

And so it is that the Rev. [Al Sharpton](#) pops up in a few cameos, first in the uncharacteristic role of being, literally, a footnote.

The report, released on Thursday, castigated State Senate leaders, saying

there was a “taint on the motives” behind their support of Aqueduct Entertainment Group, a bidder in the project that eventually won, and then lost, the franchise. Mr. Sharpton, who was not accused of any wrongdoing, first appears in a footnote on Page 98 of the 308-page report: “Individual members of the A.E.G. team also apparently believed that contributions to entities associated with the Rev. Al Sharpton had, in some fashion, advocated for A.E.G.”

In an interview on Friday, Mr. Sharpton, who runs a nonprofit group called the [National Action Network](#), waved off any claims of having had his support bought with contributions. People or organizations associated with Aqueduct Entertainment gave almost \$100,000 to the National Action Network in 2009, the report said. Mr. Sharpton said the donations came, along with many others, including some from other companies bidding for the franchise, at his annual fall fund-raising event. “They were trying to establish they were going to work in the community,” he said.

Mr. Sharpton said he did not single out any bidder for support because he believed they all had good approaches to minority participation. “None of these groups asked me to talk to the governor for them,” he said. “No one asked us to lobby for them for money. Everybody donated and donated for years.”

And, he added, what if the National Action Network had? “If we did support someone and they were a contributor of ours, there wouldn’t be anything wrong with that.”

Investigators asked Mr. Sharpton why a member of Aqueduct Entertainment sent an e-mail to another member in 2009 to say that Mr. Sharpton “lobbied the governor hard over the weekend on our behalf.” Mr. Sharpton testified: “If he said that, I don’t know where he got that from.” He added: “National Action Network never did decide on a group, so that wouldn’t be true. I don’t know where this gentleman got that impression, but that would not be true.”

Indeed, the investigators found no evidence that Mr. Sharpton had ever lobbied for Aqueduct

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Written by Administrator

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Entertainment. Gov. [David A. Paterson](#) testified that not only did Mr. Sharpton not push for Aqueduct Entertainment, but also that that would have been improbable. A minor partner in Aqueduct Entertainment was the Rev. [Floyd H. Flake](#), an influential Queens minister who did not often agree with Mr. Sharpton. ("If Flake is on any side, you can be assured Sharpton will be on another," Mr. Paterson testified.)

Mr. Sharpton said Friday: "Why would I, for some contributions to an event, support a billion-dollar project of someone on the other side, politically? I've been accused of many things. Stupid ain't one of them."

The most intriguing mention of Mr. Sharpton in the report is the most cryptic. On Jan. 28, Mr. Sharpton met with leaders of Aqueduct Entertainment in the Grand Havana Room in Manhattan, a membership-required cigar bar and, literally and figuratively, one of the last of the old smoke-filled rooms.

In the meeting, a lobbyist for Aqueduct Entertainment and a past supporter of Mr. Sharpton, former State Senator Carl Andrews, introduced the chief executive officer of an advertising firm that had worked with Mr. Sharpton.

Then Mr. Sharpton left. The advertising executive then told the representatives of Aqueduct Entertainment that his firm could be "helpful" if Aqueduct Entertainment won the franchise.

What does it all mean? Do not ask Mr. Sharpton.

"I'm a member of the Havana club," he said. "I don't remember that, no. I don't even remember. Maybe I didn't know they were having a meeting."

"Let's take the anti-Sharpton theory," Mr. Sharpton added, and assume that something was amiss. "If I am currying favor and putting something together, then why did I leave?"

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If nothing else, Mr. Sharpton's cameo in the report is a reminder of his enduring presence in city and state affairs.

"A lot of people feel that if they're going to say to the community that they have their interest at heart, they want to go to people that the community works with," he said.

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