

Mayor Marks' connection with AT&T dates to '90s

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Mayor John Marks has worked as an attorney and consultant for [AT&T](#) and BellSouth since the early 1990s.

He also served on the Alliance for Digital Equality's board of advisers from 2007 until controversy forced him off earlier this year. ADE received almost all its funding from AT&T from 2007 through 2009.

Don Sadler Jr., director of public affairs for AT&T in Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, said Marks works on state regulatory issues for AT&T based on his experience as a former regulator. Before he was mayor, Marks served on the Florida Public Service Commission from 1979 to 1987.

Marks abstained from voting April 9, 2008, on using AT&T for a public-safety wireless network, saying he had a conflict of interest because he was retained by AT&T.

The mayor's work for AT&T doesn't show up on any of his annual financial-disclosure forms. His attorney, Barry Richard, said that's because money from AT&T went to Marks' law firms, which then paid Marks.

"His income doesn't come from AT&T," Richard said. "It comes from the firm."

Three different law firms are listed as primary sources of income for Marks on his financial-disclosure forms from 2002 through 2010. They are Knowles, Marks & Randolph P.A., Adorno & Yoss LLC, and his current firm, Marks and Marks LLC. Marks also disclosed ADE as a primary source of income on the forms for 2007 through 2010.

Richard said ADE chairman Julius Hollis invited Marks to join the organization's board of advisers sometime in 2007, the year ADE formed. Richard said Hollis told Marks the purpose was to get broadband into local communities across the country, and the mayor was picked as an advisory-board member because of his background with utilities.

"(Marks) said he thought it was a good idea — he still thinks it's a good idea," Richard said.

Richard added Marks was "completely unaware" of financial contributions from AT&T to ADE.

"He's not suggesting he thinks there's anything wrong with that," Richard said of AT&T's financing of ADE. "It's just not something that ever came to his attention."

Richard said Marks attended only one of ADE's summits and that he also attended meetings of the board of advisers.

Hollis, in an interview with the Democrat, said Marks came to the attention of ADE through the Miami law firm of Adorno & Yoss, which employed the mayor from June 2004 to March 2009.

"(Marks) was in my view an excellent addition to our board," Hollis said. "First because of his knowledge of telecoms from his role as a former PSC commissioner and secondly as a mayor of a local government."