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Three Oil Barons Backed 19 Paxton-Impeachment Officials with \$12 Million, Study Finds

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Three ultra-conservative, oil-tycoon billionaires moved \$12 million in campaign funding to 17 officials directly involved Attorney General Ken Paxton’s impeachment trial, a [new study](#) finds. Recipients include defendant Paxton, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, who acts as the trial’s judge, and a majority of the 31-member Senate jury, according to the report by Texans for Public Justice and the Texas Office of Public Citizen.

The three Christian conservatives with thumbs on the impeachment scales are CrownQuest Operating’s Tim Dunn of Midland and brothers Ferris and Dan Wilks of Cisco, who sold Frac Tech Holdings for \$3.5 billion in 2011. Since 2006 these three tycoons contributed \$7.9 million to 19 impeachment officials directly or through their two majority-owned political committees: Empower Texans PAC and successor Defend Texas Liberty PAC. Those Dunn-Wilks PACs also backed more than \$4 million in campaign loans to Paxton and Patrick.

Defend Texas Liberty PAC recently reminded officials weighing Paxton’s impeachment that it will spend freely to try to rub out his opponents.

“Anyone that votes against Ken Paxton in this impeachment is risking their entire political career and we will make sure that is the case,” PAC front man Jonathan Stickland [said](#) two weeks before the trial.

“A few ultra-wealthy Texans are exploiting our state’s weak ethics laws like we’ve never seen before,” said Public Citizen Texas Office Director Adrian Shelley. “Seven-figure donations are coming from PACs aiming to help Ken Paxton dodge accountability for years of alleged criminal activity. Lawmakers need to act to restore the integrity of our political system, starting with campaign contribution limits, enforceable conflict of interest and recusal laws, and a ban on donations during an impeachment proceeding.”

Paxton is the most indebted to the Wilk-Dunn machine, which provided him with \$3.3 million in contributions and \$1.75

Oil-Tycoon Impeachment Contributions From Dunn, the Wilks Bros. & their Majority-Owned PACs 2006 To July 2023

Amount	Impeachment Official	Office
\$3,315,570	A.G. Ken Paxton	AG
\$2,778,849	L.G. Dan Patrick	LG
\$1,100,242	Sen. Bob Hall	S-2
\$260,000	Sen. Kevin Sparks	S-31
\$105,000	Sen. Angela Paxton	S-8
\$79,043	Sen. Charles Perry	S-28
\$78,214	Sen. Bryan Hughes	S-1
\$50,000	Sen. Pete Flores	S-24
\$28,065	Sen. Phil King	S-10
\$25,234	Sen. Brian Birdwell	S-22
\$22,500	Sen. Paul Bettencourt	S-7
\$21,157	Sen. Kelly Hancock	S-9
\$7,000	Sen. Mayes Middleton	S-11
\$7,000	Sen. Donna Campbell	S-25
\$7,000	Sen. Brandon Creighton	S-4
\$5,000	Sen. Lois Kolkhorst	S-18
\$4,380	Sen. Drew Springer	S-30
\$238	Sen. Charles Schwertner	S-5
\$100	Sen. Tan Parker	S-12
\$7,894,592	TOTAL	

Sources: Texas Ethics Commission, Texans for Public Justice.

million in loans. Patrick comes next, with \$2.8 million in donations and a \$2.3 million in loans from the oil tycoons and their PACs. Leading the senate juror pool, Sen. Bob Hall took \$1.1 million in Dunn-Wilks contributions.

Dunn-Wilks also gave \$105,000 to Sen. Angela Paxton, the defendant's spouse. Senate rules let Sen. Paxton attend impeachment proceedings while excluding her from the final vote. This amounts to a "No" vote, however, since excluding her altogether would have lowered the super majority needed to convict from 21 to 20 senators.

"Rarely in American history have so few tycoons spent so much to keep afloat so tainted a politician," said Texans for Public Justice Research Director Andrew Wheat.