

Assemblyman Neil Cohen under child porn investigation

Posted by [jappezza](#) July 24, 2008 20:15PM



Saed Hindash/The

Star-Ledger Assemblyman Neil Cohen.

Deputy Assembly Speaker Neil Cohen is being investigated for alleged possession of child pornography, according to two of his Democratic colleagues who said they brought the matter to the attention of law enforcement.

In a joint statement, Sen. Raymond Lesniak and Assemblyman Joseph Cryan (both D-Union) confirmed they alerted authorities to the possibility Cohen (D-Union) had child pornography on his computers.

"As the facts became apparent in our office, we notified the appropriate agency and will continue to assist in any way possible," Lesniak and Cryan said. "While it was our proactive steps that led to the investigation to this point, we are appalled at what has transpired."

At least one of Cohen's computers from the Union Township legislative office the three lawmakers share was confiscated by the Attorney General's Office, according to three sources who have been briefed on the investigation. Two of the sources said a legislative staffer initially discovered the images, then notified Lesniak and Cryan. The sources declined to be identified because they were not authorized to discuss the ongoing investigation.

"Both of us have known Neil Cohen for more than two decades," Lesniak and Cryan said. "We know him as a compassionate, caring individual but if the allegations prove true, clearly there was a side to him neither of us knew. We have been instructed to not make any further comments regarding this very serious matter."

Sources said Cohen was under psychiatric care Thursday night. He could not be reached for comment.

Assembly Democratic spokesman Derek Roseman declined to comment. Attorney General Anne Milgram and spokesman David Wald did not return phone messages.

Cohen, 57, is in his 17th year in the Assembly, having served from 1990 to 1991 and continuously since 1994. He chairs the Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee and is one of seven deputy speakers. He also is a long-time member of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Ethical Standards.

Lesniak and Cryan reported the Cohen matter to authorities on Monday.

"We have been in constant touch with the appropriate authorities throughout the situation and will continue to follow the Office of Legislative Services guidelines and counsel in this matter," Lesniak and Cryan said.

A law enforcement source said material seized from the raid of Cohen's office has been turned over the State Police Official Corruption Unit. The source, who declined to be identified because he was not permitted to speak publicly about the case, said the State Police have not yet looked at any of the evidence.

Cohen practices law in Montclair with Sen. Nia Gill (D-Essex).

Among the more than 100 laws Cohen has sponsored is one that created a 24-hour hotline for members of the public to report computer crimes, including child pornography. He also co-sponsored a law that retroactively removed immunity from churches, schools and other charities that negligently hire employees who sexually abuse children.

He also supported measures to support stem cell research, provide health insurance for mammograms, restrict strip searches and expand eligibility for the Pharmaceutical Assistance for the Aged and Disabled program.

He was one of the leaders last year of the effort to save the life of Congo, a German Shepherd condemned as a vicious dog after mauling a landscaper. Congo was spared for that incident only to be destroyed by his owners last month after attacking a family member. Cohen's measure to provide greater protections to dogs accused of being vicious, dubbed "Congo's Law," is still pending.

Word of the development spread quickly through Cohen's district. Roselle Mayor Garrett Smith, a Democrat but longtime opponent of Cohen and his supporters in the Union County Democratic organization, said, "My phone started ringing off the hook. I hit the floor when I heard the news. I'm speechless. It's incredible -- if it's true. I don't know what to think."

"I know he's kind of like a loner...but I've had no indication of anything like that," Smith said.

Third Ward Councilwoman Cecilia Dallis Ricks, a former Board of Education member, local Girl Scout leader and longtime Cohen supporter, was "totally shocked."¶

Prior to his election to the Legislature, Cohen served as a Union County freeholder from 1988 to 1990. He was the Union County Democratic Chairman during 1991 and 1992. ¶

Cohen, who is not married, graduated from Athens University in Alabama and Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C. After a clerkship with a Superior Court judge, he began his legal career as a trial lawyer in the Middlesex County Public Defender's Office.

"Let me just give you one statement. This is how I feel. I have nothing but respect for Neil. I have no comment on any of the accusations," said Gleshia Givens, his chief of staff.

Staff writers Susan K. Livio, Carly Rothman and Rick Hepp contributed to this report.

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Comments

44tt44 says...

Wow this is big. Was it a little boy or a little girl.

Now he is in the hospital to try to make us feel sorry for him.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 8:33PM

doctorphil says...

Hilarious!!! Love to see this politician try and weasel his way out of this one. If true, I hope he gets a very long jail sentence.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 8:44PM

nedbroy says...

Just what do you expect Blue movie values from a Blue state. The sad thing is that even when the jails are full of Liberal ex politicians the dumb NJ voters will still vote in more

Posted on 07/24/08 at 8:48PM

beautifulas says...

he looks like Larry David (seinfeld creator, curb your enthusiasm);

Posted on 07/24/08 at 8:49PM

ferdek says...

Leave Larry David out of this blog, nothing like him anyway!

Posted on 07/24/08 at 8:55PM

meanmen says...

nedbroy what was the name of the Assembly speaker during whitman's administration who the taxpayers had to bale out with the sexual harassment charge, was Chuck something (maybe Haitian)?

If I remember right he said he would fight it in court, then right before it went to court the whitman administration said it did not want to waste money at a trial and paid the lady off.

So much for republican ethics

Posted on 07/24/08 at 8:56PM

17tixe says...

A democrat you say? I'm shocked.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:00PM

Jerzzy526 says...

Hey Doctorphil, very true and now we have our law makers this yr alone wow weazeling and feds still working on the ex mayor of newark & former senator and few others in trenton and this yr we had the ny gov with cg#9 whats next? i say VERY SAD TO SAY WE VOTED THEM IN OFFICE. Hey lets call on mr christie for this one ya think drphil?

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:04PM

fooliwas says...

Sexual harassment is a major issue but child porn is worse because it involves children. Children cannot fight back, adults have a shot at protecting themselves.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:07PM

theredyankee says...

Timothy Wiltsey

www.redyankeepress.com

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:09PM

kingbleacher says...

Speaking of "probe", was this dude in contact with any young children? Could be more to this story.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:18PM

deeavondra says...

he looks like a flaming _ _ _ _ - my guess it was pictures of boys - to hear Lesniak says he is appalled about anything is laughable. he's slimey like seaweed. the poor thing is seeking psychiatric care maybe he could hitch a ride to the new HIGH and ever popular Victory Bridge i'm just sayin

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:25PM

scrappacito says...

I'd like to see whats on the computers of Lesniak and Cryan. Lesniak is the most crooked politician in the state. He makes Jim McGreevey look like Little Lord Fauntleroy.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:29PM

nwrkpeaches says...

Bring back the death penalty, please!

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:33PM

Sharmayne says...

So Cohen got the heads up somehow on the discovery of the child porn on his computer and checks himself into a psych hospital? How does that work? Is the fact that he's a psychiatric patient give him some sort of sanctuary from being taken into custody by law enforcement?

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:35PM

07isback says...

That is why I Stick for the Republicans .

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:41PM

Lohfuss says...

I don't know whether Cohen's guilty or not. The investigation will bear that out. But these days, any perverted fool can send you an e-mail with an image of child porn embedded in it and it shows up on your computer. How many of us can be 100% sure there's nothing like that on our own hard drives?

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:43PM

meanmen says...

Don't get me wrong child abuse in any way is wrong, and I have no qualms with anyone who is connected with the manufacturer of, distribution of or purchaser and user of child pornography being put in the middle of the worse prison of NJ with a sign on him or her say have fun during recreation time for Ambrose Harris.

I think crime has nothing to do what political party you belong to.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:47PM

johnpinochio says...

Go ahead Jerszy526 Make that call and let him know we want to see whats on Sweetney, Codey Papi Chulo Corruptzine and Roberto "el Salsero"

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:47PM

upinthemorn says...

Lesniak & Cryan share the same office with Cohen. I would be looking into those two. Both are "close" friends with Jimbo McGreevey. Just in time for election.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:48PM

PatPassaic says...

Lesniak has photos of his pal McGreevey on his pc probably dressed in outfits. Waiting for Lesniak to be carried away next.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:51PM

Hanukankan says...

Agree with Lohfuss , That could very well be one of the cases If that were true and the case who knows maybe one of his " Legislative Friends was the one who send him that Picture .

But back to the Play sand Box lol
I want to see whats on Frankie hard drive

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:52PM

beachrat25 says...

I guess he is a democrat, because the article is full of quotes by democratic members of the state legislature, but never once does the article call Mr. Cohen a democrat Assemblyman - I doubt that would be the case if he was a republican... interesting

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:53PM

newcivileyes says...

Holy Cow i can picture all the parents from his Home town Locking away all the small kids indoors ..Bye Bye swimming Pool Bye Bye Play yard times for the Kids .

Is that one of the reasons when they try to pass a Bill there is just full of it ?

Posted on 07/24/08 at 9:56PM

LikesVikes says...

Yes, beachrat25, he's a Democrat, and it says so in the second sentence.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 10:07PM

07isback says...

Holy Cow !! Since im not Good in English i had to serch in the Encarta Dictionary for : rsamma70 Comments : lol

And i ask myself Dont they have a room to go to ?

Is that whay we paying for ?

Now we know why those Bills come up like w/t common sense what so ever .

I say lets close down Trenton and let the feds handle a new Re Opening

phallus

phal^llus [f^lll^əs] (plural phal^llus^{es} or phal^lli [f^llⁱ])

noun

Definition:

1. stylized penis: a picture, sculpture, or other representation of a penis, especially one regarded as a symbol of the reproductive force of life

2. penis: the human penis, especially when erect

[Early 17th century. Via late Latin

Posted on 07/24/08 at 10:07PM

bmxbiker87 says...

This is the same guy who stud up for a vicious dog and criticized the victim because he was an illegal resident. I hope he rots in jail!!!

Posted on 07/24/08 at 10:13PM

jerseytalk says...

Isn't Newark looking for a new Superintendent of Schools? Go Democrats!

Posted on 07/24/08 at 10:16PM

chaucer914 says...

Ahh lucky for him he is a Democrat - so obviously the NJ Supreme Court will now declare child porn not only legal but noble.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 10:20PM

homersleeps says...

Maybe Sharpe and Cohen can bunk together. Of course, it's not their fault. Let's see who Cohen blames.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 10:24PM

PACWOMAN says...

Thats what happens when you think you're teflon. Every dog has its day! He's sick because he got caught.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 10:45PM

coolguy11 says...

thats not even something to joke about mayday u sick freak.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 10:55PM

coolguy11 says...

thats not even something to joke about mayday u sick freak.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 10:56PM

spoondean says...

Psychiatric ward you say? Well the saying is true "LIBERALISM IS A MENTAL DISORDER"!!!!

Posted on 07/24/08 at 10:58PM

Running4Ever says...

The article reports it was a shared computer, so let's not jump to conclusions just yet.

Posted on 07/24/08 at 11:04PM

footballrnj says...

SHARED COMPUTER?

CHARGE ALL HYPOCRITS

Posted on 07/24/08 at 11:08PM

deeavondra says...

the pedophile holds a law degree he's not stupid - he knows damn well that if your "sick" (psycho) you can't be criminal - lets hope he at least flaps his gums and brings down Lesniak & Cryan too, he's got to have some sort of dirt on them. elliot spitzer did what ?

Posted on 07/24/08 at 11:13PM

yournext says...

mayday07 where did you go? Guess the truth hurts

Posted on 07/24/08 at 11:28PM

aurora21 says...

Yes, he's a Democrat, and his Democratic leadership turned him.

Very unlike the Republican Congressman Foley from Florida, whose Republican leadership, including Speaker Dennis Hastert, shamelessly covered up his interest in the

House pages also so they wouldn't lose his seat. Well, they lost it. And they deservedly lost the House, too.

And this doesn't even include the Republican mayor of Spokane who used his city computer for gay sex encounters nor the Republican Washington state legislator who was caught with a male prostitute nor the Republican Florida state legislator caught propositioning an undercover male cop for oral sex.

What is the saying about one who lives in a glass house?

Posted on 07/25/08 at 12:04AM

rurichdog says...

Hey Margolin, if you hadn't had such a raging hard*n for Rutgers football earlier this week, you could have broken this story earlier and saved some kids from being subjected to such horrible acts. How does that make you feel?

Posted on 07/25/08 at 12:31AM

rurichdog says...

You finally broke a real news story, Josh! Congratulations! Now you know a real story from completely fabricated spin.

Posted on 07/25/08 at 12:32AM

yournext says...

help help the eraser is out

Posted on 07/25/08 at 12:49AM

nextmedia says...

This couldn't have happened to a better person! He's also a sleaze divorce attorney. He and Nia Gill's firm represent mostly women and coach them to lie. They criminalize good hard working black fathers and present them in court as incapable individuals. Destroy the man and the family and leave it where the father has no rights to his own children. Imagine that! In a world where many men do not want anything to do with their children, the few that do - Cohen and Gill destroy them. In many cases, the children want to see their fathers and to have them in their lives. But for the sake of winning - Cohen and Gill will present anything to the court - and sadly no one questions it. This has been done enough where many in the industry know that he is a snake but no one stopped him nor said anything. I knew something was wrong with him. Who could do this and not be damaged in his spirit in some way. Someone needs to investigate those divorce and

custody cases....and note the trend of making the father a criminal. Then, we'll see another demented side of him.

Posted on 07/25/08 at 1:21AM

Sharmayne says...

The Cohen, Cryan, Lesniak legislative office is like dorm rooms isn't it? Can't anyone access all computers? It must have been like the scene in "Goodfellas" when Ray Liotta, "Henry Hill" realizes that "Jimmy" (Robert DeNiro) was going to whack someone.

Posted on 07/25/08 at 2:11AM