

Facts on Misdirected Republican Email re Judicial Nominations

- On Friday, November 2nd at about 10:16am, Olati Johnson opened an email from Makan Delrahim, Deputy Chief Counsel to Senator Hatch, that was addressed to Olati and to Alex Dahl, Counsel to Senator Hatch. The email was forwarded correspondence between White House legislative affairs aide Heather Wingate and Chris Myers, senior communications adviser for the Senate Republican Conference. Myers indicated that he was working to put something together that would use the war on terrorism to force the Democrats to confirm more GOP judges. The email indicated that Sen. Rick Santorum had been talking with Trent Lott about putting together a press event that would link the pace of confirmation to the new terrorism bill's need for more judges to get wire taps and search warrants. Several people from the White House and Justice Department were also copied on the email.
- Immediately after receiving the email Olati forwarded the email to Melody Barnes and to several of her Democratic colleagues who work on judicial nominations on the staffs of Sens. Leahy, Schumer, Durbin and Edwards with a note indicating that this confirmed that Democrats needed to be aggressive about message and strategy. Melody Barnes also forwarded the email to Beryl Howell on Senator Leahy's staff (neither Senator Leahy's chief counsel or nominations counsel were present that day)
- Continuing to read through her emails, Olati then opened emails from Makan Delrahim, and Alex Dahl indicating that they had sent her an email in error and that she should delete it. Olati replied simply "sure. no worries."
- Olati and Melody subsequently received a phone call from Stephanie Cutter indicating that she had heard about the email from Senator Leahy and Senator Durbin's press staff and asked whether we should release this email to the Press. Olati and Melody were disinclined to release the email to the press, but while they were thinking the matter through, were informed that Senator Leahy's press secretary had already given the email to Al Kamen of the Washington Post and that other Senators might also send it to their hometown newspaper. Stephanie Cutter decided then to release the email to the Boston Globe.
- Short pieces about the email ran on Monday in Al Kamen's "In the Loop" Column in the Washington Post, and the Chicago Tribune. The Boston Globe did not run an article on the story. A short piece about the email confusion ran in the e-mail subscriber version of Roll Call.