

Berkley investigation overshadows Senate campaign

By Karoun Demirijan, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada Rep. Shelley Berkley was always going to have to face some tough music on the Senate campaign trail over allegations she used her seat in Congress to push for policies and programs that benefited her family's bottom line.

But the inquiry that stood at least a chance of being dismissed as a political witch hunt now ranks among the most serious investigations of alleged ethical offenses taking place this Congress.

The House Committee on Ethics voted unanimously Monday to appoint an investigative subcommittee, armed with full subpoena power, to determine whether Berkley violated the House's Code of Official Conduct over matters "in which (her) husband had a financial interest."

In 2008, Berkley joined with other members of the Nevada House delegation, including her current Senate opponent, Dean Heller, to press federal officials not to shutter the kidney center at University Medical Center in Las Vegas, which would have sent Southern Nevadans in need of transplants looking out of state for treatment. In that same year, Berkley sent a letter on her own to Rep. Pete Stark, who chaired the House subcommittee with jurisdiction over Medicare, urging him to oppose lowering Medicare reimbursement rates for dialysis.

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