



★ TEXAS SUPREME COURT ★ **DOLLAR DOCKET**

In Texas, 48% of judges and 79% of lawyers say contributions significantly influence judicial decisions. - Texas Supreme Court poll

TEXANS FOR PUBLIC JUSTICE • 609 W. 18th St., Ste. E, Austin, TX 78701 • 512-472-9770

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Justices Collect Prejudgment Premiums

Insurers have been busy paying premiums to Texas Supreme Court justices, who delivered two opinions this month benefiting the insurance industry.

Both opinions deal with prejudgment interest. Prejudgment interest is compensation paid to plaintiffs for the lost use of money. These opinions provide new incentives for insurance companies to sit on claims and clog our courts with disputes that should be settled. The decisions are another costly slap in the face to Texas consumers.

In the weeks between February oral arguments and this month's decision in *Henson v. Texas Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance*, Justices Nathan Hecht and Alberto Gonzales each collected a \$2,000 contribution premium from the Texas Farm Bureau (which runs the defendant insurance company in this case).

Just before January oral arguments in the other case, *Embrey v. Royal Insurance*, Justice Gonzales picked up a \$2,500 contribution premium from the law firm defending that insurer. Justices Gonzales, Hecht and Owen also received another \$2,500 each from Thompson Coe Cousins & Irons last fall.

Defending the insurance industry contribution in the *Henson* case, Justice Gonzales said, "In the whole scheme of things, \$2,000 isn't going to have any kind of influence on me."

"In the whole scheme of things" Justice Gonzales did not need the conflict-ridden money that he took from the Texas Farm Bureau. Gonzales raised \$1,047 for every dollar his opponent raised.

April Dollar Docket

Cases heard by the Texas Supreme Court in April and the corresponding contributions to justices from the parties and/or attorneys.

May 4, 2000

Huckabee v Time Warne \$0
\$111,185

May 11, 2000

Fort Worth ISD v Southwestern Bell \$176,895
\$239,309

May 25, 2000

Keck, Mahin & Cate v. Nat'l Union Fire Insurance \$125,173
\$11,600

Texas Editorials Clamor for Judicial Reform

Texans for Public Justice assisted Public Citizen and the Gray Panthers file a constitutional challenge to the Texas judicial-selection system in federal district court on April 3. The lawsuit prompted papers across the state to publish editorials calling for fundamental judicial reform in Texas.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram April 6
Amarillo Daily News April 6
Corpus Christi Caller-Times April 6
San Antonio Express-News April 8
Dallas Morning News April 17
Austin American-Statesman April 24

If \$2,000 won't influence a justice, try \$55,000. This is how much money Texans for Lawsuit Reform rounded up for Gonzales. TLR money accounts for 10 percent of all the money in Gonzales' \$539,000 war chest.

For whatever reason, insurance companies continue to clean up before the high court. Insurers won 71 percent of the cases that they had before the Texas Supreme Court in the 1990s. •