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Milton Hirsch removes backers in search of judge's seat

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Milton Hirsch will take Barbara Carey-Shuler's money, but he'll hold off on her endorsement. And the 2010 Miami-Dade judicial candidate doesn't want Angel Gonzalez giving him the thumbs-up either. Hirsch removed their names from the official endorsement list on his campaign website, electmiltonhirsch.com, days after two Miami city commissioners were busted on public corruption charges in mid-November.

A prominent criminal defense attorney, Hirsch counts Carey-Shuler as one of his clients. This past September, he accompanied the former Miami-Dade County commissioner when public corruption prosecutor Richard Scruggs interviewed her. With Hirsch at her side, Carey-Shuler gave a sworn statement against her protégé Michelle Spence-Jones, who has been charged with felony grant theft for allegedly taking \$50,000 in public grants.

Perhaps by sheer coincidence, Hirsch also represents Gonzalez's daughter Elizabeth, who admitted to Scruggs that her daddy got her a no-show job with a company that does business with the city. Angel Gonzalez resigned as part of a guilty plea on a second-degree misdemeanor of abusing his public position.

Riptide is guessing Hirsch realized it might look bad for an aspiring judge to accept endorsements from those intimately connected with the recent scandals that threw Miami City Hall into chaos. Hirsch, who did not return two messages left with his secretary to comment for this story, might want to weed out some other names on his endorsement list. Last time we checked, Congressman Alcee Hastings and Miami Lakes Councilwoman Nancy Simon are not exactly upstanding elected officials.

In 1981, Hastings was impeached and removed as a federal judge when he was charged with accepting a \$150,000 bribe in exchange for giving lenient sentences to a couple of accused racketeers. Hastings also committed perjury. A jury acquitted him because his alleged co-conspirator refused to testify.

Simon got into trouble with the state's Department of Business and Professional Regulation last year when investigators found she had received more than \$28,000 in commissions from three separate home sales since allowing her real estate license to expire September 3, 2004. The State Attorney's Office also is investigating the commissions Simon made.