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"promoting ethics in public life"



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Founded 1991

March 19, 2010

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, Chair
The Honorable Jo Bonner, Ranking Republican Member
Committee on Standards of Official Conduct
HT-2, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

VIA FAX: 202-225-7392

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL: #7005 1160 0004 8557 8584

Re: Request for an Investigation into Activities of Rep. Gregory Meeks

Dear Chair Lofgren and Ranking Member Bonner:

The National Legal and Policy Center (NLPC) respectfully requests that the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct investigate the conduct of Rep. Gregory Meeks, Representative for New York's Sixth Congressional District, to determine if he has violated the Code of Official Conduct or any law, regulation or standard of conduct applicable to a Member of Congress.

Our request is based on an investigation over the last two months whose findings raise serious legal and ethical questions as to whether Rep. Meeks has misused his office for personal gain.

Virtually all of the information suggesting improper behavior comes from materials in the public domain including news articles, Federal Election Commission reports and audits, real estate records, legal documents, Financial Disclosure Reports, and other public records. Such records are cited and/or included as exhibits accompanying this letter.

Rep. Meeks and Alleged Special Favors for Accused Ponzi Scheme Operator R. Allen Stanford

On December 27, 2009, the *Miami Herald* ran two articles regarding the ties financier R. Allen Stanford, accused by the federal government of cheating investors out of \$7 billion, had with specific Congressmen.¹

The front-page article, “Feds Probe Banker Allen Stanford’s Ties to Congress,” disclosed that the Justice Department was “investigating millions of dollars that Stanford and his staff contributed to lawmakers over the past decade to determine if the banker received special favors from politicians.”

The article went on to describe the millions of dollars spent by the offshore financier to lobby against tighter financial oversight on offshore banking and stricter controls against money laundering. At the same time he was cultivating Congress, he was paying \$200,000 in bribes to an Antiguan banking regulator, according to court documents.

Stanford’s effort to buy friends in Congress involved support to both Senators and Congressmen of both parties.

In 2003, Stanford began hosting trips for selected Congressmen to the Caribbean island nation of Antigua, where his financial operations were based. In 2003, Stanford hosted a trip to Antigua costing \$39,500 for Representatives Pete Sessions, Bob Ney, John Sweeney, Gregory Meeks, Donald Payne, Max Sandlin and Phil Crane. The trip included a stay at luxury hotels and the use of two Stanford jets for transportation.

The trips to the Caribbean at Stanford’s expense led to the founding of the Caribbean Caucus, a group closely linked to Stanford’s interests. Rep. Meeks became a member of the Caribbean Caucus. His committee assignments, House Committee on Financial Services and House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, meshed nicely with Stanford’s legislative interests.

When Stanford was arrested and charged in connection with a \$7 billion Ponzi scheme to defraud investors, many lawmakers who received contributions from Stanford turned the money over to the court-appointed receiver to help compensate people who were cheated. Meeks was listed as one of the Congressmen who instead turned “some of the money” over to charities.

The article concluded by stating that the State Department had specifically mentioned Stanford in a 1999 report for using his influence to weaken the Antiguan banking laws, creating “one of the most attractive financial centers in the Caribbean for money launderers.”

¹ “Feds probe banker Allen Stanford’s ties to Congress,” by Michael Sallah and Rob Barry, *Miami Herald*, Dec. 27, 2009, page 1; “Gregory Meeks’ trip to Venezuela on behalf of Stanford’s bank raises ethics questions,” by Rob Barry, Michael Sallah and Gerardo Reyes, *Miami Herald*, Dec. 27, 2009.

The companion *Miami Herald* article to the story about the federal investigation of Stanford's ties to Congress, "Gregory Meeks trip to Venezuela on behalf of Stanford's bank raises ethics problems," singled out Rep. Meeks for an apparent special favor he performed for his benefactor and major donor.

The article described how Stanford was enraged with the president of his banking operations in Venezuela for publicly questioning whether Stanford was perpetuating a fraud after Stanford had accused the executive of stealing from the company.

The article continued:

"Enraged at his former executive, Stanford placed a call in March 2006 to Democratic House member Gregory Meeks with a rare request: Go to President Hugo Chavez and seek a criminal investigation of Gonzalo Tirado.

Meeks, a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, agreed to carry the message, according to two former U.S. federal agents working for Stanford who were listening to the call on a speakerphone.

The politician would travel to Venezuela a month later for a series of meetings with Hugo Chavez and other leaders. A year after that visit, Venezuelan prosecutors indicted Tirado on charges of swindling and tax evasion.

Meeks' trip to Venezuela was billed as a mission to express gratitude to Chavez and other leaders for a program that provided heating oil to Americans in the Northeast, press reports said. There was no mention of any discussion about Stanford, whose Venezuelan bank was one of the most successful in his business network.

Meeks did not return repeated phone calls and e-mails asking for more information about the trip."²

The *Miami Herald* went on to document how following the Venezuelan trip, Meeks went on to take five more trips, including several with his wife, to luxury resorts in the Caribbean paid for by a non-profit funded by Stanford. And it disclosed that the Meeks campaign received some \$12,100 in contributions from Stanford and his employees in 2008.

² "Gregory Meeks' trip to Venezuela on behalf of Stanford's bank raises ethics questions," by Rob Barry, Michael Sallah and Gerardo Reyes, *Miami Herald*, Dec. 27, 2009.

Underscoring the close relationship between Rep. Meeks and R. Allen Stanford is the fact that on July 31, 2008, Stanford became the Congressman's top individual campaign contributor by donating \$2,300 to the Friends for Gregory Meeks campaign committee for the primary campaign and \$2,300 to the Friends for Gregory Meeks campaign committee for the general election campaign.³

The Center for Responsive Politics, an ethics watch dog organization, calculated that the Stanford Financial Group was the third largest contributor for Meeks during the 2007-2008 campaign cycle. This calculation was obtained by tallying the known contributions from Stanford Financial Group's officers and employees along with funding from their political action committee.⁴

But the financial ties between Meeks and his now-indicted benefactor R. Allen Stanford go even deeper. A *Wall Street Journal* article spoke of Stanford's ties this way:

He also was a big supporter of New York Democrat Gregory Meeks, a member of the House Financial Services subcommittee dealing with offshore banks that received an estimated \$17,600 from a Stanford fund-raiser held in the Virgin Islands in July. Mr. Meeks' campaign later reimbursed the organizers of the event \$3,591 for the cost of food and beverages, according to the campaign's financial disclosures.⁵

July 2008 was a busy and unpleasant month for R. Allen Stanford. On July 15, 2008, the Internal Revenue Service filed major tax liens against Stanford in Houston and Miami.⁶ The liens totaled \$28.7 million for tax year 2002 and \$75.5 million for 2003.

With these major tax problems in July, the Stanford inner circle was holding a fund-raiser for Mr. Meeks, the congressman from Queens in the Virgin Islands. Meeks' Federal Election Commission reports covering that month show he received contributions in July 2008 from:

- R. Allen Stanford
Chairman & CEO, Stanford Financial Group
- P. Mauricio Alvarado
General Counsel, Stanford Financial Group
- Daniel Bogar
CEO, Stanford Financial Group

³ Federal Election Campaign Record for Friends for Gregory Meeks, FEC Form 3, Schedule A for report filed on August 28, 2008.

⁴ www.opensecrets.org

⁵ "Texas Businessman Sought Influence in Corridors of Capitol," by Glenn R. Simpson and T.W. Farnam, *Wall Street Journal*, February 18, 2009.

⁶ "Stanford's U.S. tax Bill Tops \$104 Million, Property Liens Show," by Ryan Donmoyer and Laurel Calkins, *Bloomberg.com*, February 20, 2009.

- James Conzelman
SVP Government Affairs, Stanford Financial Group
- Jimmie M. Haley
Executive, Stanford Financial
- Lionel Johnson
Senior Vice President, Stanford Financial Group
- Juan Rodriguez-Tolentino
President, Stanford International Bank
- Joan Marie Stack
Executive, Stanford Financial
- Andrea M. Stoelker
Banker, Stanford Financial Group
- Yolanda Suarez
Attorney, Stanford Financial Group

Meeks comment about his relationship with the accused swindler – before Meeks stopped talking to the media about it – was:

“I can just say that Allen Stanford has always treated me fair and decently and above the board,” Mr. Meeks said. “I have no idea what the investigation is about, but if I was asked about Allen Stanford, I would say that he was a guy who was wealthy but he was also helping people.”⁷

A follow-up story by the New York *Daily News*, “Records show Rep. Gregory Meeks took six Caribbean trips with wife – on tab of con artist,” provided more background on the Stanford-funded Caribbean travel for Meeks.⁸

“During a Jan. 11-15, 2006 trip to Montego Bay, Jamaica, Meeks and his wife stayed at the luxurious Ritz Carlton, running up \$2,711 in lodging expenses, \$5,365.46 on airfare, and \$1,470 on meals. They flew in a Stanford jet.

The trip was hosted by a local “businesswoman and socialite” and included sightseeing and visits with local officials, local press reports said.

⁷ “Texas Businessman Sought Influence in Corridors of Capitol,” by Glenn R. Simpson and T.W. Farnam, *Wall Street Journal*, February 18, 2009

⁸ “Record show Rep. Gregory Meeks took six Caribbean trips with wife – on tab of con artist,” by Greg. B. Smith, *Daily News*, Dec. 28. 2009.

The previous January, the congressman and his wife flew to Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, then to Antigua – the island where Stanford’s banking empire was headquartered before it fell apart. The total bill came to \$8,161.”

The non-profit in question, the Inter-American Economic Council, appears to be little more than an extension of the indicted financier’s financial operations. The head of the group was quoted as saying that Stanford Financial had provided 85% of the group’s revenue in 2005.⁹

The facts as set forth above paint the picture of a Congressman intervening on behalf of a major donor who has funded numerous Caribbean junkets for the Congressman while arranging for thousands of dollars in campaign donations.

According to two former U.S federal agents who overheard the telephone conversation on a speakerphone, Rep. Meeks heard Stanford ask him to have a foreign dictator launch a criminal investigation of a former employee who was accusing Stanford – correctly as it turns out – of orchestrating a fraud. The former federal agents heard Meeks agree to carry that message.

A month later Meeks was traveling to Venezuela to meet with Hugo Chavez. Subsequently, the former Stanford employee was indicted by the Venezuelan government. Stanford’s interests continued to provide Rep. Meeks with luxury trips and campaign contributions following the trip.

Following the publication of the *Miami Herald* stories, Rep. Meeks refused to answer questions regarding his relationship with Stanford, a man awaiting trial for his role in a \$7 billion investment scam.

The fact that court records allege Stanford was willing to pay major bribes to government officials underscores the seriousness of this case.

As does an ABC News report that the FBI was tracking Stanford in a probe of whether he had been laundering money for Mexican drug cartels.¹⁰

The facts suggest that Mr. Meeks had a very special relationship with the man who now stands accused of masterminding one of the largest Ponzi schemes in U.S. history. Stanford and his interests were among the biggest financial supporters of Meeks at a time the IRS was moving in on Stanford. And the facts also suggest that Meeks was doing special favors for Stanford, as when he reportedly agreed to visit Hugo Chavez of Venezuela to assist Stanford in his efforts to silence a whistleblower.

⁹ “Disgraced Texas financier Allen Stanford tapped home politicians as allies,” by Dave Michaels, *The Dallas Morning News*, Feb. 28, 2009.

¹⁰ “Charges Against Stanford a Long Time Coming, Offshore Banking Experts Claim,” by Justin Rood and Brian Ross, Feb. 19, 2009, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=6907429&page=1>

It is hard to imagine a more compelling set of facts on which to launch an investigation of a Representative.

**Rep. Meeks' Discount Deal on a New Mansion Built by a Major Donor
Whose Business Benefited From Government Projects Supported by Rep. Meeks**

Rep. Greg Meeks bought a newly-built mansion in 2006 worth more than \$1.2 million for just \$830,000. The architect who oversaw the construction had benefited financially from construction projects supported by Meeks in his role as Congressman. Everything about this sweetheart deal looks suspicious.

Background to a Sweetheart Real Estate Deal

According to New York voting records¹¹, tax judgments¹², and real estate documents¹³, Rep. Greg Meeks lived in a very modest residence until some time in 2006 when he moved into a brand new home classified by New York City as a “mansion.”¹⁴

The earlier Meeks residence at 660 Grassmere Ter., Far Rockaway, NY 11691-2556 had just 975 square feet of finished space according to the 2006 property assessment. Meeks sold the property for \$402,800 on September 15, 2006.¹⁵

The home purchased by Rep. Meeks and his wife on October 13, 2006 cost \$830,000 according to state real estate records.¹⁶

This newly constructed home at 194-24 109 Road, Jamaica, New York 11412 was listed on the New York City Department of Buildings application as having 6,047 square feet in total construction floor area.¹⁷ The permit applicant was for Robert C. Gaskin of R.C.G.A. Architects, P.C.

¹¹ New York Voter Registration records show Gregory W. Meeks last voted at his 660 Grassmere Ter., Far Rockaway, NY 11691-2556 address in 2006.

¹² Public records show Lipscomb Lord Group, Inc. had numerous tax judgements and liens using the 660 Grassmere Ter., Far Rockaway, NY 11691-2556, address. The principal of Lipscomb Lord Group, Inc. is Mrs. Simone Marie Meeks, the wife of Rep. Meeks. The creditors include New York City Department of Finance, New York State Department of Taxation and the City of New York.. The filing dates began in 2003 and ran until December 28, 2006.

¹³ Real estate records (indenture document signed and dated Oct. 13, 2006) associated with the sale of Rep. Meeks' new home to him and his wife lists their address at the time as being 660 Grassmere Ter., Far Rockaway, NY 11691-2556

¹⁴ Final Assessment Roll 2007-08, Taxable Status Date Jan. 5, 2007, for property at 194-24 109 Road, Jamaica, NY 11412

¹⁵ Real Property Transfer Report filed with the New York State Board of Real Property Services on Sept. 15, 2006.

¹⁶ Real Property Transfer Report filed with the New York State Board of Real Property Services on October 13, 2006.

¹⁷ NY City Department of Buildings Application for Job Number 402136540; Permit issued 9/16/2005.

Shortly after the Meeks family purchased the house, the New York City assessment, per a taxable status date of January 5, 2007, estimated the market value of the house to be \$1,239,000¹⁸ – more than \$400,000 over the Meeks purchase price of \$830,000.

And the spacious new house was classified on the assessment as A7 – a classification in New York City for a mansion.

A closer examination of how Rep. Meeks came to own such a large new mansion for such a bargain price uncovers a tale of how machine politics in New York City can permeate every aspect of such a purchase.

The property on which the Meeks home was constructed belonged to the Prince of Peace Baptist Church. Following a devastating fire which gutted the church in 1997, the church sold off parcels from its large lot to raise money to build a new church at the same location.

The then-councilman who represented the area, Archie Spigner, referred the pastor, Rev. Arthur Harris, to a builder, Richard Dennis. Mr. Dennis purchased parcels of land from the church, enabling them to raise funds to begin building a new church. A *New York Times* article concluded that Mr. Dennis was able to sell nine homes built on the parcels for about \$3 million.¹⁹ One of those homes is now owned by Meeks.

Though the church broke ground in 2004, using the \$400,000 it obtained through its sale of land parcels to Mr. Dennis, it failed to complete the new church. A loan from Community Capital bank was not consummated after the bank was acquired by Carver Federal Savings Bank.

It turns out that Archie Spigner and Carver Federal are both very close to Meeks in a number of ways. Rep. Meeks had introduced legislation, which passed, to have a post office in his district named after Spigner. This was a singular honor as the post office is the only one in the United States named after a living individual.²⁰

The overlapping interests of Meeks and Spigner can also be seen in the major development project being overseen by the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation (GJDC). City lobbying records show Archie Spigner was the lobbyist for GJDC and Center for Responsive Politics Open Secrets website, www.opensecrets.org, show that the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. was paying lobbyists in Washington to lobby Congress every year from 2000 through 2009.

¹⁸ Final Assessment Roll 2007-08, Taxable Status Date Jan. 5, 2007, for property at 194-24 109 Road, Jamaica, NY 11412

¹⁹ “From the Ashes, an Empty Promise,” by Jo Craven McGinty, *New York Times*, May 11, 2009.

²⁰ “Historical Event: Only Post Office Named After a Living Individual; Rep. Meeks, U.S. Postal Service to Host a Postal Renaming Ceremony for the Honorable Archie Spigner,” PR Newswire, May 6, 2005.

Published accounts show Rep. Meeks as one of the biggest boosters of funding for the GJDC. A 2008 States News Service story, “Congressman Gregory Meeks Applauds Great Jamaica Development Corp. for New Revitalization Project,” credited the Congressman for obtaining funding for GJDC.²¹ Numerous other sources credit Meeks with getting funding for GJDC going back to 2001 or earlier.²²

Meeks’ ties with Carver Federal are also strong. His campaign treasurer is a Carver Federal Vice President,²³ his campaign banks at Carver Federal,²⁴ and Meeks has worked with Carver Federal in numerous other ways.

A Closer Look at the Sweetheart Deal on Rep. Meeks’ New Home

Aside from Meek’s purchase of his new home for \$830,000 on October 13, 2006 and the assessment of the property using a taxable status date of January 5, 2007 – less than three months later – which listed the estimated market value at \$1,239,000, there are quite a few other indications that Meeks received a bargain basement purchase price on his brand new mansion.

Start with the price Meeks paid per square foot.

The application for the construction of the Meeks’ home which was approved on June 27, 2005 lists the total construction floor area at 6,047 square feet.²⁵

The Final Assessment Roll 2007-2008 with the Taxable Status Date of January 2, 2007 lists the home with two finished floors as having a building size of 64.10 feet x 49.80 feet, which equals 3,192 feet per floor. The home has two finished floors making the approximate square footage about 6,384.

To be conservative, count the square footage at 6,000.

Considering the \$830,000 purchase price for the home, Meeks paid just a shade over \$138 per square foot for his new mansion.

That price is less than half the cost per square foot for homes in Queens in both 2006 and 2007 according to the Trulia Real Estate Search service.²⁶ Considering that the

²¹ “Congressman Gregory Meeks Applauds Greater Jamaica Development Corporation for New Revitalization Project,” States News Service, Nov. 19, 2008.

²² “GJDC Presents Planning Framework for Development and Transportation Linked to AirTrain,” *New York Voice, Inc.*, May 23, 2001. Article credits Meeks with “being instrumental in gaining the Federal funds for the study.”

²³ Meeks for Congress Statement of Organization, FEC Form 1, page 3, filed 7/15/2001, discloses Patsy Ann Simmons as Assistant Treasurer. Meeks for Congress Statement of Organization, FEC Form 1, page 3 shows Patsy Ann Simmons, a Carver Federal officer, promoted to treasurer of Meeks for Congress.

²⁴ Meeks for Congress FEC Form 3 Reports disclose Carver as a depository for campaign funds.

²⁵ New York City Department of Buildings, Application approved on June 27, 2005, Job Number 402136540, at Section 8.

Meeks home was categorized as A7, a mansion, and was just built, the \$138 per square foot represents the sweetest of sweetheart deals for the congressman.

Another indication that the Meeks home was a bargain comes from 2007/2008 Assessment Year Cost Guidelines, a publication of the New York City Department of Finance, Property Division Valuation Policy and Quality Control Unit.²⁷ This cost guideline publication lists the cost per square foot for “High Value Residences (Mansion Style)” at \$355 to \$540. Taking the lowest end of that range, \$355 per square foot and multiplying it times 6,000 square feet puts the cost of a 6,000-square-foot mansion at \$2,130,000, a staggering \$1,300,000 over Meeks’ purchase price of \$830,000.

And that is the lowest end of the range.

Ironically, the \$138 per square foot paid by Meeks is even less than the cost per square foot for public housing, \$165 to \$265.²⁸ Purchasing a mansion for less per square foot than public housing is certainly a spectacular deal. This was a deal that was not open to the general public since the construction and purchase of the home was privately arranged by Rep. Meeks.

Other indicators also underscore the fabulous bargain.

The previous home occupied by Rep. Meeks (660 Grassmere Terr., Far Rockaway, N.Y. 11691) was sold on September 15, 2006 for \$402,800.²⁹ That property had 975 square feet of finished space and another 975 square feet of unfinished space for a total of 1,950 square feet. Meeks’ tiny old home sold for \$206 per square foot the month before he purchased his new home at \$138 per square foot. Considering the fact that only 975 square feet was finished space in the older home and the disparity in price is incredible.

Another indicator is the disparity between what Meeks paid for his new home and the prices paid for the other A7 category mansions which sold in 2006 in Queens.

Real estate records for Queens show that just five other A7 properties were sold in Queens in 2006, the year the congressman bought his home.

The information below dramatically emphasizes the deal:

Building Class A7 Properties Sold in Queens in 2006

²⁶ Average Price per Square Foot for Homes in Queens; http://www.trulia.com/real_estate/Queens-New_York/market_trends/.

²⁷ 2007/2008 Assessment Year Cost Guidelines, New York City Department of Finance, Property Division Valuation Policy and Quality Control Unit, released September 1, 2006, page 7.

²⁸ *Op cit*.

²⁹ Real Property Transfer Report, State of New York, State Board of Property Services, RP-5217 NYC, September 15, 2006.

Address/Zip	Gross Square Feet	Sale Price	Sale Date
112-27 68 Ave./11375	2,556	\$1,823,000	2/8/2006
183-17 Elmira Ave/11412	1,280	\$465,000	9/18/2006
179-21 Tudor Rd/11432	5,724	\$3,225,000	2/27/2006
140 Beach 143 St/11694	10,685	0	5/31/2006
53 Underwood Road/11375	5,023	0	4/1/2006

Eliminating the two non-sale transfers, it's apparent that few mansions sold in Queens that year and none sold for anything remotely as low a price per square foot as the Meeks home.

When the assessments for the two A7 mansions subject to non-sale transfers are examined, it becomes clearer yet that A7 mansions are far more expensive than what Meeks paid for his. The home described above at 140 Beach 143 Street was listed on the Final Assessment Roll 2007-2008 for New York, which used the taxable status date of January 5, 2007, as having an estimated market value of \$3,790,000.³⁰ The home at 53 Underwood Road was listed on the Final Assessment Roll 2007-2008 for New York, which used the taxable status date of January 5, 2007, as having an estimated market value of \$2,129,000.³¹

While the records cited show that Meeks purchased his home from the Dennis Organization, Inc. and the construction was overseen by R.C.G.A. Architects, Robert Gaskin's firm, it is not entirely clear which party was responsible for the bargain obtained by Meeks in this real estate deal. It is even possible a different third party subsidized the sweetheart deal.

What is abundantly clear is that Meeks got a home more than three times the size of his prior home at a cost per square foot far lower than his old home as well as far lower per square foot than the average Queens residential sale that year.

And he did not buy the property in a sale open to the public but rather in a private transaction.

The fact that the owner of R.C.G.A. Architects, which oversaw construction, was a major donor to Meeks as well as profiting from many construction projects supported

³⁰ Final Assessment Roll 2007-2008, City of New York, Taxable Status Date January 5, 2007, for the property at 140 Beach 143 Street in the Borough of Queens; Estimated Market Value \$3,790,000.

³¹ Final Assessment Roll 2007-2008, City of New York, Taxable Status Date January 5, 2007, for the property at 53 Underwood Road in the Borough of Queens; Estimated Market Value \$2,129,000.

by Meeks in his official capacity as a Member of Congress is only the beginning of the context for the home sale.

Robert Gaskin: An Architect With Questionable Credentials

The Richard Dennis Organization was the owner of the lot on which the Meeks home was built. The Dennis Organization contracting license appears to have been inactive at the time the Meeks home was built. Other public records, including the construction permit, show the construction was being overseen by Robert Gaskin of RCGA – Architects.³²

Mr. Gaskin bills himself on his resume, letterhead and other documents as a member of the prestigious American Institute of Architects. NLPC’s investigation included checking Mr. Gaskin’s professional background. An inquiry to the American Institute of Architects disclosed that Mr. Gaskin was not a member of AIA nor had he ever been.

Further inquiries revealed that Gaskin was not a member of the National Organization of Minority Architects either, despite that claim on his resume on the RCGA web page, www.rcgaarchitects.com.

Even more curious was the possibility that Robert St. C Gaskin – as he bills himself on his web page and as his New York professional license lists him – is not Gaskin’s real name.

A variety of public records show Robert Gaskin’s full name to be Robert Albert or Robert A. Gaskin:

- Contributions of Robert A. Gaskin to Meeks for Congress in which the contributor’s occupation is listed as architect and his employer as RCGA:

\$1,000 10/28/2002

\$225 11/17/2005

- A Pennsylvania Court Report shows Robert Albert Gaskin (DOB: 09/1960; SSN: 119-64-xxxx) charged with misdemeanor DUI with an offense date of 10/09/2004) Gaskin’s address is listed as Blakeslee, PA 18610. Court case number: CP-45-CR-0000076-2005

A more recent Pennsylvania Court Report shows Robert Gaskin charged with misdemeanor driving under the influence with an offense date of 05/24/2009. Gaskin’s address is listed as Blakeslee, PA 18610. Court case number: CR-0000158-09

³² New York City Department of Buildings Application, approved June 27, 2005; permit issued on September 16, 2005.

Aside from the DOB and partial SSN matching Robert Gaskin of RCGA, property assessment records for Monroe County, Pa show Robert and Angela Gaskin as owners of 1120 Timber Drive, Blakeslee, PA 18610. Angela is Robert's second wife.

As a former prosecutor in Pennsylvania, I understand that DUI defendants are typically listed in the arrest reports by the name on their driver's license. The obvious question here is why Gaskin has his architectural license under the name Robert St. C Gaskin when he apparently has a driver's license under Robert Albert Gaskin. Add to this, Gaskin's longtime apparent misrepresentation of himself as a member of the American Institute of Architects when he never belonged and a deeper examination of Mr. Gaskin's credentials is in order.

While Mr. Gaskin portrays himself as a successful international architect, numerous holes appear in this façade.

One example is his letterhead for RCGA. Aside from the nonexistent credentials of AIA and NOMA membership already cited, Mr. Gaskin lists across the bottom of his letterhead: NEW YORK • MIAMI • PHILADELPHIA • ROME. No sign of RCGA offices in any other city than New York was found nor could any sign that RCGA was registered as a foreign corporation in any of those other locations found. Moreover, the RCGA web page had no such offices listed.

Gaskin's façade as an up and coming architect is also belied by a string of tax liens against RCGA. One Internal Revenue Service tax lien dated 10/10/2005 against RCGA was for \$174,569.

Just last year there were the following tax liens against RCGA:

IRS	\$65,626
NY State	\$6,476
NY City	\$2,761

For a firm which generates much of its income from taxpayer-supported projects, RCGA appears to have been a tax deadbeat to the tune of several hundred thousand dollars.

On top of the IRS liens against RCGA, a search of public records by NLPC found a Federal Tax Lien against Gaskin and his wife dated 9/18/2008 for \$31,292.70.³³

³³ Office of the City Register, Document ID 2008092600988023, Federal Tax Lien for \$31,292.70, Document filed: 10/17/2008, filed against Robert S. Gaskin and Angela Gaskin, 10819 Guy R. Brewer Blvd, Apt. 2, Jamaica, NY 11433-2804.

Robert Gaskin: Architect Thriving on Politically Influenced Construction Projects

A profile of Robert St. C Gaskin which appeared in a 2005 issue of *Crain's New York Business* stated in a sidebar under a photo of Gaskin:

Burning Ambition To land big government contracts

Gaskin has achieved his “burning ambition” with numerous government-funded contracts in the New York area.

And in the process he has become a political contributor to the leading political figures of his section of New York. Aside from Gaskin's donations to Rep. Meeks, he made six donations to State Senator Malcolm Smith totaling \$3,600 as well as repeated donations to other New York elected officials.³⁴

Merrick Academy

One example of Gaskin's work as an architect overlapping with interests of his political cronies is the Merrick Academy, a charter school in New York. Gaskin lists his work on Merrick Academy on his resume on the RCGA web site.³⁵

The IRS Form 990 annual report for 2001 shows Rep. Greg Meeks as a Trustee of Merrick.³⁶ An External Evaluation Report for Merrick Academy covering 2007-2008 also listed Meeks as a member of the school's board of trustees as of the date of the inspection visit for the report.³⁷ That Meeks was an early trustee is further documented by an April 2000 release of the Charter Schools Institute listing him as a trustee.³⁸

Rep. Meeks repeatedly failed to disclose his trustee position with Merrick Academy in his Financial Disclosure Reports despite a clear requirement that he do so.

Another Trustee listed is State Senator Malcolm Smith.

And another is Joan Flowers, an attorney who has served as a campaign treasurer for Meeks and Smith. Flowers also served as a treasurer for former Lt. Governor (now Governor) David Paterson.

Another Trustee was Darryl Greene, a former Flowers and Smith business associate and major donor to Meeks who was “convicted in 1999 of stealing \$500,000 in city and corporate cash in a minority hiring scam.”³⁹

³⁴ New York State Board of Elections at www.elections.state.ny.us/

³⁵ <http://www.rcgaarchitects.com/people1.htm>

³⁶ 2001 IRS Form 990 for Merrick Academy, Statement #4.

³⁷ External Evaluation Report of Merrick Academy – Queens Public Charter School, 2007-2008, Feb. 27, 2009, Charter Schools Institute, The State University of New York, page 4.

³⁸ “State University Trustees Vote to Re-Submit Three New Charter Schools to State Board of Regents,” Charter Schools Institute release, April 25, 2000.

³⁹ “Floyd Flake's Friends,” *New York Post*, Feb. 2, 2010.

As will be shown later, Gaskin also did architectural and or renovation work for Meeks, Smith and Flowers as well as working with Darryl Greene's company on one or more projects.

Gaskin was a major political contributor to Meeks, Smith and Paterson.

In short, a politically connected architect received business from a school close to a series of individuals who have had financial and/or work relationships with Gaskin. The opportunity for a conflict of interest when a contractor does projects for political figures is a recurring theme in political corruption cases at all levels of government.

Greater Jamaica Development Corp.

The Greater Jamaica Development Corp. works to promote development projects in the Jamaica area of Rep. Meeks' congressional district.

Rep. Meeks has been able to funnel huge amounts of federal funding to the GJDC for its building projects.

- Rep. Meeks "was instrumental in gaining federal funds" for a two-year planning project by the Greater Jamaica Development Corp.⁴⁰
- Rep. Meeks announced new federal funds (\$3 million) for the Jamaica Station. The GJDC was stated that it was planning to use the funds to expand bus facilities.⁴¹
- Rep. Meeks secured "\$21 million in investor tax credits for a planned office tower near the Long Island Rail Road's Jamaica Station" according to an April 2003 *Newsday* article. The Greater Jamaica Development Corp. received the grant.⁴²
- An April 2003 *Daily News* article further nailed down Meeks' role in securing the \$21 million in tax credits for GJDC by quoting the GJDC chair as explaining that Meeks was a member of the House Financial Services Committee and a sponsor of the new tax program which had resulted in the \$21 million in tax credits for GJDC. The GJDC chair went on to state, "We applaud Congressman Meeks for his vigorous efforts on behalf of economic revitalization in downtown Jamaica."⁴³

⁴⁰ "GJDC Presents Planning Framework for Development and Transportation," *New York Voice, Inc.*, May 23, 2001, page 7.

⁴¹ "U.S. Rep. Gregory W. Meeks Announces New Federal Funding for Queens Projects," *New York Voice, Inc.*, Dec. 12, 2001, page 13.

⁴² "Creative Financing Will Help Revitalize Jamaica," *Newsday*, April 4, 2003, page A42.

⁴³ "Office Development is Set for First Phase ,"

- “Leadership from Congressman Gregory Meeks” was credited in a January 2005 article in *Real Estate Weekly* for producing “federal funds for a \$40 million infrastructure project which Greater Jamaica Development Corporation has launched.”⁴⁴
- “Congressman Gregory W. Meeks secured funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), for the project, which is being undertaken by Greater Jamaica Development Corporation.”⁴⁵
- Rep. Meeks issued a press release on April 4, 2009 and posted it to his congressional web page listing his 2010 appropriations requests. Among the earmarks he supported was \$5 million for the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. for the Jamaica Plaza Station Intermodal.⁴⁶

At the same time public records show Robert Gaskin’s RCGA Architects has gotten project after project funded by GJDC.

Gaskin lists two GJDC officials as references on his RCGA Architects web page.⁴⁷

The New York City Department of Buildings lists a number of projects in which the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. was the owner and Robert Gaskin/RCGA Architects was the applicant.⁴⁸

Robert Gaskin’s RCGA – Architects also appears to have been selected by LCOR for work funded by GJDC through the receipt of the \$21 million tax credit referenced above which Rep. Meeks was so influential in obtaining for GJDC. GJDC selected LCOR, Inc. as its development partner for the project⁴⁹ although the project later stalled. It would appear that Robert Gaskin was somewhat close to LCOR, Inc. as the RCGA Architects web page lists the executive vice president of LCOR, Inc. as a reference for RCGA Architects.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ “\$40 Million transport plan wins new federal cash boost; Construction & Design,” *Real Estate Weekly*, January 12, 2005, page C1.

⁴⁵ “Downtown Jamaica facelift rejuvenates area’s retail,” *Real Estate Weekly*, December 3, 2008, page 10, (S).

⁴⁶ <http://www.house.gov/meeks>

⁴⁷ <http://www.rcgaarchitects.com>

⁴⁸ New York City Department of Buildings Applications:

Job No: 401073538

Job No: 401071308

Job No: 401174153

Job No: 401216304

⁴⁹ “Office Plan Set to Fly,” by Donald Bertrand, *Daily News*, March 30, 2003, page 1.

⁵⁰ <http://www.rcgaarchitects.org>

JFK Airport Projects

Rep. Meeks has always been a prominent supporter of federal funding for JFK Airport as well as the expansion of the airport. In an article entitled “Congressman Gregory W. Meeks’ Vision for JFK,” Meeks declares his support for expanding the physical infrastructure of JFK Airport, adding airport slots, and developing policies that encourage the use of JFK as a hub for major airlines.⁵¹ The same article cites Meeks’ claim that he secured more than \$40 million in federal funds for noise abatement for public buildings due to the proximity of the airport.

Meeks has also taken credit for persuading American Airlines to “re-invest at John F. Kennedy International Airport – the economic engine of Meeks’ congressional district. As a result, American constructed a \$1.4 billion terminal and added thousands of new construction jobs and dozens of new vendors and suppliers from the local community.”⁵²

Reviewing Robert Gaskin’s resume on the RCGA – Architects web page, one finds the following projects related to American Airlines at JFK Airport:⁵³

- New American Airlines – Light Rail Station Connector. JFK Int. Airport
- American Airlines/American Eagle, JFK International Airport
- New American Eagle Operation Center, American Airlines, Terminal B, JFK Airport

Rep. Meeks claims credit for gaining slots for JetBlue to operate at JFK:

“...I was able to successfully negotiate with the Clinton Administration the acquisition of 75 slots in 199 for JetBlue to operate at JFK...”⁵⁴

Meeks also has explained that he supported JetBlue only “after securing commitments from the airline to invest at JFK.”⁵⁵

Just as Gaskin was able to get construction jobs related to American Airlines terminal construction and improvements following Meeks’ persuasion of that airline to invest at JFK, so too did Gaskin financially benefit from JetBlue after Meeks secured a commitment from that airline to invest at JFK.

⁵¹ “Congressman Gregory W. Meeks’ Vision for JFK,”
http://www.house.gov/list/hearing/ny06_meeks/ar031202.html

⁵² “Jobs, Economic Development and the Economy,”
<http://www.congressmangregorymeeks.com/issues/jobs>

⁵³ <http://www.rcgaarchitects.com/people1.htm>

⁵⁴ “Congressman Gregory W. Meeks’ Vision for JFK,”
http://www.house.gov/list/hearing/ny06_meeks/ar031202.html

⁵⁵ “Jobs, Economic Development and the Economy,”
<http://www.congressmangregorymeeks.com/issues/jobs>

Gaskin's RCGA – Architects web page claims that his firm is “about to commence the design development package for the new Jet Blue Corporate Center, located in Jamaica, New York.”⁵⁶

“Robert St. C Gaskin” also took part in a discussion on the “Challenges in Building the JetBlue Terminal.”⁵⁷ The article stated:

Gaskin noted that JFK will be introducing more high-end tenants to its concessions to “bring Madison Avenue and Fifth Avenue to the airport.” RCGA Architects is designing several of the retail projects at JFKIAT-Terminal 4.

JFK International Airport AirTrain

The JFK International Airport AirTrain is a multi-billion dollar train system connecting JFK Airport with Long Island Rail Road cars and the New York City Subway.⁵⁸ Construction of the eight-mile loop that connects to two New York mass transit stations, each three miles away, began in 1998 and ended in 2003.⁵⁹

The Airtrain is in Rep. Meeks' congressional district and he has been a supporter funding for the project and its funding from his first term in office. Meeks' 1998 financial disclosure report shows he took a trip to Vancouver where a similar system was operating. The trip was funded by the Port Authority, which operates the AirTrain, and Bombardier, the manufacturer of the train.

Rep. Meeks' support of the AirTrain meshed with his support for infrastructure expansion with the Great Jamaica Development Corp. and the JFK International Airport. As with the earlier projects, Gaskin's RCGA received project funds. The RCGA web page shows Gaskin listing work with “New Air-Train (sic) British Airways Station” and “New Air Train (sic) Link, Phase 1 Development, New York.”⁶⁰

Given the connections among the various public works transportation and infrastructure projects which Rep. Meeks supported, it is not difficult to find projects Meeks pushed which tied several of his pet projects together. One such project was the Jamaica Plaza Station Intermodal on which Meeks is requesting \$5,000,000 in federal earmark funds from the 2010 appropriation for the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. but which is sited at a location where the AirTrain converges with the Long Island Rail Road.⁶¹

⁵⁶ <http://www.rcgaarchitects.com/aboutus.htm>

⁵⁷ <http://www.allbusines.com/profectional-services/architectural-design-engineering/134111368-1.htm>

⁵⁸ <http://www.jfk-airport.net/airtrain.html>

⁵⁹ “Sen. Gregg's Remarks on the NYC Train Earmark”, U.S. Senate Budget Committee – Minority, May 1, 2008.

⁶⁰ <http://www.rcgaarchitects.com/people1.htm>

⁶¹ http://www.house.gov/list/press/ny06_meeeks/PR040409.shtml

Robert Gaskin: Contractor to the Politically Connected

Robert Gaskin's RCGA – Architects appears to have been busy doing work for a host of politically connected individuals in addition to the mansion he built for Rep. Meeks.

Coincidentally, many of these individuals were political allies of Meeks and influential in political decisions affecting public construction projects.

Coincidentally, Robert Gaskin's RCGA – Architects firm was working on those projects.

State Senator Malcolm Smith

State Senator Malcom Smith is the New York State Senate President and a close political ally of Rep. Greg Meeks. Both Smith and Meeks helped set up the controversial nonprofit, New Direction.⁶² The group drew headlines because the nonprofit had promised to provide funds to victims of the Katrina Hurricane and little or no funds went to the victims.⁶³

The problems associated with New Direction were originally discovered by Thomas Anderson, Director of NLPC's Government Integrity Project and were shared with the *New York Post*, which broke the story.

Shortly after the media ran the story, the *New York Post* reported that federal prosecutors were "probing a charity set up by two powerful Queens lawmakers that pledged to help Hurricane Katrina victims..."⁶⁴

As was previously noted, Gaskin performed work on the Merrick Academy, a school where State Senator Malcom Smith was a Trustee.⁶⁵

Robert Gaskin's RGCA is listed on a New York City Department of Buildings application form as performing work on a Queens property owned by Malcolm Smith.⁶⁶

Helen Marshall, Queens Borough President

⁶² "Figure Under Scrutiny in Inquiry Into Charity Was on Senate Payroll," by William K. Rashbaum and Danny Hakim, *New York Times*, February 10, 2010.

⁶³ "Queens pols stiffed Katrina victims," by Melissa Klein and Isabel Vincent, *New York Post*, February 8, 2010.

⁶⁴ "Feds' eye on missing Katrina aid," by Tom Topousis and Frederic U. Dicker, *New York Post*, February 13, 2010.

⁶⁵ <http://www.rcgaarchitects.com/people1.htm>

⁶⁶ New York City Department of Buildings Application approved on November 1, 1999; Permit issued August 23, 2002

Queens Borough President Helen Marshall and her husband Donald purchased a home at 31-17 Buell Street in Queens on March 14, 2005 according to New York City property records.

Robert Gaskin's RCGA is listed on a New York City Department of Buildings application form as performing work on the property.⁶⁷

Helen Marshall in her capacity as Queens Borough President had strong influence over a great deal of economic development involving design and construction in Queens.

She served as a member of the Interagency Taskforce for the Jamaica Plan, a powerful consortium of elected leaders and other city representatives overseeing millions of dollars in planning and development in Queens.⁶⁸

Also serving on the Interagency Taskforce for the Jamaica Plan were two other Gaskin clients: Rep. Greg Meeks and State Senator Malcolm Smith.⁶⁹

Robert Gaskin is currently working on Phase 1 of the Jamaica Plan.⁷⁰

Joan Flowers, Campaign Treasurer to Malcolm Smith, Greg Meeks and David Paterson

Joan Flowers has been a key political ally as well as a campaign treasurer for a number of influential New York politicians including Rep. Greg Meeks, Governor David Paterson and State Senator Malcolm Smith. Controversy has repeatedly dogged Ms. Flowers in her role as treasurer. After the Federal Election Commission audited Rep. Meeks' congressional campaign and found numerous financial and legal irregularities, she quit.

More recently, she was associated with the New Direction Local Development Corp., the nonprofit started by Meeks and Smith which was covered in media stories when it was revealed that little or none of the funds it raised for Hurricane Katrina victims appeared to have gone to the victims.⁷¹ Following the story, it was disclosed in press reports that federal investigators were investigating New Direction.⁷²

Gaskin also performed work on Merrick Academy, a school on which Joan Flowers served as a Trustee.⁷³

⁶⁷ New York City Department of Buildings Application approved on October 30, 2007.

⁶⁸ The Jamaica Plan – Interagency Taskforce Sub-Group Meeting, February 7, 2008..

⁶⁹ *op cit*

⁷⁰ ePWC Newsletter, Professional Women in Construction, March 20, 2009.

⁷¹ "Queens pols stiffed Katrina victims," by Melissa Klein and Isabel Vincent, *New York Post*, February 8, 2010.

⁷² ⁷² "Feds' eye on missing Katrina aid," by Tom Topousis and Frederic U. Dicker, *New York Post*, February 13, 2010.

⁷³ <http://www.rcgaarchitects.com/people1.htm>

New York City Department of Building records show Robert Gaskin's RCGA performed work on Joan Flowers' property, listed as owned by Flowers Enterprises, Inc.⁷⁴

Mustapha Elshiekh, Meeks Political Ally Who Directed Dodgy Charity

Americans for Global and Domestic Peace is a New York nonprofit which was headed by Moustafa Elshiekh, a local Democratic Party activist. The nonprofit listed Rep. Greg Meeks as being on its board.⁷⁵

The nonprofit held a fund raising event at the World's Fair Restaurant to raise money to help victims of the South Asian tsunami in February 2005.⁷⁶ A press report at the time claimed that \$240,000 was raised.⁷⁷ Moustafa Elsheikh later disputed that amount, claiming they only raised about \$10,000 and gave it to a local Indonesian mosque. Meeks was listed as a board member on the group's IRS Form 990 as well as its web page. When the reporter contacted Meeks' spokeswoman for a response, the spokeswoman did not return the call.

Robert Gaskin's project list on the RCGA web page breaks down his claimed project work by categories. Under "Residential," Mr. Gaskin lists:

Mustapha El Sheikh (sic) Residence, Elmont, New York⁷⁸

Rev. Floyd Flake's Greater Allen Cathedral AME Church

Rev. Floyd Flake is a major power broker in Queens. He served as U.S. Representative for more than a decade and was a mentor to Rep. Greg Meeks, who succeeded Flake in Congress. He also mentored State Senator Malcolm Smith. He now heads a church with a \$12 million a year budget and also heads the Greater Allen Development Corp., an umbrella group that constructs housing, manages commercial property, and directs a variety of services. The former congressman lives in a \$3.6 million home on Long Island and is considered a significant political figure in Queens.⁷⁹

Over the years and more recently, Rev. Flake has been dogged with ethics issues.

⁷⁴ New York City Department of Buildings application approved on December 2, 1997 and plan exam approved on May 18, 2000.

⁷⁵ "Tsunami cash down 'sinkhole'," by Isabel Vincent and Melissa Klein, *New York Post*, February 22, 2010.

⁷⁶ "Pols team for tsunami relief," by Robin Haas, *Daily News*, January 21, 2005.

⁷⁷ "Tsunami cash down 'sinkhole'," by Isabel Vincent and Melissa Klein, *New York Post*, February 22, 2010.

⁷⁸ <http://www.rcgaarchitects.com/people1.htm>.

⁷⁹ "How the Rev. Floyd Flake Does Business," by Amanda Fung, *Crains New York*, February 21, 2010.

Rev. Flake was involved with a business consortium called Aqueduct Entertainment Group (AEG) which won a bid to run a lucrative slot machine casino at Aqueduct race track in Queens. Governor Paterson's selection of AEG was plagued with controversy. One of the AEG parties, Darryl Greene, was a former business associate of Rep. Meeks and Joan Flowers. He was also a felon "convicted in 1999 of stealing \$500,000 in city and corporate cash in a minority hiring scam."⁸⁰

The AEG bid was quickly tossed aside after a storm of controversy grew around the selection, with published accounts calling the deal the "AEG Fiasco."⁸¹

New York Department of Buildings records show that Gaskin's RCGA performed work in 2001 for Rev. Floyd's church.⁸²

Conclusion

The focus of this request for an investigation is quite clear: Rep. Gregory Meeks appears to have benefited improperly and significantly from his official actions.

Published reports show that Meeks had personally received a telephone call from controversial financier R. Allen Stanford, now the accused perpetrator of a \$7 billion Ponzi scheme.

In the call, overheard by two former federal agents, Stanford requested that Meeks intercede with Venezuela's authoritarian ruler Hugo Chavez in a case involving a dissident Stanford employee who was threatening to expose Stanford's financial dealings. The article stated that Stanford wanted Meeks to get Hugo Chavez to launch a "criminal investigation" against the dissident employee.

Meeks reportedly agreed and about a month later in fact traveled to Venezuela to meet Chavez. The hapless employee, Gonzalo Tirado, was later indicted by prosecutors for the Venezuelan regime.

There is little doubt that Stanford was a man who was spending huge sums to get the U.S. government to see things his way. Public records show that Stanford poured more than \$5 million into lobbying since 2001.⁸³

There is also little doubt that Stanford was especially close to Rep. Meeks. The Virgin Islands fund raiser for Meeks in July 2008, a month during which the IRS was filing tens of millions of dollars in liens against Stanford, was a financial windfall for the

⁸⁰ "Floyd Flake's Friends," *New York Post*, Feb. 2, 2010.

⁸¹ "New Rules for Aqueduct racino bidding following AEG fiasco," by Kenneth Lovett. *Daily News*, March 15, 2010.

⁸² New York City Department of Buildings application approved on March 26, 2001 and permit issued on July 25, 2001.

⁸³ "Many ties for Stanford, lawmakers Federal agents are looking at connections," by Michael Sallah and Rob Barry, McClatchy Newspapers, *Houston Chronicle*, December 29, 2009, page 8.

Meeks campaign account. Federal Election Commission records show major donations from R. Allen Stanford and a number of his top executives and attorneys as well as his senior Washington, DC lobbyist.

We also know that Meeks has adamantly refused to answer questions about his relationship with Stanford from reporters with the *Miami Herald*,⁸⁴ *Daily News*,⁸⁵ and the *New York Post*.⁸⁶

If such a close relationship between a Member of Congress and a financier accused of one of the most serious financial frauds in U.S. history is not a fit subject for investigation, what is?

Investors lost billions of dollars as a result of the Ponzi scheme which Mr. Stanford, now in federal prison awaiting trial, is accused of masterminding. Those investors are entitled to learn more about Stanford's dealings with Congress.

Rep. Meeks' purchase of a new mansion for many hundreds of thousands below its market value is also a matter that is much too large to ignore.

While there is no definitive answer from public records as to who made this large financial windfall possible, there can be little doubt that Meeks got a sweetheart deal that was not available to the general public.

The huge disparity between what Meeks paid for his new mansion and what it was worth appears beyond all dispute:

Cost of house compared to market value

Meeks and his wife paid \$830,000 for the house in October 2006.
The estimated market value listed on his assessment with a taxable status date of January 5, 2007 was \$1,239,000.
Difference: \$409,000.

Cost of house per square foot compared to the cost per square foot of the average house in Queens sold in 2006

The cost per square foot for the average home sold in Queens in 2006 and 2007 was over twice the price paid per square foot by Meeks for his new home according to figures compiled by Trulia, an online real estate research tool.

⁸⁴ "Gregory Meeks' trip to Venezuela on behalf of Stanford's bank raises ethics questions," by Rob Barry, Michael Sallah and Gerardo Reyes, *Miami Herald*, Dec. 27, 2009.

⁸⁵ "Meeks not shy about gifts; Enjoyed 6 Caribbean visits thanks to accused con artists," by Greg B. Smith, *Daily News*, December 29, 2009, page 6.

⁸⁶ "Meeks not so blessed; Queens pol linked to Chavez 'scammer,'" by Maggie Haberman, *New York Post*, December 29, 2009, page 13.

Cost per square foot of Meeks' new home compared to his old home

Meeks paid at most about \$138 per square foot for his new house. Meeks old home in Far Rockaway sold for \$206 per square foot. That's based on the 1,950 square feet listed even though only 975 square feet were listed on New York City records as finished space. The old home sold the month prior to the purchase of the new home.

Difference: \$68 per square foot more for the tiny old home than the new mansion.

Cost of Meeks' new home compared to the other A7 category mansions sold in Queens in 2006

Only five other A7 (mansions) were sold in 2006, according to city real estate records. None of the other five were even close to the low cost per square foot paid by Meeks for his A7 mansion. The other properties are all listed earlier in this letter.

The mansion closest in size to the Meeks mansion was a 5,724 gross square foot home at 179-21 Tudor Road in Queens. It sold on February 27, 2006 for \$3,225,000. That equals about \$563 per square foot, far over the \$138 per square foot paid by Meeks.

Cost per square foot for the Meeks house compared to 2007/2008 Assessment Year Guidelines, a publication of the New York City Department of Finance, Property Division Valuation Policy and Quality Control Unit, cost estimates for mansion style houses.

This regularly updated guideline publication lists the cost per square foot for "High Value Residences (Mansion Style)" at \$355 to \$540 per square foot. Using the conservative 6,000 square foot size of the Meeks home and multiplying it by the lowest end of the range (\$355 per square foot) puts the cost at the lowest end of the range for a 6,000 square foot mansion at \$2,130,000

Difference: the difference between Meeks' cost of \$830,000 and his cost if he paid \$355 per square foot, the low end of the range discussed above is staggering. At \$355 per square foot, the cost of Meeks' house would have been \$2,130,000. Using this yardstick, Meeks saved an incredible \$1,300,000 on his purchase.

So whether Meeks got a windfall in his home purchase of \$409,000 (his cost compared to the market value) or a windfall of \$1,300,000 as in the calculation above, one thing is clear: the congressman got a sensationally lucrative deal that was certainly not available to the general public.

The issue isn't whether Meeks received a sweetheart deal.

He did.

The real focus of any investigation should be *why* Meeks received such a lucrative deal and *who* was Meeks' beneficiary for the bargain mansion.

Richard Dennis of the Dennis Organization sold the house to Meeks. He was also a contributor to Meeks' campaign and leadership political action committee.

Robert Gaskin of RCGA Architects was the architect/contractor for the Meeks house. He was also a major donor to the Meeks congressional campaign committee. He was an architect with dubious credentials who had a "burning ambition" to do big government-funded projects. As has been shown he also made contributions to political heavyweights in New York and coincidentally ended up doing projects for a series of Meeks' political allies.

Finally, the Meeks mansion was built for and purchased by Meeks in 2006. This was the year Stanford was reported to have telephoned Meeks and asked him to visit Venezuela's authoritarian leader, Hugo Chavez. The reason was that a former Stanford financial executive was beginning to make noises about Stanford's dodgy financial schemes and Stanford wanted the dissident investigated. Meeks visited Chavez a month later and Venezuela subsequently indicted the former Stanford executive.

Throughout this request for an investigation, very little has been said about applicable House Rules about gifts or any other relevant House Rule. Nor does it need to be belabored. The House Rules define the term "gift" very broadly:

**“. . . a gratuity, favor, discount, entertainment, hospitality, loan, forbearance, or other item having monetary value.
[House Rule 25, clause 5(a)(2)(A).]**

The appearance of impropriety with respect to Rep. Meeks' relationship with the accused \$7 billion Ponzi scheme operator R. Allen Stanford is palpable. Published accounts state the federal authorities are investigating. And Meeks has refused to answer any questions from reporters regarding his Stanford dealings.

Had a Member of Congress appeared to be facilitating the Bernie Madoff \$50 billion Ponzi scheme, can there be any doubt that the Committee on Standards of Official Standards would have a responsibility to undertake an investigation? Similarly, the dealings between Rep. Meeks and the man accused of cheating investors out of more than \$7 billion cry out for official scrutiny from the body entrusted with ensuring ethics in the U.S. House.

By the same token, the House Rule on gifts is both broad and strict. For example, Members have been known to get letters approving in advance wedding gifts. Issues

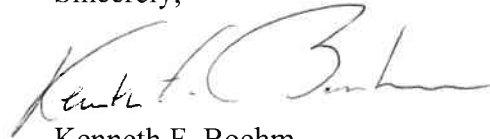
have arisen in ethics cases over stays at a vacation home and a variety of similar gift issues.

In this case, a Congressman buys a mansion for hundreds of thousands of dollars below market price. In no way can this be considered a minor gift for to do so would mean that Congress might as well make major financial gifts to Congressmen legal.

Virtually all of the facts in this matter are from public sources and are fully documented.

The two major issues on which we are requesting an investigation are textbook examples of the types of ethics cases for which the public, the media and Congress are entitled to a full, fair and professional investigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kenneth F. Boehm".

Kenneth F. Boehm
Chairman