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Perata asks for federal probe of U.S. Attorney in Sacramento

By [John Howard](#) (published Wednesday, March 11, 2009)

Former Senate Leader Don Perata filed a formal request with the U.S. Justice Department Wednesday for an investigation into the conduct of the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's office in Sacramento, who he contends abused their authority by resurrecting a lengthy ethics investigation of Perata.

The request was submitted by George O'Connell, Perata's lawyer and a former U.S. Attorney in Sacramento, to the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General. The office, among other things, conducts investigations into complaints against Justice Department personnel, including FBI personnel. The request was filed with Inspector General Glen Fine.

O'Connell's action stems from the recent decision by the U.S. Attorney in Sacramento to renew the investigation into Perata's business dealings. O'Connell also submitted a request to acting U.S. Attorney Lawrence G. Brown in Sacramento to preserve documents and communications related to that office's decision to take over the case.

According to O'Connell, the Sacramento prosecutor was approached by "disgruntled FBI agents" to take charge of the case only after federal prosecutors in San Francisco decided not to pursue it. The Sacramento prosecutor decided to take the case, which O'Connell contended was a violation of federal prosecutorial principles.

The 4 1/2-year federal investigation focused on the business dealings of Perata, an Oakland Democrat who served as leader of the state Senate from 2004 to 2008. The investigation, which included a Grand Jury in Oakland, sought to determine whether Perata had accepted kickbacks in return for actions he performed as a public official, and examined his links to lobbyists and his payment of campaign funds to family members, among other issues.

Brown rejected the allegations of Perata and O'Connell.

"While I strongly disagree with Mr. O'Connell's letter, I am not going to be drawn into some public spat with counsel for Senator Perata," Brown said in a written statement released by his office.