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The House May Be Betting on Perry at Tonight's Venetian Casino Debate

Texas Governor and Las Vegas Sands Croupier Sheldon Adelson Have Wealth of Ties

Austin—Tonight's Republican presidential debate at Las Vegas' Venetian Resort Hotel Casino takes Texas Governor Rick Perry back to the same sprawling complex where he attended his son's 2009 bachelor party. Las Vegas Sands Corp. owns the Venetian, which is hosting the debate, and it owns the adjoining Palazzo Resort-Hotel-Casino, where Perry bedded down the night of his son's party. The head of Las Vegas Sands, Sheldon Adelson, has been a Perry supporter since 2007.

Perry's campaign reported that he flew to Vegas on October 24, 2009 to meet Brian Sandoval, who was then running a successful GOP campaign to be governor of Nevada. Days later the campaign acknowledged to the *Dallas Morning News* that on that same Vegas trip Perry also attended a bachelor party that the male friends of his son, Griffin, held to celebrate the younger Perry's upcoming wedding.¹

Perry previously reported that casino owner Adelson contributed a \$1,856 in-kind "event expense" to the Perry campaign on December 7, 2007. Perry's campaign reported that one of its fundraisers, Krystie Alvarado, flew to Vegas a day earlier for a fundraiser. The campaign reported that Flatonia, Texas sausage magnate Danny Janecka then flew Governor Perry to Vegas on December 9, 2007 for a fundraiser. Later that month, Perry's campaign reported receiving a total of \$25,000 more from Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon Adelson, Adelson's daughter Shelley and Adelson's aide, Yasmin Lukatz. Lukatz and Las Vegas Sands Vice President Patrick Dumont gave Perry \$25,000 more late last year. Since Perry became active in Republican Governors Association (RGA) fundraising in 2006, Las Vegas Sands Corp. and Sheldon Adelson have pumped \$1.6 million into the RGA. Sheldon Adelson and Yasmin Lukatz both contributed to Newt Gingrich before Perry entered the presidential race in August.

Las Vegas Sands Casino-Related Contributions To Perry's Gubernatorial Campaign

| Contributor | Employer | Occupation | Location | Date | Amount |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|
| Sheldon Adelson | Venetian Hotel/Casino | Owner | Las Vegas, NV | 12/7/2007 | *\$1,856 |
| Sheldon Adelson | Venetian Hotel/Casino | Owner | Las Vegas, NV | 12/31/2007 | \$5,000 |
| Sheldon Adelson | Venetian Hotel/Casino | Owner | Las Vegas, NV | 12/31/2007 | \$5,000 |
| Yasmin Lukatz | Self | Investments | Las Vegas, NV | 12/31/2007 | \$5,000 |
| Shelley Adelson | Self | Investments | Wayland, MA | 12/31/2007 | \$5,000 |
| Yasmin Lukatz | Self | Marketing | Las Vegas, NV | 12/11/2010 | \$10,000 |
| Patrick Dumont | Las Vegas Sands | VP | New York, NY | 12/11/2010 | \$15,000 |
| TOTAL | | | | | \$46,856 |

* In-kind contribution described as an "Event Expense."

Note: Perry reported two \$5,000 donations from Mr. & Mrs. Sheldon Adelson on the last day of 2007 (perhaps receiving a check apiece from husband and wife?).

The month of Adelson’s fundraiser, the Perry campaign reported receiving another \$13,000 in Vegas contributions. Perry collected \$10,000 from the Fertitta family that operates Stations Casino. The Fertitta family also owns Houston-based Landry’s Restaurants. Landry’s head Tilman Fertitta, who has contributed \$327,910 to Perry’s gubernatorial campaigns, has been pushing for Texas to legalize casinos.²

Other Vegas Contributions the Month of Adelson’s Perry Fundraiser

| Contributor | Employer | Occupation | Location | Date | Amount |
|------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|
| David Brady | Brady Industries | Principal | Las Vegas | 12/12/2007 | \$1,000 |
| Travis Brady | Brady Industries | Vice President | Las Vegas | 12/12/2007 | \$1,000 |
| Frank Fertitta | Stations Casino | Chair & CEO | Las Vegas | 12/12/2007 | \$5,000 |
| Lorenzo Fertitta | Stations Casino | Executive | Las Vegas | 12/12/2007 | \$5,000 |
| Sig Rogich | Rogich Commun. | President | Las Vegas | 12/31/2007 | \$1,000 |
| TOTAL: | | | | | \$13,000 |

The month of the Vegas fundraiser Perry also received \$2,000 from two executives at Brady Industries, which provides linen and janitorial services to many Vegas casinos.³ Finally, the head of Vegas-based Rogich Communications contributed \$1,000. [Sig Rogich](#) was one of George W. Bush’s “Pioneer” campaign bundlers and produced ads for President Ronald Reagan and the first President Bush. In 2000 Rogich clients on the Las Vegas City Council approved a controversial liquor permit for a Rogich property, thereby greatly boosting its value by allowing it to be used as a topless bar.⁴

Governor Perry’s position on gambling is carefully crafted. He has repeatedly said he opposes the expansion of gambling’s footprint in Texas, seeking to confine it to existing Indian reservations and race tracks. Yet Perry has endorsed dramatically expanding gambling at those sites by proposing that they be allowed to introduce slot machines. Perry took a 2003 junket to the Bahamas to discuss school financing with his inner circle, including campaign strategist Dave Carney, tax crank Grover Norquist and gubernatorial aides Mike Toomey, Deirdre Delisi and Mike Morrissey. The following year Perry proposed offsetting property tax reductions with a variety of new revenues, including those the state could earn by legalizing slot machines at Indian reservations and race tracks.⁵ This proposal has yet to pass the Texas Legislature, though variants are continually resurrected by the gambling industry.

A key gambling obstacle in Texas has been the failure of greedy race track, reservations and casino interests to agree on a deal to share the wealth. Adelson, who specializes in one-stop shopping gambling resorts, seemed to address this in a 2010 phone call with investors. “They are talking about 12 tracks and 12 Racinos in Texas and they’re talking about 12 casinos,” he said. “The point is that if we can’t do our song and dance of an integrated resource, it becomes less and less attractive.”

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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.

Notes

¹ “Gov. Rick Perry’s Trip to Vegas Includes Bachelor Party for His Son,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 26, 2009.

² MGM Mirage Vice President Joe Fertitta also contributed \$1,000 to Perry’s campaign in 2010.

³ “Third Generation Carries on Success for Brady Industries,” *Las Vegas Journal Review*, October 16, 2011.

⁴ “Rogich Obtains Liquor Approval,” *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, April 6, 2000.

⁵ “Special Sessions For Special Interests,” Texans for Public Justice, April 2006. “Perry’s Trip Is a Fond Memory—for his Foes,” *Austin American-Statesman*, February 17, 2006.