



Public Justice Foundation of Texas

Annual Report 2013

Public Justice Foundation of Texas

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Public Justice Foundation Annual Report 2013

This is a summary of activities supported by the Public Justice Foundation of Texas during calendar 2013.

All of the projects detailed below were carried out by Texans for Public Justice, a 501(c)4 non-profit organization. The Public Justice Foundation of Texas is an independent 501(c)3 research foundation. Its primary purpose is to raise funds and provide grants to support specific, tax-exempt research and public educational activities of Texans for Public Justice (TPJ). Those activities are approved by the foundation's directors. In 2013, as in all previous years, the Public Justice Foundation of Texas' expenditures and all went to TPJ.

Sections:

- Program Highlights & New Initiatives
- Major Reports
- Lobby Watch
- Data Collection & Enhancement
- Board of Directors
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Highlights & Initiatives

Texans for Public Justice aggressively carried out its core mission in 2013; promoting government and corporate accountability, exposing corruption and cronyism, advocating for the interests of consumers, and sharing our vast repository of campaign finance data with the media, fellow public interest groups and the general public. TPJ continues to play a unique role as a credible, non-partisan watchdog that isn't afraid to expose and confront the powerful economic and conservative interests that control public policy. What follows are our 2013 highlights and an overview of our recent reports.

- **Promoting Government Transparency and Ethics Reform.**

TPJ helped lead an alliance of advocacy organizations and open-government advocates promoting reforms of campaign-finance and personal-financial disclosures as part of a state “sunset review” of the Texas Ethics Commission. TPJ and its partners helped craft a strong reform package. That legislation passed the House and Senate before being weakened by a conference committee and vetoed by Governor Perry.

- **Exposing “Dark Money.”**

TPJ led the charge to require disclosure of direct political expenditures by not-for-profit organizations that actively support or attack political candidates for political office. Led by the group Empower Texans, Texas experienced its first wave of undisclosed political expenditures in 2012. Dark-money disclosure legislation drafted by TPJ passed the legislature twice in 2013, drawing gubernatorial vetos both times.

- **Tracking Payday-Lender Clout.**

TPJ painstakingly researched and identified the many predatory-loan interests bankrolling candidates and hiring lobbyists. This put us in the spotlight during the failed 2013 legislative battle to reform this rogue industry.

- **Wendy Davis vs. Greg Abbott Cash.**

As soon as Attorney General Greg Abbott and Senator Wendy Davis squared off for the 2014 gubernatorial race, TPJ analyzed fundraising on both sides in August. Many follow-ups are expected in 2014.

- **Gov. Perry’s Threats to Veto Corruption Watchdog.**

TPJ filed a formal complaint against the governor over his threats to veto the budget of the Travis County Public Integrity Unit, which prosecutes political corruption. A special prosecutor has been assigned to investigate TPJ's allegations and potentially present them to a grand jury.

- **Judicial-Reform Initiative.**

TPJ played a lead role in organizing the Texas Fair Courts Network, a group of government and judicial reform organizations advocating fundamental reform of Texas' judicial-selection process. TPJ and the Fair Courts Network organized the Money & Justice Forum at UT-Austin in November. It attracted judicial reformers and activists from around the state. Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Wallace Jefferson gave a keynote address advocating judicial-selection reform. After presentations by state and national experts, participants analyzed ways to promote judicial-selection reform in the 2015 Texas Legislature. The Fair Courts Network is developing a statewide organizing and outreach plan.

- **The Ongoing Saga of Tom DeLay.**

Tom DeLay's fate has yet to be sealed 12 years after he conspired to steal the 2002 Texas legislative elections. In the latest twist in 2013, two GOP appellate justices voted to reverse his criminal conviction—with one Democratic judge dissenting. The Travis County prosecutor, whose budget has been slashed by the governor, is appealing that ruling.

Major Reports

Texans for Public Justice published three major reports during 2013 that detailed campaign and lobby spending.

Major Reports

Texas PACs (October 10, 2013) – This recurring report tracks spending by Texas political action committees during each two-year election cycle. This edition finds a record number of PACs that spent almost \$126 million in the two-year 2012 election cycle. A special section also analyzes dark-money spending. Read the [report](#).

Top Lobby Interests (June 10, 2013) –Special interests paid 1,663 lobbyists up to \$328 million during the 2013 session. TPJ breaks down that lobby money by industry and exposes the biggest lobbyists and lobby clients in Texas. Read the [report](#).

Top Contributors (June 10, 2013) –Texas’ top 150 campaign contributors spent \$107 million on the state elections preceding the 2013 session. TPJ identifies the institutional and individual donors who occupy the owner’s boxes at the legislature. Read the [report](#).

Lobby Watch Reports

TPJ's *Lobby Watch* newsletter tracks special interests that seek legislative and regulatory favors. It exposes who these interests are, what they want and how much they pay for it. TPJ published 28 editions of *Lobby Watch* in 2013.

2013 Lobby Watch Reports

[Dynasty's Rolodex Delivers to George P. Bush](#)

(January 17) Ninety percent of the \$1.4 million that George P. Bush has raised came from Texas and Florida, which his uncle and father once governed. Just 39 donors provided 69 percent of Bush's total funds.

[Curriculum Lobbying Dropped After Education Board Lost Clout](#)

(January 24) Lobbying on instructional materials plummeted after lawmakers hobbled the State Board of Education's embarrassing influence over textbooks.

[Abbott Seizes Early Money Advantage over Perry](#)

(January 30) Many of last year's top contributors to Governor Perry and Attorney General Abbott appear to favor Abbott in a potential 2014 gubernatorial showdown.

[Revolver Vicki Truitt Claims Her Payday](#)

(February 7) Ex-Rep. Vicki Truitt, who serviced payday lenders as Financial Services Committee chair, now lobbies for ACE Cash Express.

[Another CPRIT Scandal](#)

(February 13) Campaign contributions may have spawned entitlement at the CTNet network, which won't refund \$1.3 million in improper expenses to the state cancer fund.

[Sprawl Interests and Industrial Users Drive Water Projects](#)

(February 22) The governor is the top recipient of money from the housing interests and industrial water consumers promoting state-funded water projects.

[Dueling Values Fund Houston Senate Race](#)

(February 27) Funding sources differentiate the two Democratic Hispanic women who collectively raised \$2 million for Saturday's Senate runoff.

Drew Darby Requires Nuke Waste King's Love

(March 4) Rep. Drew Darby introduced a sweetheart bill to exclusively benefit one company: Waste Control Specialists. No other lawmaker received more money from this nuclear-waste PAC.

Big Beer Drowns Competitors

(March 7) Bills promoting the craft-beer industry may be drowned by powerful beer distributors, who inebriated state officials with \$7 million.

Payday-Funded Pols Push Tepid Loan Reforms

(March 18) Predatory lenders invested almost \$4 million in Texas politicians, seriously constraining what--if anything--will be done about the runaway industry's exploitation of the neediest Texans.

Big Three Bag Millions from Enterprise-Fund Recipients

(April 8) Officials overseeing the Enterprise Fund collected \$3.6 million from recipients of Enterprise Fund awards.

Combs Reaps Thousands from Event Fund Grantees

(April 18) Business interests that received \$57 million from the state's Events Trust Funds gave \$421,000 to the overseer of those state grants.

12 Republicans Flip from Lege to Lobby

(April 23) A dozen recent lawmakers are reporting up to \$2 million in lobby income. Many of these revolvers hustle for interests they regulated.

Predatory-Loan Bill Lands in Mortgaged House

(April 29) The Senate's tough predatory-loan reforms must run a gauntlet through the House, whose members took \$1.4 from that industry.

82 Payday Lobbyists Out to Kill Reforms

(May 2) Predatory lenders are paying 82 lobbyists (including many ex-lawmakers) up to \$4.4 million to kill consumer protections.

Tax-Break Recipients Give Combs \$238,500

(May 15) Corporate recipients of \$1.2 billion in property-tax breaks gave \$238,500 to the comptroller who vets these abatements.

Will Perry Veto Lobby Disclosure?

(May 22) Lawmakers sent a bill to make lobbyists disclose any payments received from political campaigns to the governor whose campaign has paid lobby interests \$650,000.

'Little Tobacco' Fights Health-Care Fees

(May 31) Smaller cigarette companies failed to stub out a bill to make them pay the same health-cost fees that Big Tobacco pays. The bill's fate lies with a governor whose ex-campaign manager is a tobacco lobbyist.

Car-Dealer Cartel Stalled Musk's Tesla

(September 10) Billionaire Elon Musk lobbied lawmakers on two issues. They let Musk's rocket company launch tort reform and corporate welfare into new orbits. But they shot down bills to let Musk's Tesla bypass auto dealers and sell cars directly to earthlings.

Death-Row Pharmacist Concocts Solution to Aging

(October 8) A pharmacist supplying the nation's busiest death row with lethal-injection drugs worked for years on a formula to arrest aging.

Vested Interests Flood \$1 Million Water-Bond PAC

(October 9) Natural resources and construction interests are funding the push for \$2 billion in state funds for water-infrastructure projects.

Pariah PAC Money that Even Politicians Won't Touch

(October 16) Money-hungry politicians return negligible political funds. Most money returned to jilted PACs comes from businesses that are controversial, heavily regulated or rely on government contracts.

Rogue Dating Service Wooed Texas Pols

(October 22) Texas sued dating website True.com to stop it from selling its members' personal data. True.com owner favors powerful GOP men and has a fetish for hiring the governor's ex-subordinates as lobbyists.

Texas Gave \$1.8 Million to Obamacare Contractor

(October 25) Obamacare critic Rick Perry inadvertently helped sabotage that program by granting \$1.8 million in taxpayer funds to CGI Group--the lead contractor on the buggy software crippling Obamacare.

Is the Water Fund Perry's New Slush Fund?

(October 30) The PAC promoting a \$2 billion water infrastructure fund got most of its money from thirsty energy and construction interests that gave \$7 million to Governor Perry.

Dewhurst Gave Favored Senators a Boost

(November 14) Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst announced senate committee chair appointments early. This allowed his anointed chairs to cash in before the start of the legislative session's fundraising blackout.

Toomey Firm Lobbies for Client Seeking Perry Grant

(November 19) The lobby firm of the governor's ex-roommate and former chief of staff is representing AAA Auto Club as it seeks state grant money from Governor Perry.

Dark-Money Texan Helped Utah's Rogue Attorney General

(November 25) Utah's Attorney General resigned as a state probe found he knowingly broke election laws. A Texan who used dark-money to help install that rogue attorney general now works on a Texas Attorney General campaign.

Data Collection & Enhancement

Texans for Public Justice maintains and updates comprehensive databases of Texas campaign contributions and lobbying contracts.

- In 2013 TPJ added more than 1,000,000 campaign contribution records to our databases.
- In 2013 TPJ added over 9,000 lobbying contract records to our databases.

TPJ is Texas' only public-interest group that amasses comprehensive data on campaign contributions and lobby expenditures. TPJ enhances the value of these data by identifying the economic interests behind Texas PACs, campaign contributors and lobby clients. This onerous work allows TPJ alone to: Rank the state's top donors, PACs and lobbyists; Analyze political money by industry; and Identify emerging political trends. Keeping these huge databases current requires a database specialist.

During 2013 TPJ added more than 1,000,000 campaign-contribution records to our databases. TPJ identified and assigned unique contributor-identification numbers to tens of thousands of previously unidentified major Texas donors and identified their economic interests.

TPJ also maintains a database of approximately 100,000 state lobby contracts dating back to 1995. TPJ identifies the economic interests of each lobby client, which allows us to comprehensively analyze the lobby. During 2013 we added over 9,000 lobbying contracts to our database.

Public Justice Foundation Board of Directors

Craig McDonald, President

McDonald is the Director of Texans for Public Justice

Andrew Wheat, Secretary

A journalist by training, Wheat has written for numerous progressive publications including the Nation, the Multinational Monitor, Texas Monthly and the Texas Observer. Wheat is employed as Research Director of Texas for Public Justice.

Tom “Smitty” Smith, Board Member

Thomas “Smitty” Smith is an institution among progressive Texas advocates. Smitty has been employed as the director of the Texas Public Citizen office since 1985. Prior to that he worked with Texas Rural Legal Aide and as a staff member in the Texas Legislature.

Margaret Justus, Board Member

Margaret served as assistant press secretary to former-Governor Ann Richards. She also served as Texas spokesperson for the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign and remains active in liberal politics in Texas.

Thomas Tobin, Board Member

Tobin is former national organizing director for Public Citizen’s Washington office. He currently is V.P. of Development for Global Impact, a consortium of progressive charities focusing on poverty in the Third World.

Financial

Total income to the Public Justice Foundation in 2013: \$194,949.
Grants to Texans for Public Justice 20013: \$210,000.*

Funding is provided by individual contributors and foundation grants. PJFT does not accept government or corporate grants.

Foundation support was provided by:

The Piper Foundation
The Open Society Foundations
The Sunlight Foundation
The Winkler Foundation
Good Jobs First
Contributions from individual Texas donors.

Copies of IRS Forms 990 for The Public Justice Foundation and Texans for Public Justice are available upon request.

* All grants & expenditures were made to Texans for Public Justice, a 501(c)4 organization. Texans for Public Justice does not engage in direct or grassroots lobbying activity. None of the funds expended by the Public Justice Foundation of Texas supported direct or grassroots lobbying activity.