Fact-Checking Perry’s Spin Machine

Spin 1: A partisan witch hunt produced Perry’s criminal charges. NOT TRUE.
Over 36 years the Travis Co. Public Integrity Unit prosecuted 21 officials: 6 Republicans and 15 Democrats. At the time of Perry’s $7.5 million veto, the vast majority of that unit’s case load targeted complex finance and insurance fraud cases—not politicians. Democratic Travis County District Attorney Rosemary Lehmberg’s office recused itself from Perry’s case for obvious reasons. After an Austin Democratic judge recused herself, the case went to Republican Judge Billy Ray Stubblefield, a Perry appointee. Stubblefield assigned the case to San Antonio Republican Judge Bert Richardson, a George W. Bush appointee. Richardson appointed special prosecutor Michael McCrum, who served as a federal prosecutor under the first President Bush. Only Republican judges have touched this case.

Spin 2: The charges against Perry are frivolous. NOPE.
Prosecutors do not pursue every criminal complaint received. A Republican judge believed this one had sufficient merit to appoint a special prosecutor. The prosecutor and members of the grand jury say there is compelling evidence. “These charges are very serious,” Prosecutor McCrum said. “There is evidence to support them, and there is nothing political about what happened in my investigation or the grand jury’s deliberations.”

Spin 3: The charges challenge Perry’s veto powers. HARDLY.
Texans for Public Justice (TPJ) filed its complaint before Perry vetoed state funding for the DA’s office. Nobody questions Perry’s veto powers. The charges allege that Perry broke the law by threatening an elected official to resign so he could appoint a replacement. “It’s perfectly legal to veto something,” Dallas Morning News reporter Wayne Slater wrote. “And it’s perfectly legal to demand that an elected official you don’t like should resign. But it might be illegal to link the two.”

Spin 4: Perry did not personally seek to oust DA Rosemary Lehmberg. A WHOPPER.
Perry said in May that he did not initiate any efforts to oust Lehmberg nor did he personally make any phone calls toward that end. A Perry attorney also claimed there’s no evidence that Perry threatened Lehmberg apart from the American-Statesman article that triggered TPJ’s complaint. In fact, many insiders have discussed their roles in the affair before and after the veto. The Statesman confirmed that Perry personally called attorney Mindy Montford to see if she would step in if Lehmberg resigned. So Perry personally sought to replace Lehmberg with Montford, whom Travis County’s Democratic voters rejected for that very same office in 2010.

Spin 5: Perry says the case is about drunken driving. WRONG AGAIN.
Two other district attorneys arrested for drunken driving failed to draw Perry’s wrath. Lehmberg pleaded guilty, served jail time, sought treatment and promised not to run for reelection. A legal case to drive her from office failed. Perry targeted Lehmberg because she controlled the Public Integrity Unit, one of few remaining Texas powers in Democratic hands. Texas Republicans have sought to strip that power from Travis County for at least 10 years. Perry is accused of breaking the law in zealous pursuit of this prize.