

News Release

Texans for Public Justice ** 609 W. 18th Street, Suite E, ** Austin, TX 78701

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Watchdog Group Alleges That Appellate Chief Justice Ken Law Repeatedly Broke Campaign Laws

TPJ Asks County Prosecutor and Texas Ethics Commission to Investigate

(Austin)—Texans for Public Justice filed a pair of complaints with Travis County Attorney David Escamilla and the Texas Ethics Commission today alleging that Third Court of Appeals Chief Justice W. Kenneth Law repeatedly violated the Texas Election Code in the course of his current reelection campaign. The alleged violations include illegally collecting more than \$66,000 in political contributions without a duly appointed campaign treasurer and taking \$10,000 from GOP Swift-Boat activist Harold Simmons—twice what the state Judicial Campaign Fairness Act permits.

Two of the alleged violations are misdemeanors that carry criminal penalties and fall under the jurisdiction of Travis County Attorney David Escamilla. The other four alleged violations are subject to civil penalties levied by the Texas Ethics Commission. If the agency upholds these violations, Judge Law could face civil fines totaling more than \$235,000.

Central Texas voters elected Law Chief Justice in November 2002. Last month he and two other Republican members of his court issued a divisive ruling in the criminal case against Tom DeLay's Texans for a Republican Majority PAC (TRMPAC). The ruling uses technical distinctions between "funds" and "checks" to suggest that TRMPAC did not illegally launder corporate political funds. To protect DeLay and two cronies, the justices wrote that TRMPAC's checks were not money-laundering "funds."

"As Judge Law labored over the TRMPAC ruling, he appears to have raised tens of thousands of campaign dollars in violation of Texas election laws," said Texans for Public Justice Director Craig McDonald. "The chief justice even may have cashed these ill-gotten campaign 'checks' into 'funds.' So many violations represent incompetence or indifference on his part."

TPJ alleges that Chief Justice Law appears to have:

- Accepted \$66,850 in campaign contributions at a time when he did not have a duly appointed campaign treasurer.
- Accepted \$66,850 in campaign contributions without filing his intention to opt in or out of the Judicial Campaign Fairness Act's voluntary expenditure limits.
- Violated the cap on judicial candidates taking more than \$5,000 from an individual per election by accepting \$10,000 from nuclear-dump owner Harold Simmons.
- Accepted \$1,000 from an out-of-state political committee without following the disclosure requirements prescribed for receiving large contributions from out-of-state PACs.
- Used his campaign to reimburse himself for approximately \$21,576 of campaign expenditures that were not properly designated as reimbursable expenses.
- Failed to include required disclosure information about the occupation, employer, or job title of more than 50 contributors.

Access copies of TPJ's complaints to:

- [Travis County Attorney David Escamilla](#); and
- [The Texas Ethics Commission](#)

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