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## Official: Performance czar withdraws candidacy



Feb 3 10:20 AM US/Eastern

By MICHAEL J. SNIFFEN and LIZ SIDOTI

Associated Press Writer

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Flashback: Obama Names Chief Performance Officer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Nancy Killefer, who failed for a year and a half to pay employment taxes on household help, has withdrawn her candidacy to be the first chief performance officer for the federal government, the White House said Tuesday.

Killefer was the second major Obama administration nominee to withdraw and the third to have tax problems complicate their nomination after President Barack Obama announced their selection.

The White House said Obama had accepted Killefer's decision and that the 55-year-old executive with consulting giant McKinsey & Co., would explain her reasons for pulling out later Tuesday.

When her selection was announced by Obama on Jan. 7, The Associated Press disclosed that in 2005 the District of Columbia government had filed a \$946.69 tax lien on her home for failure to pay unemployment compensation tax on household help.

Since then, administration officials have refused to answer questions about the tax error which she resolved five months after the lien was filed.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. Check back soon for further information. AP's earlier story is below.

WASHINGTON (AP)—An Obama administration official says Nancy Killefer is withdrawing her candidacy to be the first chief performance officer for the federal government.

The official said the 55-year-old executive with consulting giant McKinsey & Co., will detail her reason for pulling out later Tuesday.

When her selection was announced by President Barack Obama on Jan. 7, The Associated Press disclosed that in 2005 the District of Columbia government had filed a more than \$900 tax lien on her home for failure to pay unemployment compensation tax on household help.

Since then, administration officials have refused to answer questions about the tax error which she resolved five months after the lien was filed.

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## How Killefer Hurts Daschle



President Obama's choice for government performance officer Nancy Killefer withdrew her name from consideration, possibly causing problems for HHS nominee Tom Daschle. (Linda Davidson / staff/ The Washington Post)

**UPDATE 12:48 p.m.:** Tom Daschle has [withdrawn from consideration as the Health and Human Services Secretary designate](#), citing his desire not to be a distraction to the president.

Original Post

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The [decision of Nancy Killefer to withdraw her name from consideration](#) as President Obama's chief performance officer due to tax questions has the potential to further complicate former Sen. **Tom Daschle's** (S.D.) already rocky confirmation process as secretary of the Health and Human Service Department.

In a [letter of resignation released by the White House](#), Killefer wrote: "I have also come to realize in the current environment that my personal tax issue of D.C. Unemployment tax could be used to create exactly the kind of distraction and delay those duties must avoid."

Killefer is the the third Obama pick to face tax questions; Treasury Secretary **Tim Geithner** was forced to apologize for not paying \$34,000 in Social Security and Medicare taxes but ultimately was confirmed while Daschle continues to fight for his political life amid revelations that he had failed to pay more than \$140,000 in back taxes.

As we wrote this morning, [Daschle faces major problems](#) -- the optics of having not paid taxes on a car and driver provided by a wealthy donor are TERRIBLE -- but will likely be confirmed barring any other revelations.

Killefer's resignation could be those "other" revelations.

While the Killefer resignation is obviously not directly connected to Daschle, it certainly will have an effect on the political environment in which the former South Dakota senator finds himself battling for his nomination.

As any reporter knows, three related events amount to a storyline -- meaning that Obama and his senior aides are now certain to face a barrage of questions (starting with today's press briefing) on whether the

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president has a problem with his vetting process for top Cabinet picks. Obama's interviews this afternoon with the top anchors for the major networks will now almost certainly lead off with questions about Killefer, Geithner and Daschle.

Obviously, that is not the narrative the Obama White House wants dominating the news coverage as it tries to sell the economic stimulus plan to a somewhat skeptical Senate.

All of that spells trouble for Daschle -- as does the continued drumbeat on the story, which was kept up this morning by two developments.

The first: a [New York Times editorial](#) calling for Daschle to step aside.

"Mr. Daschle is another in a long line of politicians who move cozily between government and industry," reads the editorial. "We don't know that his industry ties would influence his judgments on health issues, but they could potentially throw a cloud over health care reform. Mr. Daschle could clear the atmosphere by withdrawing his name."

The second is an [old Daschle campaign ad](#) circulating among the Washington chattering class this morning that -- irony of ironies -- shows Daschle driving around in a beat-up Pontiac (and driving by a chauffeured limousine).

In politics, the context in which any given event happens and the way in which said event is perceived are absolutely critical when analyzing the outcome. Until this morning, Daschle looked like he would make it through the nomination fight -- battered but confirmed. The Killefer revelations badly cloud Daschle's prospects and make the next 24 to 48 hours even more critical.

By Chris Cillizza | February 3, 2009; 11:05 AM ET  
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### Another Obama official bites dust with tax problems

February 3, 2009 | 8:01 am



**Nancy Killefer**, named by [President Obama](#) as his chief performance expert at the Office of Management and Budget, has withdrawn her nomination on account of -- among other things -- tax problems!

The 55-year-old executive tapped to serve as the watchdog on wasteful government spending had a \$900 tax lien on her home in 2005 for failing to pay unemployment compensation tax on household help, according to the Associated Press. Killefer works for the consulting giant McKinsey & Co. (See video down below.)

She is the third Obama official to run into tax troubles.

Former Senate Majority Leader [Tom Daschle](#)'s nomination to be secretary of Health and Human

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Services is at a tipping point over his failure to pay \$146,000 in back taxes, some of it on a limousine and driver he used in his personal life. And Treasury Secretary **Timothy Geithner** was confirmed after confessing that he, now the nominal head of the Internal Revenue Service, had failed to pay Social Security and Medicare taxes while an employee at the International Monetary Fund. After calling for a "new era of responsibility" in his inaugural speech, Obama is coming under increased fire for seemingly applying a double standard. The Boston Globe's Peter Canellos noted this morning that the president seems to have [rigorous rules for Wall Street fat cats but looser ones for his top advisors](#).

And some are starting to question the vetting process or decision-making abilities of the once-vaunted Obama machine. Sen. **Charles Grassley** of Iowa, the ranking Republican on the Finance Committee [hearing Daschle's explanations](#), told CNN:

What bothers me is a president who wanted to get his administration off and running even before he's sworn in. What's wrong with the vetting process? It shows a little bit of shortcoming for someone who otherwise is a genius, you know, about management capability.

Her letter of resignation is posted below.

-- Johanna Neuman

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Photo: Getty Images

February 3, 2009



Dear Mr. President,

I recognize that your agenda and the duties facing your Chief Performance Officer are urgent. I have also come to realize in the current environment that my personal tax issue of D.C. Unemployment tax could be used to create exactly the kind of distraction and delay those duties must avoid. Because of this I must reluctantly ask you to withdraw my name from consideration.



I am deeply honored to have been selected by you and you have my deep appreciation for your confidence in me. You have my heartfelt support and best wishes for success in all your endeavors.

Respectfully yours,

Nancy Killefer

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