

News Release

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Texas Lawyers Fund 72 Percent of Appeals Judges' Campaigns

- **An Endangered Species, Democratic Judges Pay Huge Premiums to Win**

Austin, TX: Lawyers and law firms—the very donors who have the greatest recurring interest in state court rulings—supply 72 percent of the campaign funds that Texas' intermediate court judges raise to win office, a ground-breaking Texans for Public Justice (TPJ) study finds.

In [Lowering the Bar: Lawyers Keep Texas Appeals Judges on Retainer](#), TPJ analyzes campaign contributions to 73 judges who sat on intermediate state appeals courts in January 2003. These judges raised \$6.8 million for 87 winning campaigns to sit on Texas 14 intermediate appeals courts between 1997 and 2002. Led by leading defense and plaintiff firms that have numerous cases in state courts, lawyers and law firms supplied 72 percent (\$4.9 million) of all the money in the justices' war chests.

The justices' financial dependency on attorneys leapt from 61 percent of their total in 1996 to 76 percent in the 2002 election cycle. By comparison, Texas Supreme Court justices take 48 percent of their campaign funds from lawyers and law firms. The fact that Texas judges depend heavily on campaign donors with vested interest in state court rulings fosters widespread perceptions that justice is for sale in Texas.

“Members of the Texas Bar could jump-start badly needed judicial reforms if they would just say ‘No’ to pleas for campaign funds,” said TPJ Director Craig McDonald. “We suspect that Texas attorneys give money because they share the public's perception that few politicians—judicial or otherwise—are blind to big campaign contributions.”

Other major findings of [Lowering the Bar](#) include:

- Republicans, who held 55 percent of Texas' intermediate appeals judge seats in 1997, controlled 76 percent in January 2003;
- The average winning Democratic justice in the age of George W. Bush had to raise \$114,739—or 78 percent more than the \$64,614 average for winning Republicans;
- Attorneys contributed 82 percent of the money that Democratic justices raised, much more than the 65 percent share that lawyers supplied to Republican justices;
- Led by San Antonio's Fourth District Chief Justice Alma Lopez, Democrats raised eight of the ten largest war chests;

- On average, justices in Dallas' Fifth District and El Paso's Eighth District raised the largest share of their war chests from attorneys (89 percent);
- The top sources of non-lawyer contributions were: the oil-rich Bass family; the Texas Medical Association; Perry Homes and Texans for Lawsuit Reform.

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[Texans for Public Justice](#) is a non-profit, non-partisan research and advocacy organization that tracks the role of money in Texas politics.