



House Divided:

March 10, 2015

# Lobby Helped Straus Crush Tea-Party Revolt

## Funding Differences Separate House Rebels from Straus Camp

Starting the 2015 legislative session with a suicide mission, 19 of the Texas House’s 150 members [voted](#) to replace relatively moderate Republican Speaker Joe Straus with tea-party Rep. Scott Turner.

Key differences separate the top funders of the 131 members who retained Speaker Straus (including all 52 House Democrats) from top funders of the 19 anti-Straus rebels (listed on the last page).<sup>1</sup> Note that this analysis of what House members *raised*, overlooks *independent* political expenditures by Empower Texans—the state’s biggest spender of [dark money](#)<sup>2</sup> and the leading sponsor of the revolt against Speaker Straus.

The average anti-Straus candidate raised less money (\$236,540) in the 2014 cycle than the average pro-Straus member (\$399,389). Yet anti-Straus candidates overcame more opposition—especially in the primary (see table). Straus appointed no rebels to be the chair or vice chair of any House committee.

The pages below list top donors to the pro-Straus and anti-Straus factions. Many big PACs rank as top donors to both. Even Empower Texans—which would have recruited more rebels if Straus were in real jeopardy—gave something to both sides.

The tables on the pages below flag in bold those *anti-Straus* donors such as Texans for Lawsuit Reform, for example, that gave more money to the average *pro-Straus* member than to the average *anti-Straus* member. This clarifies otherwise fuzzy allegiances.

The top sponsors of the Straus status quo are a who’s who of Austin’s institutional business lobby. They include just six *individuals*. Trade group seeking to topple Straus likely would act anonymously through dark-money non-profits. Meanwhile, the anti-Straus revolt drew limited support from institutional donors, with 21 individuals ranking among its top funders.

### Speaker Straus Loyalty and House Fundraising

Speaker Loyalty	Member Count	Total Raised 2014 Cycle	Average Raised	Avg. Vote % (Primary/Gen'l)
Anti-Straus (R)	19	\$4,494,253	\$236,540	73%/83%
Pro-Straus	131	\$52,319,897	\$399,389	88%/86%
(Straus Rs)	(79)	(\$37,817,228)	(\$478,699)	86%/83%
(Straus Ds)	(52)	(\$14,502,670)	(\$278,898)	92%/91%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>\$56,814,151</b>	<b>\$378,761</b>	<b>86%/86%</b>

## Top Contributors to 19 Anti-Straus House Members

Total to 19 Anti-Straus Members	Anti-Straus Avg.	Total to 131 Pro-Straus Members	Pro-Straus Avg.	Contributor	City
\$456,980	\$24,052	\$19,380	\$148	Empower Texans PAC	Austin
\$179,481	\$9,446	\$12,750	\$97	Accountability First PAC	Austin
\$157,547	\$8,292	\$0	\$0	Anthony & Connie Ewing (Adv. Fixtures, Inc.)	Frisco
\$138,156	\$7,271	\$2,392,501	<b>\$18,263</b>	<b>Texans for Lawsuit Reform</b>	Austin
\$123,400	\$6,495	\$0	\$0	Jeff D. & Laura Sandefer (Sandefer Capital)	Austin
\$121,611	\$6,401	\$223,788	\$1,708	Republican Party of TX	Austin
\$107,500	\$5,658	\$7,000	\$53	Farris & Joann Wilks (Frac Tech Services)	Cisco
\$92,000	\$4,842	\$21,500	\$164	Monty Bennett (Remington Hotel)	Dallas
\$84,305	\$4,437	\$0	\$0	Rex Nichols (Garwell, LP)	Plano
\$80,000	\$4,211	\$0	\$0	James & Marcia Webb (Preferred Imaging)	Plano
\$60,501	\$3,184	\$5,250	\$40	Michael & Marika Olcott (retired biochemist)	Ft Worth
\$59,905	\$3,153	\$1,352,701	<b>\$10,326</b>	<b>TX Assn. of Realtors</b>	Austin
\$59,000	\$3,105	\$408,500	<b>\$3,118</b>	<b>Texans for Education Reform</b>	Austin
\$51,952	\$2,734	\$0	\$0	Tim M & Terri Dunn (CrownQuest/Enerquest)	Midland
\$50,000	\$2,632	\$2,500	\$19	Kyle L Stallings (Permian Basin Acquisitions)	Midland
\$50,000	\$2,632	\$0	\$0	Dan & Staci Wilks (Frac Tech Services)	Cisco
\$49,100	\$2,584	\$8,500	\$65	Rex Gore (Cleancescapes)	Austin
\$41,500	\$2,184	\$365,500	<b>\$2,790</b>	<b>TX Apartment Assn.</b>	Austin
\$36,000	\$1,895	\$709,516	<b>\$5,416</b>	<b>Associated Republicans of TX</b>	Austin
\$30,000	\$1,579	\$0	\$0	Phil Pourchot (Starside Custom)	Plano
\$30,000	\$1,579	\$0	\$0	Donald Yonce (Mobility Partners)	Frisco
\$29,500	\$1,553	\$418,762	<b>\$3,197</b>	<b>Energy Future Holdings</b>	Dallas
\$28,000	\$1,474	\$316,000	<b>\$2,412</b>	<b>Chickasaw Nation</b>	Ada, OK
\$26,417	\$1,390	\$2,500	\$19	David & Windi Grimes (Grimes Energy)	Houston
\$25,500	\$1,342	\$192,300	<b>\$1,468</b>	<b>TX Land Title Assn.</b>	Austin
\$24,526	\$1,291	\$257,156	<b>\$1,963</b>	<b>HillCo (Partners) PAC</b>	Austin
\$24,500	\$1,289	\$185,500	<b>\$1,416</b>	<b>Trevor Ahlberg (Cash Store/Cottonwood)</b>	Irving
\$23,000	\$1,211	\$275,930	<b>\$2,106</b>	<b>Indep't Insurance Agents of TX</b>	Austin
\$22,250	\$1,171	\$383,129	<b>\$2,925</b>	<b>Blackridge Consulting</b>	Austin
\$21,215	\$1,117	\$4,000	\$31	Don Dyer (Professional Janitorial Services)	Austin
\$21,000	\$1,105	\$0	\$0	Wallace L Hall (West Fork Partners)	Austin
\$21,000	\$1,105	\$404,007	<b>\$3,084</b>	<b>TX Republican Rep. Camp. Com.</b>	Dallas
\$20,000	\$1,053	\$0	\$0	Daniel M Mitchell (Danmark Energy)	Wh.Oak
\$18,500	\$974	\$220,500	<b>\$1,683</b>	<b>Indep't Bankers Assn.</b>	Austin
\$17,250	\$908	\$28,000	\$214	Robert & Elizabeth McLane (McLane Co)	Temple
\$17,000	\$895	\$370,000	<b>\$2,824</b>	<b>Richard W Weekley (Weekley Properties)</b>	Houston
\$15,500	\$816	\$0	\$0	Scott Turner Campaign	Frisco
\$15,000	\$789	\$0	\$0	Jim Williams (LandPlan Development)	Frisco

**Bold:** Average pro-Straus amount exceeds average anti-Straus amount.

The donors above supplied 54% of the \$4.5 million that the 19 anti-Straus members raised in the 2014 cycle.

The non-bold donors above showed greater allegiance to anti-Straus members than to pro-Straus members. Just four *institutional* contributors are among them. They include the campaign of failed speaker candidate Scott Turner, as well as the [intertwined](#) PACs of Empower Texans and Accountability First, which both attack Straus's

lieutenants. The Republican Party of Texas also gave four times more on average to anti-Straus members than pro-Straus members. Yet almost all the party's anti-Straus money helped Rodney Anderson defeat a Democrat in the fall. By contrast, 84 percent of Empower's anti-Straus money moved in the primary.

## Top Contributors to 131 Pro-Straus House Members

Amount to 131 Pro-Straus Members	Pro- Straus Avg.	Amount to 19 Anti-Straus Members	Anti- Straus Avg.	Contributor	City
\$2,392,501	\$18,263	\$138,156	\$7,271	Texans for Lawsuit Reform	Austin
\$1,352,701	\$10,326	\$59,905	\$3,153	TX Assn. of Realtors	Austin
\$917,630	\$7,005	\$0	\$0	Joe Straus Campaign	Sn Antonio
\$709,516	\$5,416	\$36,000	\$1,895	Associated Republicans of TX	Austin
\$558,500	\$4,263	\$0	\$0	Charles C Butt (HEB Grocery)	Sn Antonio
\$435,000	\$3,321	\$0	\$0	Border Health PAC	McAllen
\$426,445	\$3,255	\$9,250	\$487	TX Medical Assn.	Austin
\$418,762	\$3,197	\$29,500	\$1,553	Energy Future Holdings	Dallas
\$408,500	\$3,118	\$59,000	\$3,105	Texans for Education Reform	Austin
\$404,007	\$3,084	\$21,000	\$1,105	TX Republican Rep. Camp. Com.	Austin
\$397,550	\$3,035	\$6,000	\$316	Associated Gen'l Contractors of TX	Austin
\$383,129	\$2,925	\$22,250	\$1,171	Blackridge Consulting	Austin
\$370,000	\$2,824	\$17,000	\$895	Richard Weekley (Weekley Properties)	Houston
\$365,500	\$2,790	\$41,500	\$2,184	TX Apartment Assn.	Austin
\$365,265	\$2,788	\$3,720	\$196	AT&T, Inc. PAC	Dallas
\$328,370	\$2,507	\$4,000	\$211	TX Trial Lawyers Assn.	Austin
\$316,388	\$2,415	\$7,000	\$368	United Services Auto. Assn. (USAA)	Sn Antonio
\$316,000	\$2,412	\$28,000	\$1,474	Chickasaw Nation	Ada, OK
\$312,000	\$2,382	\$14,000	\$737	Time Warner Cable	Austin
\$277,500	\$2,118	\$7,500	\$395	Farmers Employee & Agent PAC	Austin
\$275,930	\$2,106	\$23,000	\$1,211	Indep't Insurance Agents of TX	Austin
\$275,619	\$2,104	\$0	\$0	TX House Leadership Fund	Austin
\$257,156	\$1,963	\$24,526	\$1,291	HillCo (Partners) PAC	Austin
\$253,824	\$1,938	\$9,072	\$477	TX Farm Bureau	Waco
\$243,000	\$1,855	\$3,000	\$158	TX & SW Cattle Raisers Assn.	Ft Worth
\$224,800	\$1,716	\$14,750	\$776	TX Assn. of Builders	Austin
\$223,788	\$1,708	\$121,611	<b>\$6,401</b>	<b>Republican Party of TX</b>	Austin
\$220,500	\$1,683	\$18,500	\$974	Indep't Bankers Assn.	Austin
\$218,099	\$1,665	\$1,500	\$79	Wholesale Beer Distrib. of TX	Austin
\$208,500	\$1,592	\$2,000	\$105	TX Hospital Assn.	Austin
\$204,057	\$1,558	\$14,750	\$776	TX Optometric PAC	Austin
\$202,290	\$1,544	\$10,500	\$553	Allen Boone Humphries Robinson	Houston
\$200,829	\$1,533	\$7,959	\$419	TX State Farm Agents PAC	Austin
\$192,300	\$1,468	\$25,500	\$1,342	TX Land Title Assn.	Austin
\$186,250	\$1,422	\$6,500	\$342	TX Automobile Dealers Assn.	Austin
\$185,850	\$1,419	\$3,750	\$197	Gulf States Toyota PAC	Houston
\$185,500	\$1,416	\$24,500	\$1,289	Trevor Ahlberg (Cash Store/Cottonwood)	Irving
\$163,500	\$1,248	\$0	\$0	Houston Fire Fighters PAC	Houston
\$184,500	\$1,408	\$5,000	\$263	Peter & Julianna Holt (Holt Co's)	Sn Antonio
\$182,226	\$1,391	\$2,500	\$132	Linebarger Groggan Blair & Sampson	Austin
\$179,289	\$1,369	\$2,500	\$132	John L & Barbara Nau	Houston
\$175,000	\$1,336	\$9,500	\$500	Atmos Energy	Houston
\$172,500	\$1,317	\$0	\$0	Ryan TX PAC	Dallas
\$164,625	\$1,257	\$1,000	\$53	'Richie' Ray (Richie's Specialty Pharmacy)	Spring
\$162,611	\$1,241	\$7,500	\$395	TX Dental Assn.	Austin

**Bold:** Average anti-Straus amount exceeds average pro-Straus amount.

The donors above supplied 32% of the \$52 million that the 131 anti-Straus members raised in the 2014 cycle.

The individuals bankrolling anti-Straus rebels include such well-known Straus adversaries as Empower Texans founder [Tim Dunn](#). Also making the list are Jeff Davis Sandefer and UT Regent Wallace Hall. This duo bankrolled the Empower and Accountability First PACs, while leading controversial efforts to overhaul state universities. This session, anti-Straus Rep. Jeff Leach is leading the [call](#) to reform corrupt admissions policies at the University of Texas that Hall publicized.

Led by Anthony Ewing, who sells retail-display cases, a cluster of anti-Straus funders hail from the affluent Metroplex satellites of Plano and Frisco. Led by the fracking-billionaire [Wilks brothers](#), many Straus foes are powered by oil and gas.

The top anti-Straus contributors listed in this report gave \$2.4 million to the 19 anti-Straus members, or 54 percent of the total that they raised. Backed by a deeper bench, the top pro-Straus contributors listed here gave \$17 million to 131 Straus loyalists, or one-third of what they raised.

## Members Who Backed Rep. Turner To Replace Speaker Straus

Total Raised 2014 Cycle	House Member	Dist.	Primary Vote	General Vote
\$687,490	Scott Turner	33	100%	100%
\$536,843	Rodney Anderson	105	53%	55%
\$514,259	Jonathan Stickland	92	65%	64%
\$436,509	Matt Schaefer	6	61%	88%
\$262,662	Matt Shaheen	66	49%	100%
\$243,755	Pat Fallon	106	100%	70%
\$233,395	Jeff Leach	67	100%	79%
\$225,704	David Simpson	7	100%	100%
\$210,244	Matt Rinaldi	115	51%	57%
\$195,427	<a href="#">Tony Tinderholt</a>	94	55%	57%
\$181,358	Bryan Hughes	5	100%	92%
\$174,899	Matt Krause	93	100%	100%
\$105,060	Dustin Burrows	83	NA	81%
\$97,841	Stuart Spitzer	4	51%	89%
\$95,575	Scott Sanford	70	100%	100%
\$89,551	<a href="#">Molly White</a>	55	54%	100%
\$70,768	Mark Keough	15	57%	100%
\$68,764	Stephanie Klick	91	100%	69%
\$64,150	Bill Zedler	96	100%	81%

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Of the 146 House members who participated in the Speaker vote on January 13, 2015, 127 members voted for Straus and 19 voted to replace him.

<sup>2</sup> The Empower Texans PAC contributes money to candidates and discloses its contributors and expenditures. Meanwhile, the Empower Texans *non-profit* make independent expenditures of so-called “dark money” to promote or attack candidates. The non-profit does not report who contributed this dark money, though it does disclose how it is spent. Much of these independent expenditures fund attacks on relatively moderate Republicans—or promote their tea-party challengers.