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Crisis Management Experts say Sen. Bob Menendez Prostitution Story Won't Stick

Consultants say Menendez story lacks staying power

By [LAUREN FOX](#)

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The Daily Caller broke a story on the *Drudge Report* Thursday alleging New Jersey Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez paid prostitutes for sex during a trip to the Dominican Republic.

According to the story, Menendez agreed to pay two women \$500 each for "sex acts." In the end, according to the women, Menendez only doled out \$100 each.

It is an "October Surprise," and one that in most circumstances would have damaging effects. But crisis management experts caution this scandal lacks key components necessary to catch fire and push Menendez off [the 14-point lead](#) he holds in his Senate race.

"This will not have much impact," says Gene Grabowski, the executive vice president at Levick, a crisis communications firm. "The story in New Jersey right now is about a hurricane, not about a sexual temptress."

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Grabowski argues major elements are missing from this story to make it stick. First off, Menendez is divorced. There is no scorned wife or visible victim, because neither of the women in the report live in the United States. They want to remain anonymous, so they won't be appearing at televised news conferences in the states anytime soon.

"You need a visible victim who is suffering," Grabowski says. "This might raise eyebrows, but stories like this don't last more than a few days."

And the only sources who have confirmed *The Daily Caller's* story are the two women who, when shown a picture of Menendez, confirmed that was the man who had solicited sex from them.

"It has not been corroborated," Grabowski says. "These kinds of stories pop up, and they are timed for the obvious reasons of trying to beseech a candidate in the days before an election. In this case, that is doubtful."

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Also, Menendez, even if he did solicit prostitutes, did not break the law. Prostitution is legal in the Dominican Republic.

Unlike more high-profile sex scandals, few media outlets have written about Menendez since *The Daily Caller* posted its story.

Grabowski argues that is partly because the story lacks evidence and part because the mainstream media is more hesitant to attack a Democrat in a sex scandal than a Republican.

"You would see a little more digging if he were a Republican. It is the slightest of the factors, but it is still a factor," Grabowski says.

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Scott Sobel, another Washington-based crisis manager says *The Daily Caller* report raises more questions than it answers.

"It needs to be reported out more," Sobel says.

Sobel argues there is potential for a story like this to have staying power, but readers need more evidence.

"In light of the Secret Service issue with prostitution several months ago, the interest in this story could be heightened," Sobel says. "There needs to be more facts and credibility coming from other sources."

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