

News Release

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For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, April 27, 2010

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Supreme Court Candidate Debra Lehrmann 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 Supreme Court candidate Debra Lehrmann may have violated state election laws by accepting political contributions that exceeded campaign limits.

Texas' judicial campaign laws restricted Lehrmann to accepting no more than \$5,000 from a single donor during the run up to the recent March 2nd Republican Primary. Yet Lehrmann reported that she accepted a total of \$20,100 from Norma J. Talley of Fort Worth.

The apparently illegal contributions may have shaped the outcome of the race for the Place 3 open seat. Lehrmann advanced to the runoff by placing second in a six-candidate field with 18.2% of the vote. Rick Green, whom Lehrmann subsequently defeated, advanced to the runoff with 18.9% of the vote. Jim Mosely narrowly missed entering the runoff with 18.1% of the vote.

Lehrmann advanced to the runoff on the back of \$117,389 in contributions and \$64,700 in loans. Of the \$20,100 Lehrmann received from Talley, she reported \$20,000 as a loan and \$100 as a cash contribution. The \$20,100 from Talley represented 17% of the money Lehrmann raised from sources other than herself and her husband.

The Judicial Campaign Fairness Act limits Supreme Court 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). Norma Talley's total contributions to Lehrmann appear to have exceeded the legal limit by \$15,100.

Texas law exempts immediate family members (limited to children, parents, brother, sister, grandchildren and grandparents)¹ from these campaign-contribution limits. Lehrmann identified Talley in news reports as her mother-in-law.

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 of consanguinity."