

News Release

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

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Appeals Court Candidate Melissa Goodwin Violated Judicial Campaign Limits, TPJ Alleges

Watchdog Complaint Urges Texas Ethics Commission To Investigate

(Austin)—Texans for Public Justice filed a complaint with the Texas Ethics Commission today alleging that 3rd Court of Appeals candidate Melissa Goodwin may have violated state election laws by accepting political contributions that exceeded campaign limits.

Texas' judicial campaign laws restricted Goodwin's campaign to taking no more than \$5,000 from a single donor during the recent Republican Primary. Yet Goodwin's campaign reported that it accepted a total of \$25,274 from Bob and Paca Goodwin of Marble Falls, Texas, exceeding the limit by \$20,274.

The apparently illegal contributions may have shaped the outcome of the race for an open seat on the Austin-based 3rd Court of Appeals. Goodwin won 53 percent of the vote on March 2, defeating opponent Scott Field (who got 47 percent). The disputed \$20,274 accounts for 42 percent of Goodwin's total primary expenditures (\$48,587)--including the \$34,400 in media buys that she initiated on February 12, 2010.

The Judicial Campaign Fairness Act limits 3rd Court of Appeals candidates from taking an aggregate of more than \$5,000 in contributions from individual donors during the primary. The law defines loans from individuals as campaign contributions subject to these limits (bank loans are treated differently). The Goodwin campaign reported that it received a \$25,000 loan from Bob and Paca Goodwin on January 21, 2010. Goodwin's campaign then reported receiving a \$274.26 in-kind contribution from the same source on February 12, 2010. Bob and Paca Goodwin's total contributions to Melissa Goodwin's primary campaign appear to have exceeded the legal limit by \$20,274.26.

Texas law exempts immediate family members (limited to children, parents, brother, sister, grandchildren and grandparents)¹ from these campaign-contribution limits. As the apparent parents of Melissa Goodwin's husband, Grant Goodwin, Bob and Paca Goodwin do not appear to be covered by this exemption.

If the Texas Ethics Commission verifies the alleged violation, it can impose civil penalties equal to three times the amount of the excess contribution. Texans for Public Justice's formal complaint to the Texas Ethics Commission is [available here](#).

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¹ The so-called "second degree on consanguinity."