

LOBBY WATCH



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Derailed

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Commissioner Enters Crossfire of Gas Producer-Pipeline Spat

Taking Money from Both Sides, Ryan Sitton Mediates a Gas Conflict

The *Texas Tribune* [reported](#) last week that Texas Republican Party Chair Tom Mechler failed to register as a lobbyist recently while urging Texas Railroad Commissioners and lawmakers to push pipeline giant DCP Midstream to pay Panhandle producers more for natural gas. The only Railroad Commissioner to take Mechler's bait, Ryan Sitton, convened a meeting between those gaseous rivals on March 2, after having taken political funds from both sides of that table.

Before going [independent](#) in January, DCP Midstream was a joint venture of Spectra Energy Corp. and Phillips 66. Spectra and Phillips gave Sitton a total of \$6,001 in recent years.¹ Phil Gamble, a DCP lobbyist referenced in the dispute, gave Sitton \$2,000 more. Most of the six gas producers known to be quibbling with DCP are not significant Railroad Commission contributors. The exception is Mewbourne Oil CEO Curtis Mewbourne, who gave Sitton \$27,500 in recent years—more than three times what the DCP team gave. Mewbourne Oil

President Todd Lovett attended Sitton's March 2 mediation meeting, according to the *Tribune*.

Since 2011 DCP's Spectra, Phillips 66 and lobbyist Phil Gamble also gave a total of \$19,001 to Commissioner Christi Craddick, \$18,502 to recently retired Commissioner David Porter, and \$11,001 to Porter replacement Wayne Christian. Executives of two gas production companies battling DCP—H&L Exploration and WBD Oil & Gas—gave Commissioner Craddick a total of \$1,000. Curtis Mewbourne did not give to Commissioners Craddick, Christian or Porter.

It is difficult to gauge the extent to which political contributions shape the actions of politicians. If, however, you asked a computer to analyze contributions by known parties to this gas dispute and predict which commissioner would act on Mechler's request to intervene, the answer would have to be: Ryan Sitton. •

DCP's Pipeline to Sitton

Date	Amount	Donor
12/6/16	\$1,000	Phil Gamble
12/8/15	\$1,000	Spectra Energy
10/22/14	\$5,000	Spectra Energy
10/22/14	\$1,000	Phil Gamble
10/16/14	\$1,001	Phillips 66 Co.
	\$8,001	TOTAL

Gas Producers Supporting Sitton

Date	Amount	Contributor
10/27/16	\$2,500	Mewbourne Oil's Curtis Mewbourne
10/3/14	\$25,000	Mewbourne Oil's Curtis Mewbourne
	\$27,500	TOTAL

Note

¹ ConocoPhillips spun off Phillips 66 in April of 2012. Enbridge, Inc. acquired Spectra in February 2017. Enbridge and ConocoPhillips contributions are not included here.