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Feds investigating \$10,000 in checks from lobbyists to ousted Madigan operative

Federal investigators are looking into \$10,000 in payments from current and former lobbyists [for the utility company Commonwealth Edison to an ousted political operative for House Speaker Michael Madigan](#), sources have told the Chicago Tribune.

Records obtained by the Tribune reveal that the checks went to Kevin Quinn, a former top Madigan lieutenant and brother of Chicago 13th Ward Ald. Marty Quinn, after he was dismissed from the speaker's political operation in early 2018 amid a sexual harassment scandal.

The checks came from accounts linked to five current or former lobbyists for utility giant ComEd, including Madigan's close confidant Michael McClain, records showed. McClain's home in Quincy was raided by the FBI two months ago.

The FBI is looking at the checks as part of an ongoing investigation, a source with knowledge of the probe told the Tribune.

While the exact nature of the inquiry remains unclear, it involves some of Madigan's closest political allies. Quinn's house was raided by federal agents in mid-May, around the same time the search warrant was executed at McClain's home in Quincy, the Tribune has reported.

Also in May, the FBI executed a search warrant at the home of retired Chicago Ald. Michael Zalewski. Among the information the FBI was seeking in that raid were records of communications among Madigan, McClain and Zalewski related to attempts to get ComEd lobbying work for Zalewski after he retired in 2018, a law enforcement source has said.

ComEd recently confirmed in a report filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission that both ComEd and parent company Exelon received a federal grand jury subpoena "requiring production of information concerning their lobbying activities" in Illinois. The report stated the companies have "pledged to cooperate fully" and were "expeditiously providing the requested information." A ComEd spokeswoman declined to comment further Tuesday.

No one has been charged as a result of the investigation. Neither the lobbyists nor a Madigan spokesman responded to requests for comment Tuesday. An attorney for Quinn declined to comment.

As speaker, Madigan exercises great power in the House, including whether legislation gets a vote or is buried. ComEd employs a large team of lobbyists to advocate for its interests at the Capitol and historically is one of the largest campaign contributors to Illinois politicians.

In addition to the federal attention, the checks Kevin Quinn received could prove politically damaging for Madigan, who dismissed Quinn in February 2018 after campaign worker Alaina Hampton accused him of repeatedly sexually harassing her.

At the time, Hampton provided the Tribune explicit texts that Quinn sent to her, including one in which he referenced a Facebook picture of Hampton in a bikini and called her "smoking hot." Hampton repeatedly discouraged the overtures, but the unwanted contact only stopped after she informed his brother, Marty, she said. She left the Madigan organization and eventually sent the speaker a letter detailing her allegations in November 2017.

In announcing Kevin Quinn's ouster, Madigan, who also chairs the Illinois Democratic Party, praised Hampton as a "courageous woman" for coming forward.

"Ald. Marty Quinn and I decided that Kevin should no longer be affiliated with the political organization," Madigan said at the time. He also said Kevin Quinn would not be allowed to return to his previous roles as a state employee and political worker for the speaker.

Madigan was roundly criticized for his handling of the scandal, which came at the height of the national #MeToo movement and was one of a succession of sexual harassment-related allegations to rock the speaker's formidable political machine.

In September 2018, Madigan penned an op-ed to the Tribune promising a top-to-bottom reform of how his office handled such issues.

"I have made it a personal mission to take this issue head-on and correct past mistakes," Madigan wrote. "I wish I would have done so sooner."

That same month, Madigan allies sent checks to Kevin Quinn, according to copies of the records reviewed by the Tribune.

A check for \$1,000 went to Quinn from the law firm of John Bradley, records show. Bradley, a former state representative from Marion who was part of Madigan's House Democratic leadership team, is now a registered lobbyist for ComEd. Bradley's firm also wrote three more checks to Quinn, each for \$1,000, in January, February and March 2019, according to the records.

Two other checks for \$1,000 each came from Cornerstone Government Affairs, a Washington-based firm that has among its ranks Will Cousineau, who bills himself on the company website as the longest-serving political director to Madigan and Illinois House Democrats. Cousineau joined the firm in June 2017, and ComEd is a Cornerstone client. The checks were both issued in January 2019.

On Tuesday evening, a Cornerstone spokesman said the lobbying firm had received a subpoena related to Quinn's work as an independent contractor. Quinn was paid \$1,000-a-month for six months ending in March 2019 for doing research and monitoring committee hearings, the spokesman said.

Cornerstone is "fully cooperating with that request," the spokesman said in a statement.

Another \$1,000 check dated in December 2018 came from Cullen Inc. The address on the check is the same as lobbying firm of Tom Cullen, another former Madigan political director. Cullen is a former ComEd lobbyist who now represents Ameren, a big downstate utility.

Lobbyist Michael Alvarez sent a \$2,000 check from his firm to Quinn dated New Year's Day 2019. The memo line said "consulting services Dec. 2018." Alvarez, a former Metropolitan Water Reclamation District member, is registered as a City Hall lobbyist for ComEd, records show.

Quinn also got a \$1,000 check dated in September 2018 from a businessman who has worked with Madigan's property tax appeals law firm. The memo line of the check says "McClain."

It's unclear why "McClain" is written on the check. But the records show that McClain, a former legislator and retired ComEd lobbyist who for decades has been considered one of Madigan's closest confidants, also gave a \$1,000 check to Quinn. The check was signed by McClain's wife from the couple's joint account. Quinn deposited it in January 2019.

McClain declined to comment about the FBI raid on his house when contacted by the Tribune last week. McClain's relationship with Madigan dates to the 1970s when both were in the Illinois House. McClain served until he was defeated in 1982.

Quinn, meanwhile, has stated in court filings in his ongoing divorce case that he is out of work and unable to pay the \$1,085-a-month in court-ordered child support.

In April, Quinn asked that the payments be reduced, saying in a filing that he was a "self-employed consultant and does not have any clients at this time, despite his best efforts to obtain additional work and clientele."

In early May, the same month the FBI raided his house, Quinn was ordered by Cook County Judge Jeanne Cleveland Bernstein to actively seek employment, including maintaining a "job diary to contain no less than 15 entries per week" so the judge could see his progress in finding work, court records show.

[Michael Flynn's former business partner convicted of illegal lobbying](#)

Michael Flynn's former business partner was convicted Tuesday of lobbying illegally for Turkey and conspiring to cover it up after a week-long trial in Alexandria federal court.

Bijan Rafiekian, 67, was running a consulting firm with Flynn that was hired in 2016 to advocate for the extradition from the United States of dissident cleric Fethullah Gulen.

While prosecutors had no evidence Turkey funded the project, jurors were convinced Dutch-Turkish businessman Kamil Ekim Alptekin was acting as a conduit for Turkish officials who wanted to exploit Flynn's prominence as a surrogate for then-candidate Donald Trump. The effort culminated in an op-ed under Flynn's name on Election Day calling for Gulen's extradition.

"They tried to subvert the American political process," Assistant U.S. Attorney James P. Gillis said Monday during closing arguments of Rafiekian's trial. Rafiekian and Flynn, he said, were "in bed with the Government of Turkey to influence the American people."

It is the first case to go to trial since the Justice Department [began cracking down](#) on unregistered foreign lobbying. But even with the jury verdict, Judge Anthony J. Trenga has signaled he [may throw out the convictions](#) for lack of evidence; he will rule Sept. 5. Sentencing is set for Oct. 18.

Assistant Attorney General John Demers said in a statement the "verdict should stand as a deterrent to any malign foreign influence that undermines the integrity of our political processes."

Rafiekian's defense team said their client was "disappointed" but that they "look forward to ... clearing Mr. Rafiekian of these charges."

Flynn himself was not charged in the case, spun out of Robert S. Mueller III's special counsel probe. Trump's onetime national security adviser agreed to cooperate as part of a guilty plea in D.C. federal court to lying about his contacts with Russians. But as Rafiekian's trial neared,

Flynn [refused to admit](#) he intentionally lied about the Turkish project, saying he had simply not read documents he signed. Prosecutors chose not to call him as a witness.

“He got a pass,” defense attorney Mark MacDougall said.

“Where is Michael Flynn?” MacDougall later asked in his closing argument, referencing “mysterious” [classified evidence](#) that the government has indicated shows Alptekin cultivated a relationship with Flynn that did not involve Rafiekian.

In his closing, Gillis argued that Flynn’s behavior did not absolve Rafiekian.

“Why are we talking about Flynn?” he asked.

But Flynn’s name was invoked repeatedly in court. When the defense pointed out that Turkey had openly hired another firm to advocate against Gulen, Gillis said it was a bigger coup to have “Lieutenant General Michael T. Flynn. . . pretend [he] had this opinion. ”

Lacking concrete proof of Turkish involvement, prosecutors relied on convergent falsehoods told by Flynn, Rafiekian and Alptekin as well as the odd evolution of the project.

In the space of a few hours in August, Alptekin went from telling Rafiekian he had a “green light” from top Turkish officials to engage the Flynn Intel Group for an anti-Gulen campaign to claiming he was paying \$600,000 himself to encourage investment in Turkey. But the focus remained on Gulen, and the plans for the project did not change.

MacDougall argued unsuccessfully that Alptekin was “making an investment” to improve his own standing with the Turkish government. Gillis called that “a cover story . . . a fig leaf.”

Rafiekian [told lawyers for FIG](#) that a September meeting with Turkish ministers in New York City had nothing to do with the project, but in emails he said the opposite. He variously described payments back to Alptekin as “refunds” for work unperformed or fees for an “outside adviser.”

FIG told the Justice Department that Flynn wrote the op-ed on his own initiative.

Evidence showed it was drafted by Rafiekian and shared with Alptekin, who had first raised the idea as coming from someone in the Turkish government. Rafiekian sent Alptekin his first draft just after a meeting with the FIG team at which the businessman dismissed their work; one witness recalled him asking the room angrily, “What am I going to tell Ankara?”

The op-ed, Gillis told jurors, was “something to show Ankara.”

Flynn’s op-ed prompted a flurry of reporting on his relationship with Alptekin and the Turkish government, followed by a letter from the Justice Department asking for details about the op-ed and suggesting Flynn might need to register as a foreign agent.

Emails show Flynn and his colleagues vociferously denied that they were foreign agents or even lobbyists as they drafted talking points for Trump campaign allies.

“We are not linked to any lobbyists,” Flynn emailed Rafiekian.

FIG likewise told the Justice Department in a March 2017 filing under the Foreign Agent Registration Act that while the project “could be construed to have principally benefitted the Republic of Turkey,” the client was Alptekin’s company.

MacDougall argued that the FARA filing, “the heart and soul of this case,” was accurate: “It’s all there.”

Gillis countered that even if that were true, the conspiracy to lobby covertly for Turkey occurred well before the filing was made.

“This isn’t some regulatory violation, this isn’t some small deal,” he said. “This is about the Turkish government trying to influence our political system.”

It is not clear how the government’s decision not to call Flynn as a witness or Rafiekian’s conviction will impact Flynn’s sentencing.

As for why Flynn did not testify, Gillis told jurors the defense could have called him as well.

“They apparently didn’t think he would be of any use to you,” he said. “Nor did we.”

[Facebook, Amazon Set Lobbying Records as Tech Scrutiny Grows](#)

Facebook Inc. and Amazon.com Inc. set records for lobbying in the second quarter as Washington ramped up scrutiny of big technology companies, while Google’s spending dipped as it continued to reshuffle its influence operations. The world’s largest social media site spent more than \$4.1 million on lobbying, the most among big internet platforms, an increase from its previous high in the same period a year earlier. Facebook disclosed lobbying around blockchain, the technology that underlies cryptocurrencies. The company has been trying to win support for its Libra cryptocurrency, which drew skepticism from President Donald Trump, congressional Democrats and Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell and took a beating from lawmakers in both houses of Congress during two days of hearings last week. The company was also in the final stages of settling an investigation by the Federal Trade Commission into privacy violations in the Cambridge Analytica scandal. The FTC has voted to fine the company \$5 billion and is expected to announce the final details of the settlement within days. For more: Facebook \$5 Billion U.S. Privacy Settlement Approved by FTC Amazon spent more than \$4 million on lobbying, topping a quarterly record in the first three months of the year, according to disclosures filed with Congress before Monday’s midnight deadline. Amazon, which runs a broad lobbying operation on a diverse range of issues, is closing in on a \$10 billion cloud services contract that the Pentagon is poised to award to a single bidder next month. Last week, Trump criticized Amazon as the perceived front-runner for the contract, saying companies such as Oracle Corp. and Microsoft Corp. had complained that the process was unfair. Oracle has led a sustained lobbying campaign against the department’s plans to award the project, known as Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure, or JEDI, to a single bidder. In June, Amazon hired Jeff Miller, who bundled \$1 million for Trump’s 2016 campaign, to lobby for its cloud computing division on issues related to “cyber security and technology services,” the filings show. On July 18, Trump said he would look “very seriously” at the bid. Oracle spent almost \$1.7 million during the quarter, when it said it lobbied on issues including cloud and government IT procurement. It also lobbied the White House and the office of Vice President Mike Pence, the disclosures show. Microsoft Corp., which is the last remaining cloud provider that’s vying with Amazon for the contract, spent \$2.7 million in the quarter, while International Business Machines Corp., which was eliminated as a competitor along with Oracle in April, spent \$1.6 million, including lobbying on JEDI, the filings show. Antitrust Scrutiny The big internet companies are coming under growing antitrust pressure as the U.S. moves toward investigating whether their conduct squelches competition. The Justice Department and the FTC, which share antitrust jurisdiction, have carved up responsibility for oversight, with the FTC taking responsibility for Facebook and Amazon and the department’s antitrust division claiming Alphabet Inc.’s Google and Apple

Inc. Facebook and Amazon also underwent a series of hearings by a House committee conducting a broad antitrust investigation of technology companies, drawing ire from lawmakers during the latest hearing earlier this month. Google ended its relationships with at least 17 lobbyists at six outside lobbying firms as global policy chief, Karan Bhatia, reorganizes the search engine's approach. Google's second-quarter spending dipped to \$3.1 million, a decrease of about half what it spent in the same period a year earlier, the filings showed. Among the top-level exits were Robert Raben of the Raben Group, who served as assistant attorney general of the Justice Department under former President Bill Clinton. It also ended its relationship with Tom Ingram, a former staff director of the Senate Republican Conference. Susan Molinari, the company's longtime Washington director and a former Republican member of Congress, moved to an advisory position at the end of 2018. Apple, which is grappling with stepped-up antitrust scrutiny as well as concerns about trade, disclosed spending of \$1.8 million in the second quarter, up slightly from \$1.7 million a year earlier. Trade Lobbying Trump's threats to impose additional tariffs on imports from China and Mexico during the quarter, as well as a push to ratify a replacement for the North American Free Trade Agreement, contributed to an increase in trade lobbying by some associations. The Consumer Technology Association, whose members include Apple, Amazon and Facebook, reported spending almost \$1.8 million during the second quarter -- up from almost \$1.5 million a year earlier and from \$1.4 million in the first quarter -- in part because of the tariff threats, spokeswoman Bronwyn Flores said. The group reported lobbying Congress, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Commerce Department and the White House on matters including the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA, the China tariffs and duties Trump imposed last year on imports of steel and aluminum. "Over the past year, anti-tariff lobbying has become an increasing focus for our government affairs practice," Michael Petricone, the group's senior vice president for government and regulatory affairs, said in a statement. "In addition, this quarter CTA's marketing and communications team executed a comprehensive media campaign to complement our efforts." The National Retail Federation, which is helping lead a coalition of trade groups opposed to Trump's tariffs, showed almost \$2 million in lobbying spending in the second quarter, up from \$1.5 million in the first three months. Trade represented a significant portion of the increase besides health care, taxes and other issues, the group said. Trump threatened tariffs on an additional \$300 billion in Chinese imports in May in response to what he said was Beijing renegeing on agreed provisions in a sweeping trade deal the two nations are negotiating. The U.S. has already slapped duties on \$250 billion in Chinese goods. Trump put the new tariffs on hold after meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in June in Japan -- but not until after executives at hundreds of U.S. companies and trade groups testified at public hearings in Washington, most opposing the duties. The president also threatened duties on imports from Mexico if that country didn't do more to stem the flow of migrants to the U.S., prompting an outcry from businesses and trade groups. Trump ultimately relented. Proponents of ratifying the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement to replace Nafta had hoped to have Congress approve the deal by its August recess, but discussions continue between the administration and congressional Democrats on concerns about provisions regarding pharmaceuticals, the environment, labor and overall enforcement of the pact. --With assistance from Bill Allison. To contact the reporters on this story: Ben Brody in Washington at btenerellabr@bloomberg.net; Mark Niquette in Columbus at mniquette@bloomberg.net To contact the editors responsible for this story: Sara Forden at sforden@bloomberg.net, Mark

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For more: [Facebook \\$5 Billion U.S. Privacy Settlement Approved by FTC](#)

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FTC taking responsibility for Facebook and Amazon and the department's antitrust division claiming Alphabet Inc.'s Google and Apple Inc.

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