

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

JANUARY 2, 2009, 3:04 PM ET

Is Big Business Scared of Obama?

What accounts for a spate of recent settlements between businesses and the Justice Department? According to the [WaPo](#), there have been more than a dozen business-related settlements since the presidential election, with more coming in January.

Since November, the Justice Department has announced 19 settlements or plea deals with companies, compared with 16 in the same time frame the year before. In 2006, department officials announced five business settlements in the same time frame.

A 'better Bush than Obama' mentality could be the reason, suggests the WaPo. Corporate lawyers point to statements by Attorney General-designate Eric Holder, who told an audience last month that he would expand the focus of federal prosecutors into corporate suites. The climate for business settlements could get tougher in three weeks.

"What they obviously are trying to do is take advantage of an administration that's deemed to be more friendly to business," [Cono R. Namorato](#), a Caplin & Drysdale lawyer, told the WaPo. "I know of no tax reason for doing it now."

Another reason could be that the holidays are a PR-friendly time. "This is traditionally the time to ram a settlement through because no one notices," Patrick Burns, a spokesman for Taxpayers Against Fraud, told the WaPo. "Putting it out between Christmas and New Year's is brilliant."

Law Blog Readers: One could certainly argue over the premise of the WaPo article. Is a jump from 16 business related settlements, in the same period of 2007, to 19 in 2008, significant?



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