

Scandal-Ridden Ilhan Omar Marries Her Political Consultant

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Rep. Ilhan Omar's marriage to a political consultant has drawn renewed focus to her campaign's payments to her now-husband and his firm, which are at the center of a pending complaint with the Federal Election Commission. The story is [here](#).

Omar (D-Minn.) on Wednesday [March 11] announced on Instagram that she had married Timothy Mynett, and the couple filed their marriage license in Washington that same day.

Following Omar's marriage announcement, conservative critics raised concerns about payments by her campaign to E Street Group, which is run by Mynett.

"Taxpayers funded her campaign. Now they're funding her marriage. How is this not an FEC violation?" conservative

activist Charlie Kirk tweeted Thursday.

Citing an “irretrievable breakdown” in her marriage, Omar filed for divorce from her previous husband in October amid allegations that she was having an affair with Mynett, a consultant for her congressional campaign. Two months prior, Mynett’s then-wife had filed for legal separation, alleging Mynett was “romantically involved” with Omar.

There have been scandals involving Ilhan Omar and each of her three “marriages,” a veritable trifecta of scandal. She apparently married Ahmed Nur Said Elmi in 2009, in a state ceremony. Some in the Somali community have claimed he is her brother, whom she “married” so that he could obtain a green card and study in the United States. She has brushed off that charge, as if it were too absurd to deserve an answer. The question remains, and many, including some Somali-Americans, would welcome an FBI investigation into the matter. There are reports that at the time she married Said Elmi, Ilhan Omar was also the wife of Ahmed Hirsi, whom she had married in 2002 in a Muslim ceremony not recognized by the state. She had two children with Hirsi before separating from him, and a third one with him after they got back together, that is, after she and Elmi had officially split (though they may never have behaved like man and wife). It seems that for some time Ilhan Omar, Ahmed Hirsi (husband number one), and Ahmed Nur Said Elmi (husband number two, and possibly her brother), all lived together, first in Minneapolis and then in North Dakota, where both Omar and Elmi enrolled at North Dakota State University. That unusual housing arrangement made sense, if Omar considered herself to be Ahmed Hirsi’s wife but also needed to make sure that government officials knew that Ahmed Nur Said Elmi was living in the same home with her, in order to buttress his claim of being her husband.

Recently a member of the Somali community in Minneapolis handed over to two FBI agents a trove of documents regarding

Omar's 2009 marriage to Elmi; the tight-lipped FBI has not yet said if, on the basis of those documents, it has opened an investigation into Ilhan Omar for marriage fraud, which carries a penalty of up to five years in jail and a \$250,000 fine. She has certainly raised eyebrows from Minnesota to Washington to Mogadishu, with her various and highly unusual domestic arrangements. Her opponent in the 2020 election could provide a campaign slogan suitable for Ilhan Omar: "What a tangled web we weave, when e'er we practice to deceive." One hopes that the FBI will not be afraid to look into her family arrangements; the agents will simply have to ignore the predictable shrill cries of "racism" and "islamophobia." And whoever runs against her this fall should not let the matter drop but demand she explain fully to the American people her relationships with her three "husbands" – Ahmed Hirsi, Ahmed Nur Said Elmi, and her current husband and overpaid political consultant, Timothy Mynett. Elmi may be hard to locate; he has left the United States for the U.K. Was that a move that Ilhan Omar, his ex-wife and possibly his sister, encouraged and paid for, to get him out of the way of pesky American reporters and investigators?

And then there is husband #3, Mynett, who runs a small political consultancy firm in Washington. With him too, there is a scent of scandal, but this one is purely financial.

Asked at the time [of reports of her being seen leaving Mynett's apartment in the morning] by the CBS affiliate in Minneapolis whether she was dating anyone, she said, "No, I am not," and declined to discuss personal matters. Mynett had denied that he was leaving his marriage for Omar or that he was in love with her.

Three lies were thus told:

- 1) by Omar, who was in fact dating Mynett at the time;
- 2) by Tim Mynett, was indeed leaving his wife for Omar; and

3) by Mynett, again, who was clearly in love with her.

Since 2018, Omar's campaign paid about \$586,000 to E Street Group for a range of services that included digital advertising, fundraising consulting, digital communications and design. The campaign also paid \$7,000 to Mynett directly for fundraising consulting before hiring his consulting firm.

\$586,000 to Mynett's E Street group for a year's (2019) work? That's a gigantic sum for one off-election year – 2019 – of political consultancy. What were other first-time House members spending in 2019 for similar services? Those figures – compare, contrast – should prove enlightening.

Payments to the firm in the 2019-2020 cycle for Omar's reelection campaign comprised 40 percent of total campaign expenses, federal filings show.

It is unusual for such a high percentage campaign's expenses to be directed to one shop. In Omar's case, fully 40% of her total campaign expenses paid for the services of Tim Mynett's political consultancy. The shop was owned by Omar's lover and future husband. She was, in effect, paying herself – for any such overpayments to Mr. Mynett would obviously benefit the woman who was soon to become Mrs. Mynett.

Representatives for Omar's campaign and Mynett's firm said this week that there was nothing improper about the payments because they were made for legitimate work.

Her campaign and the E Street Group claim there was “nothing improper” about these payments. There are ways to test that claim. How much money is given to other consulting firms of the same size and experience, for the same kind of work? Was the payment of nearly \$600,000 paid to Mynett within the usual range for someone running for re-election to a House seat, or was it, as many suspect, a sum far above what would usually be

paid to a single consultant in a non-election year? Has Tim Mynett's E Street Group ever had a client who paid it anywhere near as much as did Ilhan Omar? Or was this, in every sense of the word, a sweetheart deal benefiting Mynett and his future wife?

But as news of the alleged affair unfolded, the conservative nonprofit National Legal and Policy Center filed an FEC complaint in August alleging Omar's campaign had violated a prohibition on candidates using campaign money for personal use.

Campaign funds cannot be used for personal purposes, including paying for a candidate's rent or any personal membership fees.

Federal laws allow candidates to use campaign funds to pay family and friends, as long as the money is used for a legitimate campaign expense and paid at fair market value.

Generally, the rationale is, as long as they're doing real work, you can pay them as you'd pay anyone else. You can't overpay them. It can't be a no-show job or a low-show job. You have to actually do the work," said Daniel Petalas, formerly the FEC's acting general counsel and head of enforcement.

You can't overpay them. Whether \$586,000 should be seen as overpayment, or not, remains to be investigated. And you can't pay their travel expenses, either, if the travel – the planes, the hotels – were for the personal pleasure of Ilhan Omar and her romantic companion, Timothy Mynett. It turns out she had been spending lavishly on such travel, and has had to pay thousands of dollars back to the campaign. Again, the purpose of each trip, the justification for Omar and Mynett having to travel so much together, the amount of travel expenses incurred, would all have to be investigated before deciding whether she has violated campaign finance laws.

A partner at E Street Group, Will Hailer, who co-founded the firm with Mynett, said on Friday that the payments went toward legitimate campaign work. He said most of the advertising-related payments had been passed on to vendors, as is the case with most advertising work.

The firm has about 18 employees and “on any given day, eight or more people could be touching her account at some point, between design, digital ads, social media, email content creation, high-dollar fundraising, political support and many other things that we provide for the campaign, Hailer said. “Similar to what we provide for countless other clients across the country.”

Hailer said he and Mynett began working for Omar’s campaign after years of political experience in her district and in Minnesota.

That is something the FEC could look into – just how much political experience did the E Street Group have, on what kinds of races, and with what results? Did they have a track record that allowed them to legitimately command fees of nearly \$600,000 from a single client? Had any other candidates ever paid them nearly as much?

Omar campaign attorney David Mitrani echoed that point in a Thursday memo, which the campaign provided to The Washington Post on Friday, saying that the firm provided bona fide campaign services at fair market value.

“There is simply nothing unusual about the services that E Street Group provides to Ilhan for Congress – and nothing inappropriate with a vendor being reimbursed for travel for bona fide services – even if that vendor is run by a candidate’s spouse,” Mitrani wrote.

In its August complaint, the National Legal and Policy Center alleged that the campaign failed to disclose that payments to

the firm “must be considered personal in nature” due to the reported relationship between its partner and the candidate.

“If Ilhan for Congress reimbursed Mynett’s LLC for travel so that Rep. Omar would have the benefit of Mynett’s romantic companionship, the expenditures must be considered personal in nature,” the complaint read.

The FEC lost its voting quorum shortly after the complaint was filed, and it is unable to take any official enforcement action on the pending complaint.

The FEC may not be able to take action on the complaint at the moment, but the American people, and especially the voters in her district, can certainly make up their own mind about Ilhan Omar’s providing her lover, and future husband, with almost all of his business, channeling business amounting to 40% of her total campaign expenditures is on the up-and-up, or whether it looks very fishy.

“As far as the nuptials, I think this event underscores the problems we cited in our complaint,” Peter Flaherty, chairman of the National Legal and Policy Center, said on Friday.

“You have a member of Congress paying a close friend and now-husband most of her campaign spending,” Flaherty added. “It still raises the question of whether it is to facilitate a personal relationship or whether Tim Mynett is the best possible vendor for all these possible activities.”

Ilhan, Ilhan. You have been so busy. In 2019 you were named Antisemite of the Year by the website stopantisemitism.org, beating out the formidable likes of Louis Farrakhan. The things you did to merit that title were truly impressive:

1. You accused American Jewry of possessing dual loyalty.
2. You alleged that Jews buy their influence with money,

infamously stating “It’s all about the Benjamins.”

3. You accused Israel of having hypnotized the world.
4. You supported the antisemitic Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel.
5. You submitted a resolution in the House of Representatives comparing boycotting Israel to boycotting the Nazis.
6. You had your antisemitic statements endorsed by infamous neo-Nazi David Duke.

And not content with that recognition, you are rushing headlong, it seems, into quite a different set of scandals. Judging by the reports, it’s possible that all by yourself you have managed to be guilty of marriage fraud, immigration fraud, bigamy, and violation of campaign financing laws. It’s taken a while, but at long last there may be an official investigation into all these interlocking offenses, and we’ll see if you have been unfairly maligned or if, instead, your many accusers have been right about you all along.

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