

McCain 'scandal' story is short on details

by *The Detroit News*

The scandal engulfing Republican presidential front-runner John McCain is seriously short on scandalous details.

A story in Thursday's New York Times and a similar piece in the Washington Post raise alarms about the relationship between the Arizona senator and a much younger Washington lobbyist, Vicki Iseman.

But the facts as presented in the story don't add up to much.

The stories quote anonymous sources saying that during McCain's first run for the presidency in 2000, some unidentified campaign staffers became concerned that the friendship between the Republican candidate and Iseman might raise eyebrows.

That's it. Additional facts from verifiable sources, if they exist, could change this into a more damaging story for McCain.

But based on what's been presented so far, it's a fairly tepid scandal. Both McCain and Iseman adamantly deny a romantic involvement, and no one has stepped forward to dispute that.

At most, the reports indicate McCain is no different than most other Washington politicians in that he has friends who are lobbyists. That may not be the best news for a presidential candidate who is touting his independence from special interests, but it's hardly a campaign-shattering revelation.

The only benefit Iseman appears to have gleaned from her friendship with McCain is a letter to the Federal Communications Commission urging it to speed up a decision in a case involving one of her clients. McCain did not urge a ruling in favor of that client, however.

In the end, the reports may help McCain more than hurt him. On Thursday, the conservative radio talk show hosts who have been blistering McCain had turned their bile on the newspapers for defaming him.

The incident could give the radio talkers the cover they need to drop their McCain invective and start tarring the Democratic presidential hopefuls again. If this campaign unfolds as others before it, there will be a lot

more scandals floated between now and November.

If it doesn't get any worse than this for McCain, he'll be one lucky candidate.

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