

From: "[REDACTED]"

Subject: DOJ To Investigate Epstein Plea Deal After Prodding By Sasse

Date: Thu, 07 Feb 2019 11:09:46 +0000

Importance: Normal

DOJ To Investigate Epstein Plea Deal After Prodding By Sasse

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Law360 (February 6, 2019, 10:35 PM EST) -- The [U.S. Department of Justice](#) has opened an investigation into whether its attorneys engaged in misconduct when negotiating a controversial plea deal for wealthy convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, according to a letter the department sent Wednesday to Sen. Ben Sasse, who repeatedly pushed for such an investigation.

The sparse letter, signed by Assistant U.S. Attorney General [REDACTED] informed Sasse, a Nebraska Republican and member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, that the DOJ's Office of Professional Responsibility had opened an investigation into allegations that its attorneys had committed misconduct when resolving the Epstein case.

The DOJ said any allegations of professional misconduct against DOJ attorneys that relate to the exercise of authority to investigate, litigate or provide legal advice are handled by the OPR — similar to the internal affairs division of a police department.

"OPR will thoroughly investigate the allegations of misconduct that have been raised and, consistent with its practice, will share its results with you at the conclusion of its investigation as appropriate," the letter states.

It was after reading an investigative report by the Miami Herald, which said that Epstein's alleged victims were deliberately excluded from the plea deal, that Sasse became concerned and sent two letters to the DOJ, urging the agency to investigate.

The Herald's three-part series, "Perversion of Justice," showed how Secretary of Labor Alex Acosta, then the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and other DOJ attorneys worked closely with defense lawyers to craft a lenient plea deal for Epstein in 2008.

Wednesday's letter does not mention Acosta but stated that the OPR will investigate allegations that DOJ "attorneys may have committed professional misconduct in the manner in which the Epstein criminal matter was resolved."

A representative for Acosta did not immediately respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

Epstein pled guilty to charges involving solicitation of prostitution and procurement of minors for prostitution. He spent 13 months in prison and is registered as a sex offender.

Epstein was alleged to have been engaged in suspected sex trafficking and also to have tried to press younger women into performing sexual acts, the Miami Herald report said.

"Jeffrey Epstein is a child rapist and there's not a single mom or dad in America who shouldn't be horrified by the fact that

he received a pathetically soft sentence," Sasse said in a statement Wednesday.

"The victims of Epstein's child sex trafficking ring deserve this investigation — and so do the American people and the members of law enforcement who work to put these kinds of monsters behind bars," he said.

Around the same time that Sasse sent his first letter, a group of Democratic senators — led by Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Tim Kaine, D-Va. — on [Dec. 6 urged](#) the DOJ's inspector general to investigate if there was any misconduct in relation to the deal cut between Acosta and Epstein's defense team.

The lawmakers were concerned about whether the deal might have flouted the Crime Victims' Rights Act. That law grants crime victims a number of rights, including the right to be informed of public court proceedings and not to be excluded from those proceedings.

Also in December, Epstein [settled a dispute](#) with the attorney who represented his teenage victims, avoiding a trial that was to have featured testimony from the women.

A representative for Sasse declined to comment beyond the senator's statement Wednesday. A representative for the DOJ did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

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