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‘Texas Jobs PAC’ Fined \$10,000 in Scheme To Launder Money to ‘Craddick D’s’

TPJ Ethics Complaint Triggered Inquiry into 2008 Campaign Shenanigans

(Austin)—The Texas Ethics Commission has levied a \$10,000 civil penalty against Texas Builds Jobs & Opportunity for a Secure Future PAC (Texas Jobs PAC) for its role in a 2008 scheme to hide the real source of the \$150,000 in campaign funds that then-Speaker Tom Craddick funneled to three Democratic House members. The commissioners meted out this hefty fine on April 20, acting in response to a complaint that Texans for Public Justice filed in 2009.

TPJ alleged that Texas Jobs PAC served as an illegal conduit to hide the true source of \$150,000 in campaign funds that then-Speaker Craddick moved to three Democratic Craddick supporters who faced 2008 primary challengers. They were then-Democratic Reps. Kevin Bailey, Kino Flores and Aaron Pena.

In the largest donation of his political career, Craddick’s campaign contributed \$250,000 to Texas Jobs PAC on January 10, 2008. Along with the check, Craddick’s daughter and campaign manager, Christi Craddick, provided Texas Jobs PAC with written instructions to contribute \$50,000 apiece to Democratic Reps. Bailey, Flores, Pena and Dawnna Dukes.¹ Texas Jobs PAC made the contributions the next day. Rep. Dukes rejected the money, later saying she didn’t want to be branded as Speaker Craddick’s tool.²

Significantly, when Texas Jobs PAC wrote these Craddick-ordered checks it had no funds *other than the \$250,000 that it received from Craddick*. The Craddick campaign could have contributed to its Democratic supporters directly but that would have revealed the money’s true source. The Craddick campaign instead laundered the money through Texas Jobs PAC. That way, voters would not know which local Democratic candidates were bankrolled by a conservative Republican speaker.

Texas Jobs PAC stiff-armed the Ethics Commission’s investigation throughout 2010, refusing to cooperate with investigators. Commissioners cited Texas Job PAC’s recalcitrance in imposing the \$10,000 fine.

“In a desperate attempt to retain control of the Speaker’s gavel, Craddick’s cronies acted as if they were above the law in 2008 and maintained this arrogance even after they were caught,” said Texans for Public Justice Director Craig McDonald. “This substantial fine sends another strong message that Texas doesn’t tolerate political money laundering.”

The Ethics Commission’s April 20 Order will be posted at its [Open Orders](#) webpage.

Epilogue

Kevin Bailey lost the Democratic Primary in 2008. Rep. Aaron Pena switched parties in December, formally coming out of the GOP closet. A Travis County jury convicted former Rep. Kino Flores of multiple political felonies in 2010.

¹ “Attorney: Texas House Speaker Tom Craddick Intended Money To Go To Democrats,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 19, 2008. “Craddick Ordered Cash To Go To Democrats” *Austin American-Statesman*, March 19, 2008.

² “Dukes Turns Down Craddick-Linked Cash,” *Austin American-Statesman*, February 7, 2008.