



★ TEXAS SUPREME COURT ★ DOLLAR DOCKET

In Texas, 48% of judges and 79% of lawyers say contributions significantly influence judicial decisions. - Texas Supreme Court poll

TEXANS FOR PUBLIC JUSTICE • 609 W. 18th St., Ste. E, Austin, TX 78701 • 512-472-9770

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A Familiar Knock:

Weekley Homes Comes On Home

When David Weekley Homes filed an appeal in Texas' High Court last month, it was as if the builder had entered one of its own custom-built homes.

Since David Weekley's brother Richard formed Texans for Lawsuit Reform (TLR) to slash businesses' legal liabilities, the Weekleys have crafted the court in their own anti-tort image. Current justices alone have taken \$120,337 from TLR's PAC (\$88,337) and the Weekley family (\$32,000).

If justices who took more than \$5,000 from the Weekleys and TLR recused themselves from this case, only Justices Harriet O'Neill and Steven Smith could hear it. Instead, justices who spent piles of Weekley campaign cash are expected to vote *secretly* to review or reject this appeal.

The Weekley case, *In RE Weekley Homes*, epitomizes the court's credibility crisis. When judges let private interests fund their campaigns, big donors resurface as parties to cases that are marred from the start. No matter what the justices do, some people will suspect that the court acted to reward a big donor—or to avoid the appearance of doing so.

In a case full of prodigal offspring, the last two Democrats to leave the court resurface here. Raul Gonzalez, now at Locke Liddell & Sapp (\$209,317 to current justices), drafted the Weekley brief, which seeks to overturn a ruling that ex-Justice Rose Spector made as a visiting trial court judge.

That ruling affects the Richardson family's complaint that its \$235,807 Weekley home is a toxic, moldy lemon that poisoned the whole family. Judge Spector sent the parents' claims to building-industry arbitrators

The Dollar Docket

Cases heard by the Texas Supreme Court in April and the corresponding contributions to justices from the parties and/or attorneys.

April 2, 2003

King Ranch, Inc. v. William Chapman, III \$344,673
\$0

Ridge Oil Company, Inc. & Woodward v. Gunn Investments, Inc. \$36,789
3,100

Prudential Ins. & Four Partners v. Prizm Partners \$108,875
\$25,875

April 9, 2003

Harry Joe, Jenkins & Gilchrist Two Thirty-Nine Joint Venture \$72,275
\$17,600

April 16, 2003

Texas Farm Bureau Mutual v. Jeff A. Sturrock \$241,027
\$0

Universal Health Services, Inc. v. Renaissance Women's Group \$232,803
\$650

In Re Ernst & Young, LLP \$490,461

April 23, 2003

Nir S. Binur, M.D. v. Donna Jacobo \$19,265
\$0

Volkswagen of America v. Andrew Ramirez \$119,449
\$0

City of Dallas v. Interstate Contracting Corp. \$100
\$70,675

Grand Total for April \$1,717,652

(as stipulated in a Weekley contract that the parents signed) but sent the minor kids' claims to a jury trial.

Now the brothers Weekley return to the court that they built, asking it to impose the arbitration sins of the fathers upon their children. It's your call, brethren. •