

LOBBY WATCH



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Bought Majority Shares in Three Campaigns:

March 5, 2010

Texans for Lawsuit Reform Sustains Pricey Primary Hits

One of Texas' most powerful political committees contributed \$602,290 to 28 candidates in contested primaries on March 2, blowing 53 percent of this wad on four incumbents whom voters just retired. These contested primaries absorbed 72 percent of the \$837,921 that TRL doled out to state candidates between January 1, 2009 and the eve of the Primary Election on March 2.

Freshman Democratic Rep. Tara Rios Ybarra was Texans for Lawsuit Reform's (TLR's) costliest primary loss. After burning through 43 cents of every dollar that TLR spent on contested primaries (\$259,110), Rios Ybarra of South Padre Island lost to challenger Jose Manuel Lozano by a gaping 14

percent of the vote. TLR provided 56 cents of every dollar that Rios Ybarra raised.

Three candidates facing runoffs on April 13 account for another 28 percent of TLR's contested-primary money. Most of this money went to Naomi Gonzalez, who forced El Paso Rep. Norma Chavez into a rematch for the Democratic nomination. TLR provided 88 percent of Gonzalez's war chest.

Raising most of its money from individuals who made their fortunes in litigious industries (see below), TLR leads the charge to restrict legal damages that consumers can recover from businesses in Texas courts.

TLR-Contested Primaries By Outcome

Primary Outcome	TLR Amount	Share of Total	No. of Candidates
Lost	\$316,675	53%	4
Runoff	\$171,621	28%	3
Won	\$113,994	19%	21
TOTALS	\$602,290	100%	28

TLR's Primary Losers

TLR Amount	Candidate (Party)	Office Sought	Primary Vote (%)
\$259,110	*Tara Rios Ybarra (D)	H-43	43
\$45,065	*Betty Brown (R)	H-4	49
\$10,000	*Judge Leslie Yates (R)	Appeals-14	48
\$2,500	*Tommy Merritt (R)	H-7	47
\$316,675	* = Incumbent		

TLR's Primary Runoff Candidates

TLR Amount	Candidate (Party)	Office Sought	Primary Vote (%)	Runoff Opponent
\$169,621	Naomi Gonzalez (D)	H-76	48	*Norma Chavez
\$1,000	*Fred Brown (R)	H-14	44	Gerald 'Buddy' Winn
\$1,000	*Delwin Jones (R)	H-83	39	Charles Perry
\$171,621	* = Incumbent			

TLR distributed 19 percent of its contested primary funds between 21 primary winners. The top recipients of these funds—led by Chuck Hopson (the House’s recent Republican convert)—brushed competitors aside, winning more than 60 percent of the primary vote.

These top victors all are incumbents, except for Republican Jim Landtroop, who challenges Democratic Rep. Joe Heflin of Crosbyton in the general election. TLR provided 84 cents of every dollar that Landtroop raised.

Top TLR-Backed Winners of Contested Primaries

TLR Amount	Candidate (Party)	Office Sought	Primary Vote (%)
\$22,397	*Chuck Hopson (R)	H-11	61
\$13,690	Jim Landtroop (R)	H-85	66
\$13,493	*Patrick Rose (D)	H-45	80
\$9,017	*Rob Orr (R)	H-58	68
\$8,631	*Steve Ogden (R)	S-5	68
\$5,266	*Eva Guzman (R)	Supreme Ct.	65
\$5,000	*Dan Flynn (R)	H-2	65
\$5,000	Al Scoggins (R)	Appeals-10	68
\$5,000	Jose Rodriguez (D)	S-29	70
\$5,000	*Bob Deuell (R)	S-2	71

*Incumbent

Democratic Primary Play

Democrats received three-fourths of the money that TLR spent on contested primaries, with qualitative differences appearing in how TLR treated Democrats and Republicans. Although TLR spent almost three times as much money on Democrats in contested primaries, it concentrated this money in just five

racers. In contrast, it distributed a much smaller pot of GOP money to 23 Republican candidates. Challengers seeking to rub out incumbents in the primary received 37 percent of TLR’s Democratic money, a rate that was three times higher than TLR’s support for Republican primary challengers.

TLR-Contested Primaries By Party

Party	TLR Amount	Share of Total	No. of Candidates
Dem.	\$448,225	74%	5
Rep.	\$154,065	26%	23
TOTALS	\$602,290	100%	28

Contested Democratic Primaries

Candidate Status	TLR Amount	Share of Total	No. of Candidates
Incumbent	\$272,604	61%	2
Challenger	\$170,621	37%	2
Open Seat	\$5,000	1%	1
TOTAL	\$448,225	100%	5

Contested Republican Primaries

Candidate Status	TLR Amount	Share of Total	No. of Candidates
Incumbent	\$134,375	87%	20
Challenger	\$18,690	12%	2
Open Seat	\$1,000	1%	1
TOTAL	\$154,065	100%	23

Texas' Top General-Purpose PACs

Total Expenditures (1/1/09–2/20/10)	Political Action Committee
\$2,407,897	TX Assn of Realtors Issues
\$2,135,480	TX Democratic Trust
\$1,426,560	TX Assn. of Realtors
\$1,405,787	TX Democratic Party
\$1,317,632	Valero Energy Corp.
\$1,112,184	Annie's List
\$987,420	Texans For Lawsuit Reform
\$709,622	ActBlue Texas
\$674,816	Border Health PAC
\$558,236	Texans for Insurance Reform
\$534,941	AT&T Texas

TLR long has ranked as one of Texas' most powerful PACs. The accompanying table lists general-purpose PACs that have spent more than \$500,000 since January 2009. Excluding PACs that exclusively serve a single political party, industry or company, TLR was Texas' No. 1 general-purpose PAC. (the bigger-spending Annie's List exclusively promotes female Democrats.)

TLR has raised \$2.3 million since January 2009. It harvested 73 percent of these funds from just 23 wealthy individuals, most of whom owe their fortunes to liability-prone industries such as energy and construction. One week before the primary, TLR's PAC reported having more than \$1.8 million left in the bank. •

23 Wealthy Contributors Supplied 73 Percent of TLR's Money (1/1/09-2/20/10)

Amount	Contributor	City	Company
\$250,909	Richard W. Weekley	Houston	Weekley Properties/TLR
\$250,000	A. Anthony Annunziato	Houston	AAA Capital Management
\$250,000	Robert C. McNair, Jr.	Houston	Cogen Technologies/Houston Texans
\$250,000	Bob/Doylene Perry	Houston	Perry Homes
\$125,000	Harold C. Simmons	Dallas	Contran Corp.
\$75,000	Peter/Edith O'Donnell	Dallas	O'Donnell Foundation
\$50,000	Randy Best	Dallas	Voyager Expanded Learning
\$45,000	Harlan/Katherine Crow	Dallas	Crow Holdings
\$45,000	Trammell S. Crow, Jr.	Dallas	Crow Holdings
\$26,000	Louis/Julie Beecherl	Dallas	Beecherl Companies
\$25,000	John/Barbara Nau	Houston	Silver Eagle Distributors L.P.
\$25,000	Jeff Davis	Austin	Sandefor Capital Partners LP
\$25,000	J. Ralph/Joy Ellis, Jr.	Irving	Belmont Oil & Gas Corp.
\$25,000	Woody/Gayle Hunt	El Paso	Hunt Corp.
\$25,000	Lawrence/Susan Kellner	Houston	Continental Airlines Inc.
\$25,000	Nancy Kinder	Houston	Kinder Foundation
\$25,000	Michael G. Manners	Spring	ELAN Development
\$25,000	Frank McGuyer	Houston	McGuyer Homebuilders
\$25,000	Drayton McLane, Jr.	Temple	McLane Company Inc.
\$25,000	James Doug Pitcock, Jr.	Houston	Williams Brothers Construction
\$25,000	Robert/Terry Rowling	Irving	TRT Holdings, Inc.
\$25,000	David M. Weekley	Houston	David Weekley Homes
\$25,000	Robert Weekley	Los Angeles	Lowe Enterprises
\$1,691,909	TOTAL		