

Nevada officials holding on to Whittemore-related money

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

Members of Nevada's congressional delegation and one candidate quickly announced that they would get rid of or give to charity all donations given by Harvey Whittemore after an FBI investigation into his campaign contributions surfaced in February.

But a review of their first-quarter campaign finance reports reveals that that's not exactly the case, though some money was donated to charities and a small sum went to the U.S. Treasury.

Some of the recipients now say they'll hold onto the money until the investigation is complete. If the funds are found to be legal, they'll keep them.

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., has given a portion back, but about \$100,000 of Whittemore-related funds remain in his coffers, according to a Reno Gazette-Journal analysis of his federal campaign spending reports.

In early February, FBI agents visited the homes and businesses of about 30 Whittemore associates and served subpoenas to testify before a federal grand jury. Several secret meetings have been held with the grand jury in Reno, but the U.S. Attorney's office in Las Vegas has yet to announce an indictment or cleared Whittemore.

Of special interest was more than \$120,000 given to Reid by a list of Whittemore friends, colleagues and family on a single day in 2007. Skirting campaign finance laws by using "conduits" is a felony that potentially carries some serious prison time.

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