

News Release

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Voters Beware:

Big ‘Morning-After’ Contributions Evade Detection Before Elections

In Last Days of Primary, Texas Donors Moved \$1.7 Million.

Austin, TX: Texas voters stood little chance of being informed about the sources of \$1.7 million raised in the last nine days of the March 2002 primaries, including \$343,328 that was reported after the election was over, a new study found.

Texans for Public Justice released [*The Morning After: Last-Minute Contributions in Texas’ 2002 Primary Elections*](#) today, as special interests again are eluding public scrutiny by contributing in the last days of the general election campaign.

“Texas politics became more dangerous than unprotected sex in February 1997,” said Texans for Public Justice Director Craig McDonald. “That’s when the FDA approved the morning-after pill to let a woman who has had unsafe sex prevent pregnancy. There is no such remedy for Texas voters, who do not learn about massive influxes of campaign money until after the affected election is over.”

The last regular campaign disclosure filed by Texas candidates in *contested* races covers contributions made up until 10 days before an election. During the last nine days of a campaign, contested candidates file little-noticed “telegram reports” to disclose large contributions. Because these reports must be filed within 48 hours, donations made in the last two days of a campaign often are reported after the election is over.

Because last-minute contributions favor candidates in tight races, this money can determine electoral outcomes. The No. 1 recipient of eleventh-hour money in the 2002 primary was Senator Jeff Wentworth, who won a primary marred by voting irregularities by just 1,216 votes. Wentworth and his opponent received large last-minute contributions from controversial donors who only donated in the last days of the campaign.

The Morning After analyzes 102 Texas candidates who faced contested primaries for statewide and district-based offices in March 2002 and electronically reported raising

\$1.7 million in the last nine days before that election (9 percent of their primary total), including \$343,328 in the last 48 hours of the campaign. The report also tracks \$501,495 in last-minute money raised by 22 of these candidates who had runoff elections.

Morning After highlights include:

- Four senate candidates were the top money raisers in the primary's last nine days, led by Wentworth, Bill Ratliff, Kim Brimer and Juan Hinojosa (Mary Denny was the House's top recipient);
- Next came Supreme Court candidates Elizabeth Ray, Xavier Rodriguez and Wallace Jefferson;
- The No. 1 late-money donor was trial lawyer Mikal Watts, who gave \$60,000 in late money to his mom, district judge candidate Sandra Watts;
- The Republican National State Elections Committee was the No. 2 late donor, giving \$50,000 to boost the primary campaigns of minority High Court Justices Jefferson and Rodriguez;
- The Tigua Indian Reservation, which has had casino battles with the state, was the No. 3 late donor, giving to Wentworth and Hinojosa.

For the full report, see: <http://www.tpj.org/reports/morningafter/>

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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.