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## Rooney's complex finances lead to Congress' biggest legal tab

Matt Dixon

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Billionaire Republican U.S. Rep. Francis Rooney has spent more money in legal fees than any other member of Congress this year, an amount he says is needed to ensure his complex finances are in compliance with congressional rules.

“We have some fairly complex financial arrangements in our family that need to be thoroughly vetted,” he told POLITICO Florida. “I am just making sure that we are absolutely safe and our office does not have any problems.”

Rooney, a 63-year-old freshman from Naples, is currently majority owner of Manhattan Construction Company, a family-owned company that built Cowboys Stadium in Dallas, the U.S. Capitol Visitors Center and the Cato Institute headquarters, both in Washington, D.C., among other buildings.

To ensure his finances comply with ethics rules, he paid roughly \$80,000 from his congressional campaign during the 2018 election cycle to the law firm Jones Day. It's the most of any other member of Congress over that time. During his election campaign, Rooney spent nearly \$54,000 with the firm.

The firm has close ties to President Donald Trump, representing his campaign and filing top legal posts in his administration, but Rooney said that is simply coincidence and has nothing to do with Trump or any of his administration's related legal issues.

“Not related at all,” Rooney said. “It's about compliance and reporting matters.”

Rooney's legal fees don't resemble those paid by other members of Congress, but little about the wealthy developer's background does.

Along with giving his 2016 campaign \$3.6 million in loans, he has long been a GOP megadonor. He was a top bundler for former President George W. Bush. He also served for over two years as U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, a post Bush appointed him to. His family construction company also helped build both Bush presidential libraries.

Though Rooney has undeniable fundraising chops, he has brought on Fritz Brogan, a prominent GOP fundraiser and D.C. restaurateur, as volunteer fundraising chairman. Brogan has helped

raise money for Gov. Rick Scott, a close Rooney ally, and served on Scott's transition team when he was first elected in 2010.

"I would rather do fundraising through group events and things like that," Rooney said. "Having some real conversation. He [Brogan] knows how to put on those events."

Rooney has also upped his presence on national networks in recent weeks. Rooney did not often do network shows for his first few months in office, but in June became a regular staple on CNN and MSNBC. He often discussed things like the economy and the proposed Obamacare repeal.

"Not many people from my side [Republicans] are willing to go on CNN or MSNBC," he said. "I just thought, these are the people I should be trying to convince ... I appreciate them letting me come on and discuss my side."