

LONE STAR PROJECT

Fighting Back... with Facts



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Special Report

Study Shows Harris County Republican Judges are Financial Conduits to Non-Judicial Candidates and GOP Party Efforts

A detailed review of campaign finance reports filed by Harris County Judges shows that the Harris County Republican Party and its allied partisan Republican organizations received a surprisingly large level of support from Harris County GOP Judges. **Over the last 6 years, Harris County partisan Republican political efforts received nearly one half million dollars from Republican judges.**

Donors to judicial candidates generally contribute because they support the individual candidate and do not take into account partisan considerations. In light of this, many Harris County donors might be surprised to learn that their contributions to Harris County incumbent Republican

Judges are often quickly cycled through judicial campaign accounts and into the coffers of the Republican Party itself and to non-judicial Republican candidates.

Sitting judges usually try to avoid appearances of overt partisanship. Their campaign funds are typically used to support their own election efforts or activity not related to campaigns. Texas election law includes many specific restrictions on how judges can raise and spend money in order to avoid a conflict between partisanship and public service. (Source: Texas Election Code - Section 253.151)

Harris County Republican Judge Donations	
Donations to Harris County Republican Party	\$349,567
Donations to GOP Allied Republican Groups	\$56,468
Total Donations to GOP Causes and Candidates	\$450,308
Source: The Texas Ethics Commission	



Judge Sharolyn Wood
Source: Harris County Website

Harris County's Republican Judges who have been especially generous to the Harris County Republican party include Judge Sharolyn Wood, who donated \$19,500, and Judge Ken Wise, who donated \$6,700 over the last three and a half years. **On average, Harris County Republican causes have received more than \$5,000 per GOP Judge.**

Harris County Republican Judge Donations	
Judge Sharolyn Wood	\$19,500
Judge Ken Wise	\$6,700
Average Donation from all Harris Ct. GOP Judges	\$5,003
Source: The Texas Ethics Commission	

Judicial Support for an Extreme Agenda

The judicial donations to the Harris County Republican Party can be used for overt political activity supporting the Republican Party agenda. Key planks in the Texas Republican Party Platform read:

- **Tort/Civil Justice Reform -**
"We strongly support continuation of common sense tort reform that puts justice back into our civil justice system and discourages frivolous lawsuits. We support abolishing joint and several liabilities that forces people to pay for damages they did not cause. We oppose the abusive use of class action lawsuits. We oppose lawsuits against manufacturers and dealers whose products or property have been misused."
- **Minimum Wage –**
"We believe the Minimum Wage Law should be repealed and that wages should be determined by the free market conditions prevalent in each individual market."
- **Early Childhood Development –**
"We believe that parents are best suited to train their children in their early development years (ages 0 through 5) and oppose mandatory pre-school and Kindergarten. We urge Congress to repeal government-sponsored programs that deal with early childhood development, and phase them out as soon as possible."
- **Stem Cell Research –**
"We commend the President for banning most government funding of human embryo stem cell harvesting."
(Source: Texas Republican Party Platform 2006)

Lone Star Project Study Details

The Lone Star Project conducted a study of Texas Ethics Commission campaign finance reports filed by Harris County Judges as well as the Harris County Republican Party. The Lone Star Project used the Texas Ethics Commission database, which contains data from campaign finance reports filed electronically with the Commission since July 2000. The Texas Ethics Commission database is available at <http://www.ethics.state.tx.us/>.

The Lone Star Project is an activity of the Lone Star Fund.
Contributions or gifts to the Lone Star Fund are not tax deductible. All contributions are subject to the prohibitions and limitations of the Federal Election Campaign Act. Federal Law requires us to use best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year.

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