

D'Amato probe cost taxpayers \$818,000

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. taxpayers paid almost \$818,000 to a private law firm for the ethics investigation of New York Sen. Alfonse D'Amato — an investigation that ended with the charges being dismissed.

The Senate Select Committee on Ethics paid the money to the law firm of Henry A. Schuelke, an outside lawyer who conducted the D'Amato investigation. The figures were culled from quarterly reports filed by the secretary of the Senate between October 1989 and October 1991.

The committee also paid

more than \$8,400 to reimburse the expenses of more than 30 witnesses who traveled to Washington to testify before the committee in closed session, the reports show.

The D'Amato investigation, which lasted more than two years, ended in early August with the committee slapping D'Amato on the wrist for not running a tighter office. It threw out allegations that he had used his position to steer federal money or contracts to friends, family and campaign contributors.

Meanwhile, D'Amato, R-N.Y.,

has yet to pay the lawyer who defended him.

Michael Armstrong, who has been D'Amato's personal attorney for more than a decade, said he would bill the senator when a legal defense fund for D'Amato was set up. Another lawyer is handling the paperwork, Armstrong said.

Armstrong refused to answer when asked if he gave the senator special treatment because he was a member of D'Amato's judicial screening panel, which helps the senator recommend nominees for federal judgeships.

Spokeswomen for the ethics sections of the American Bar Association and the New York State Bar Association said there appeared to be nothing unethical about the relationship between Armstrong and D'Amato.

The D'Amato ethics probe investigation found that D'Amato had not violated Senate rules.

The committee did find that D'Amato had "conducted his office in an improper and inappropriate manner" by allowing his brother, Armand, to use Senate staffers and letters bearing the senator's signature to lobby on behalf of Unisys Corp.

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