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Top White House Ethics Lawyer Norman Eisen Reportedly Destined for Prague Ambassador Post

By mbeckel | April 15, 2010 12:50 pm

The White House's top ethics lawyer, Norman Eisen, is reportedly being floated for consideration as the president's top diplomat in the Czech Republic.

The news that Eisen was the president's choice for ambassador to the Czech Republic was first reported by the Czech media, although the White House has yet to confirm or comment. Until further notice, it seems, Eisen will continue to fill his days with duties such as releasing the president and vice president's state and federal tax filings.

If Eisen is selected, he would join many of Obama's prior ambassador picks in having helped raise significant sums of campaign cash for the president and other Democrats.

For more than a year, Eisen, a long-time Washington lawyer, has served as special counsel for ethics and government reform to President Barack Obama — often soliciting input from nonprofit organizations, including the Center for Responsive Politics, on a range of issues.



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Eisen helped draft and implement the sweeping new ethics rules Obama signed into law via executive order the day after he was inaugurated. Eisen also helped promulgate the administration's ban on lobbyists from orally communicating about stimulus funds with government officials, along with other reform measures.

Eisen, who co-founded the ethics watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) in 2003, has known Obama since their days together at Harvard Law School. Until being tapped to serve as ethics czar, Eisen worked as a partner at the D.C. law firm Zuckerman Spaeder.

Eisen is a first-generation American whose parents were Holocaust survivors. His father emigrated from Poland, and his mother emigrated from Czechoslovakia.

From these roots, Eisen rose to political prominence.

During the 2008 presidential race, Eisen bundled between \$200,000 and \$500,000 for Obama.

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Since 1999, when Eisen contributed \$250 to Democratic presidential contender Bill Bradley, Eisen has also contributed \$58,250 to all federal candidates, parties and committees. With the exception of a \$250 contribution to Republican presidential contender John McCain in 2000, all of his donations have supported Democrats. During the 2008 election cycle, Eisen contributed \$27,350 to the Democratic National Committee, as well as the legal maximums of \$4,600 to Obama and \$2,300 to Vice President Joe Biden.

Overall, by the Center for Responsive Politics, 10 out of 15 one-fourth of the individuals elevated by Obama to serve as ambassadors also served Obama's

financial team as bundlers to his presidential or inaugural committees, and these individuals bundled a minimum of \$11 million for Obama's committees. This includes people elevated to serve in diplomatic posts with the rank of ambassador — those representing U.S. interests in countries overseas and those working on high-profile issues like war crimes or AIDS.

Here is a chart showing all of Eisen's campaign contributions to federal candidates, parties and committees since 1999.

Recipient	Total
Democratic National Committee	\$28,350
Barack Obama	\$4,600
Hillary Clinton	\$4,200
Donna Edwards	\$3,250
Joseph R. Biden Jr.	\$2,300
Larry Kissell	\$2,300
David Yassky	\$2,000
Joe Lieberman	\$2,000
John Kerry	\$2,000
Ethan A. Berkowitz	\$1,000
Mark Warner	\$1,000
Paul Kanjorski	\$1,000
Veterans Alliance for Security/Democracy	\$1,000
Wesley Clark	\$1,000
Ben Cardin	\$500
Dan Wofford	\$500

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Jay Rockefeller	\$500
Al Franken	\$250
Bill Bradley	\$250
John McCain	\$250
Total	\$58,250

CRP Researcher Carolyn Sharpe contributed to this report.

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