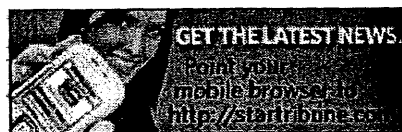


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Hutchinson senator faces ethics complaint on e-mail

Three DFLers want a hearing about the message from Sen. Scott Newman's office, which he said was sent in error.

By BRAD SCHRADE¹, Star Tribune

Last update: January 27, 2011 - 7:28 PM

Three DFL state senators filed an ethics complaint Thursday against a Republican colleague whose office sent an e-mail saying he would not meet with groups that supported or donated cash to his opponent in last fall's election.

The episode involving Sen. Scott Newman, R-Hutchinson, raises questions that feed into the public's most cynical view about the influence of money on the political process at the Capitol. Newman apologized Tuesday after the e-mail surfaced, saying that he knew nothing of it before it was sent in error and that he has no such policy.

Sen. Sandra Pappas, DFL-St. Paul, said she and her two colleagues filed the complaint because the incident places a blemish on the Senate and discredits it in the eyes of the

public. She said an official review is warranted to get the facts of what happened and what prompted the e-mail.

"That's why we need to have an ethics hearing to get to the bottom of it," Pappas said.

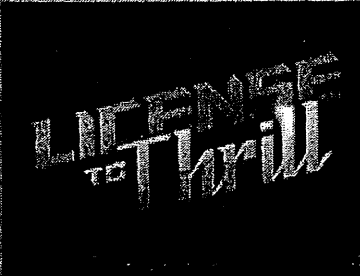
Newman did not immediately return a phone message, and no one answered a knock on his Capitol office door late Thursday afternoon.

"Senator Newman didn't personally send the e-mail, nor was he aware of it," said Michael Brodkorb, spokesman for Senate Republicans. "He accepted complete responsibility and apologized for the confusion and frustration it caused."

The e-mail, signed by Newman aide Kim Kelley, went to the Minnesota Nurses Association and said the senator would not meet with groups that donated to his DFL opponent, Hal Kimball.

"After some careful checking, I discovered the MNA had donated to Kimball's campaign," the e-mail said. "Your association will be unable to schedule an appointment with Senator Newman."

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In addition to Pappas, Sens. Kenneth Kelash and Scott Dibble, both of Minneapolis, signed the complaint with the Senate Ethics Subcommittee. Under Senate rules, it must be considered by the committee within 30 days. It seems likely to raise partisan temperatures within the body just as the Legislature begins full-on consideration of how to fix the state's \$6.2 billion projected budget shortfall.

On Thursday, the complaint was attacked by the Republican Party. In a press release that called the DFL complaint the "Height of Hypocrisy," state party Chairman Tony Sutton brought up a 2007 drunken-driving charge against then-Senate President and Ethics Committee Chairman James Metzen, DFL-South St. Paul.

"His Democrat colleagues refused to utter a word of criticism, let alone file an ethics complaint against him," Sutton's statement said.

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