



Shades of Grey:

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Mongrel Gaming Interests Debate Pedigree Purities

**The Bloodlines of Casino and Racetrack Industries
Are Both Besmirched by Out-of-State Special Interests**

The casino and racetrack industries have a bitter history. Both sides want the state to legalize slot machines. But each side argues that it alone deserves to monopolize this lucrative gambling expansion.

This old feud recently took a turn for the worst as a past president of the Texas Thoroughbred Association invoked nativist-purity claims in a dispute involving Native Americans, racehorses, greyhounds and blue-blood casino owners.

Texas lawmakers long have rebuffed calls for slot machines. Spurning 15 GOP senators, the Texas Racing Commission ruled last year that tracks could introduce “historical racing” consoles. These slots-like machines let gamblers bet on videos of past races. A subsequent court [ruling](#) found that Racing Commissioners lack authority for such a gambling expansion.

The *Texas Tribune* recently [reported](#) that a casino lobbyist helped Senator Joan Huffman draft a Re-

publican Caucus [letter](#) last summer opposing historical racing consoles. This is an important story because lawmakers let lobbyists ghostwrite too many bills.

But veterinarian David Stephens, who has headed a thoroughbred horse trade group, couldn’t leave it at that. The *Tribune* reported that Stephens was outraged that Locke Lord lobbyist Robert Miller apparently acted as a ghostwriter for “out-of-state casinos” controlled by the “deep pockets” of the Houston-based Fertitta clan (which operates casinos in other states).

There are reasons to believe that Stephens—like the thoroughbred Danish queen of yore—doth protest too much. First, the racing industry’s 2014 political expenditures were several times larger than the combined spending of Indian tribes and other casino interests. Second, deep-pocket “out-of-state special interests” control not just casinos but many Texas race-tracks, as well.

2014 Election Cycle Gambling Contributions

Amount	%	Contributor
\$7,096,955	74%	Racetrack Interests
\$1,430,000	15%	Indian Tribes
\$1,071,358	11%	Casino Interests
\$9,598,313	100%	TOTAL

Top Racing Interests

2014 Cycle Amount	Contributor	Racing Tie(s)
\$1,738,000	Robert C McNair	Ret
\$1,532,500	Peter & Julianna Holt	Ret
\$520,031	Gerald J Ford	TB
\$286,730	Bobby D & Leona Cox	TB/QH
\$274,556	Clifton & Cathy Thomas	LD
\$273,750	'Red' & Charline McCombs	Ret
\$265,518	George 'Tim' & Karen Hixon	Ret
\$251,000	Texas Events PAC	QH
\$245,747	MAXXAM Inc. PAC	Max
\$237,413	Gregory LaMantia	LaMant
\$118,065	Michael T Gallagher	LD
\$110,750	Tom Durant	TB/QH
\$99,750	Robert & Gordon Johnson	GG
\$98,000	Gallagher Law Firm	LD
\$96,500	William/Val LaMantia Peisen	LaMant
\$89,175	Stephen & Linda LaMantia	LaMant
\$85,000	Joe V LaMantia Jr	LaMant
\$69,925	Charles W Graham	LD/GG/TS
\$60,200	Scott & Eleanor Petty	Ret
\$60,000	Phil D Adams	LD/GG/TS
\$55,825	Anthony/Jennifer LaMantia	LaMant
\$54,560	Joe V LaMantia III	LaMant
\$50,750	Helen Kleberg Groves	Ret
\$39,801	Charles E Cheever	Ret
\$38,894	Mikal C Watts	GCR
\$24,951	Lukin T Gilliland	Ret
\$19,250	Melissa Jones	QH
\$19,050	John W Elder	TB
\$17,000	Nicholas T Serafy	LaMant
\$17,000	Nat'l Cutting Horse Assn.	CH
\$15,000	Curtis C Gunn	Ret
\$12,000	Samantha LaMantia	LaMant
\$10,875	Joe R & Jocelyn Straus Jr.	GG/LD/Ret

Note: Donors above supplied 97 percent of all racing money.



Casino magnate Tilman Fertitta

Key

Racing Interest	
CH	Cutting Horses
GCR	Gulf Coast Racing
LaMan	LaMantia tracks*
GG	Gulf Greyhounds
LD	Longhorn Downs
QH	Quarter Horses
Max	Maxxam tracks**
Ret	Retama Park
TB	Thoroughbreds
TS	Valle de Tesoros

*Gulf Coast, Laredo Downs, Retama and Tesoros.

** Laredo, Sam Houston and Valley Race Parks.

Racing interests spent \$7 million on Texas' 2014 elections, or almost three times the \$2.5 million spent by Indian tribes and other casino interests. Just two of Retama Park's investors, Robert McNair and Peter Holt, invested \$3.3 million in Texas' elections. That alone exceeds the combined spending of all tribal and casino interests.

Consider how much more Stephens might protest if a scion of Tilman Fertitta's casino clan was Texas House Speaker. Instead, that job falls to Joe Straus, whose father pioneered parimutuel betting in Texas and has longstanding interests in Retama and other Texas tracks.

Clearly, the racing industry has the clout to ghostwrite bills authorizing racetrack slot machines. But it lacks the votes to pass those bills—much less the requisite constitutional amendment. That's why the industry tried to move slots through a back door—one held by a lame-duck governor's Racing Commissioners.

Stephens's denunciations of "out-of-state special interests" are another instance of the racing pot calling casino kettles black. Out-of-state gambling corporations own major shares of many Texas racetrack franchises.

A joint venture of Houston's Maxxam, Inc. and Pennsylvania-based Penn National Gaming owns the Laredo, Sam Houston and Valley Race Parks. Las Vegas-based Pinnacle Entertainment owns a [controlling](#) share of Retama. And a Chickasaw Nation company [owns](#) 49 percent of Lone Star Park. Out-of-state companies own major stakes in many Texas horseracing venues. And those companies all own out-of-state casinos—the very rogues that Stephens denounced.

Apparently, "We have found the enemy and he is us."

Without even touching on how Mexico's Zetas drug cartel used expensive [racehorses](#) to launder money in Texas and neighboring states, it's clear that true, nativist thoroughbreds are hard to find in the greedy fight between casino and racing interests.

Top Racing Recipients

2014 Cycle Amount	Recipient	Favorite Racing Contributor(s)
\$1,757,761	Greg Abbott	Peter Holt
\$586,250	Texans for Lawsuit Reform	Robert McNair
\$490,503	David Dewhurst	Peter Holt
\$403,600	*Dan Patrick	Peter Holt
\$317,100	Joe Straus	Peter Holt
\$291,531	Dan Branch	Gerald J. Ford
\$252,000	Texans For Education Reform	Robert McNair
\$168,750	Glenn Hegar	Bobby Cox
\$164,600	Associated Republicans of TX	Robert McNair
\$140,000	Republican Party of TX	Robert McNair
\$118,594	*John Carona	Gerald J. Ford
\$102,340	TX Trial Lawyers Assn.	Michael Gallagher
\$100,000	Rick Perry	Peter Holt
\$99,188	Wholesale Beer Distributors	Gregory LaMantia
\$74,000	George P. Bush	George 'Tim' Hixon
\$68,700	*Donna Campbell	Peter Holt
\$52,560	Jerry Patterson	Gregory LaMantia
\$52,000	Trey Martinez Fischer	Gallagher Law Firm
\$48,750	Ken Paxton	BJ 'Red' McCombs
\$46,752	Wendy Davis	Lukin Guillard
\$44,800	Barry Smitherman	Peter Holt
\$43,565	Senfronia Thompson	Michael Gallagher
\$41,000	Whitmire, John	Gallagher Law Firm
\$40,350	House Democratic Camp. Com.	Joe LaMantia Jr.
\$39,000	Todd Hunter	Gallagher Law Firm
\$36,750	Todd Staples	Scott Petty
\$35,000	TX Good Roads, Transpo. Assn.	Peter Holt
\$33,500	Sylvia Garcia	Gregory LaMantia
\$33,250	Mike Novak	Maxxam, Inc. PAC
\$30,000	Juan 'Chuy' Hinojosa	William & Val Peisen
\$28,500	Hispanic Republicans of TX	Robert McNair
\$28,500	TX House Leadership Fund	Robert McNair
\$26,000	Kirk Watson	Gregory LaMantia
\$26,000	John 'Jake' Ellzey	Peter Holt
\$25,000	Jobs for TX PAC	Robert McNair
\$22,850	Leticia Van de Putte	Melissa Jones
\$21,500	Jeff Boyd	BJ 'Red' McCombs
\$19,500	Royce West	Gerald J. Ford
\$18,954	Rico Reyes	Mikal Watts
\$18,000	Konni Burton	Bobby Cox/Peter Holt/Johnson Bros.
\$18,000	Paul Bettencourt	Maxxam, Inc. PAC

Note: Recipients above collected 84 percent of all racing money.

*Signed protest letter to Racing Commission.

Top Casino Contributors

2014 Cycle Amount	Contributor	Location
\$759,616	Tilman & Paige Fertitta (Landry's)	Houston
\$93,250	Jack E Pratt (Pratt Development)	Dallas
\$87,666	Landry's Restaurants (Fertittas)	Houston
\$50,000	Frank & Jill Fertitta (Station Casinos)	Las Vegas
\$50,000	Lorenzo & Teresa Fertitta (Station Casinos)	Las Vegas
\$8,377	Steve Greenberg (Landry's)	Galveston
\$5,000	Stephen Cavallaro (Fertitta Entertain.)	Las Vegas
\$5,000	Marc Falcone (Fertitta Entertain.)	Las Vegas
\$5,000	Richard & Janis Haskins (Station Casinos)	Las Vegas
\$5,000	Scott & Mary Alice Nielson (Station Casinos)	Las Vegas

Top Casino Recipients

Amount 2014 Cycle	Recipient	Favorite Casino Interest(s)
\$376,000	Greg Abbott	Tilman Fertitta
\$261,116	*Dan Patrick	Tilman Fertitta
\$52,500	Glenn Hegar	Tilman Fertitta
\$50,000	Joe Straus	Tilman Fertitta/Landry's
\$36,188	Ken Paxton	Tilman Fertitta
\$35,000	*John Carona	Jack Pratt
\$35,000	John Whitmire	Tilman Fertitta
\$40,100	Wendy Davis	Jack Pratt
\$25,000	*Joan Huffman	Tilman Fertitta
\$23,576	Carol Alvarado	Tilman Fertitta
\$11,000	*Larry Taylor	Tilman Fertitta
\$11,000	*Kelly Hancock	Tilman Fertitta
\$7,000	Harvey Hilderbran	Landry's
\$6,700	George P. Bush	Landry's
\$5,491	Sylvia R. Garcia	Tilman Fertitta
\$5,000	Paul Bettencourt	Tilman Fertitta
\$5,000	Jerry Patterson	Landry's
\$4,500	*Jane Nelson	Tilman Fertitta
\$4,500	Jason Villalba	Jack Pratt
\$3,579	Rodney Ellis	Jack Pratt
\$3,500	*Charles Schwertner	Tilman Fertitta
\$3,500	*Robert Lee Nichols	Tilman Fertitta
\$2,790	Rick Perry	Landry's
\$2,750	TX Travel Industry Assn. PAC	Tilman Fertitta
\$2,500	Trey Martinez Fischer	S. Greenberg (Landry's)
\$2,500	Van Taylor	Tilman Fertitta
\$2,500	*Craig Estes	Tilman Fertitta
\$2,500	Konni L. Burton	Tilman Fertitta
\$2,500	*Brian D. Birdwell	Tilman Fertitta
\$2,500	*Donna Campbell	Tilman Fertitta
\$2,500	*Troy Fraser	Tilman Fertitta

*Signed protest letter to Racing Commission.

Tribal Contributions

Amount 2014 Cycle	Contributor	Location
\$670,000	Chickasaw Nation	Ada, OK
\$450,000	Kickapoo	Eagle Pass, TX
\$285,500	Choctaw Nation	Durant, OK
\$24,500	Alabama-Coushatta	Livingston, TX
\$1,430,000	TOTAL	

Top Tribal Recipients

Amount 2014 Cycle	Recipient	Favorite Tribe(s)
\$205,000	Greg Abbott	Chick
\$172,500	*Dan Patrick	Kick
\$55,000	Ken Paxton	Kick
\$55,000	Republican Party of TX	Choc
\$35,000	Leticia Van de Putte	Kick
\$30,000	Glenn Hegar	Chick/Choc/Kick
\$25,000	*Joan Huffman	Chick/Kick
\$25,000	Carlos Uresti	Kick
\$20,000	*John Carona	Chick
\$20,000	*Kelly Hancock	Chick/Choc
\$20,000	Van Taylor	Chick/Kick
\$20,000	TX Repub. Legislative Caucus	Choc
\$18,500	TX Leg. Black Caucus	Choc
\$15,500	John Whitmire	Chick
\$15,000	Bob Deuell	Chick
\$15,000	*Jane Nelson	Kick
\$15,000	*Kel Seliger	Chick
\$14,000	Trey Martinez Fischer	Chick
\$12,500	Roberto Alonzo	Chick
\$12,000	Richard Wayne Smith	Chick
\$11,500	Jodie Laubenberg	Chick
\$11,000	Mex. Am. Leg. Caucus	Coush
\$10,500	Abel Herrero	Chick
\$10,500	Senfronia Thompson	Chick
\$10,000	Rafael Anchia	Chick
\$10,000	Helen Giddings	Chick
\$10,000	Linda Harper-Brown	Chick
\$10,000	House Dem. Campaign Com.	Chick
\$10,000	Don Huffines	Choc/Kick
\$10,000	John Otto	Chick/Choc
\$10,000	Diane Patrick	Chick/Choc
\$10,000	Todd Staples	Choc
\$10,000	*Larry Taylor	Choc/Kick
\$10,000	TX House Leadership Fund	Choc

Note: Above recipients accounted for 66 percent of all tribal money.
*Signed protest letter to Racing Commission.