of only four Los Angeles bundlers to raise more than $500,000 for Obama (the others were Katzenberg; David Geffen, who appears to be sitting out this presidential cycle; and Charles Rivkin, the former CEO of Wildbrain Entertainment who is now ambassador to France)." (Tina Daunt, "Obama's $500,000 Power Couple," *The Hollywood Reporter*, 4/25/12)

Howard Gutman: Former Ambassador To Belgium

Belgium Ambassador Howard Gutman Was Allegedly The Subject Of A 2011 Investigation For "Ditching His Security Detail" To Solicit Prostitutes. "A top donor to President Obama's 2008 campaign was investigated for allegedly having sex with prostitutes but remains at his post as the U.S. ambassador to Belgium. Howard Gutman was investigated in 2011 for allegedly ditching his security detail in order to have sex with prostitutes, according to an internal inspector general memo obtained by the New York Post. The memo, which alleges political interference by State Department higher-ups in at least eight Diplomatic Security Service probes, was first reported by CBS on Monday, but Gutman's name was not disclosed at the time." (Julian Pecquet, "IG Memo: US Ambassador To Belgium Ditched Security Detail To Visit Prostitutes," *The Hill*, 6/11/13)

Shortly After The Investigation Was Revealed, Obama Replaced Gutman With Another Bundler As Ambassador To Belgium. "Denise Bauer — who served as the finance chair for Women for Obama during the president's 2012 campaign — has been chosen to be the new ambassador to Belgium, the White House announced in a press release Friday afternoon. Bauer, who has also served on the Democratic National Committee, raised at least $500,000 for Obama's re-election efforts, according to information voluntarily released by the campaign. … If confirmed by the Senate, Bauer will replace current U.S. Ambassador Howard Gutman, who was also a major campaign bundler. He raised at least $775,000 for Obama's 2008 campaign and first inauguration." (Michael Beckel, "More Bundlers Picked For Plush Ambassador Posts," Center For Public Integrity, 6/21/13)

According To The Center For Responsive Politics, Howard Gutman Bundled At Least $775,000 For Obama's 2008 Campaign And Inaugural Committee. (Michael Beckel, "Two Dozen Bankrollers-Turned-Ambassadors Bundled At Least $10 Million For Barack Obama," Center For Responsive Politics, 11/18/09)

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