

## **Abbott is too close to Craddick to opine about "Absolute Power"**

Speaker Craddick's conduct during the 80th regular session involves serious constitutional questions about the rights of members of the House, and through them the voice of Texas citizens, and the duties and powers of the Speaker that lie at the core of our representative democracy. The outcome of this matter will have long-lasting consequences for the House and for the future of Texas.

Speaker Craddick's claim of "absolute power" – in opposition to a majority of House members who have demanded full access to the legislative process in order to appropriately represent their constituents – has sparked a crisis in our state's government. This crisis cannot be resolved except in a fair and independent forum. Unfortunately, the fairness and independence of the present forum leaves much to be desired.

As we read the briefs filed with the Attorney General regarding the A.G. Opinion request by Representatives Keffer and Cook, we should bear in mind some undisputed facts:

First, Greg Abbott and Speaker Craddick share close financial ties, as both have taken more than \$13.6 million in combined contributions from folks who gave \$2,500 or more to each man. In other words, they are funded by the exact same sources.<sup>1</sup>

Among the joint contributors are Bob and Doylene Perry, who have given an astounding \$1,282,500 or more in total contributions to Abbott and Craddick. The Perrys are followed by T. Boone Pickens at \$485,348, Texans for Lawsuit Reform at \$385,000, John Nau at \$374,432, Lonnie (Bo) Pilgrim at \$359,775, Harold Simmons at \$350,000, and Dr. James Leininger at \$336,328.<sup>2</sup>

At least 1,416 individual contributions of \$2,500 or more have been made to Craddick and Abbott from an individual or entity giving at least \$2,500 to both politicians.<sup>3</sup> At least 150 individuals or entities have given Craddick and Abbott a combined total of \$12,500 or more.<sup>4</sup> At least 39 “joint donors” have ponied up more than \$100,000 in collective contributions to Craddick and Abbott.<sup>5</sup> At least 11 “joint donors” have given more than a quarter-million dollars in combined contributions to Craddick and Abbott.<sup>6</sup>

In all, almost half the total political contributions Abbott and Speaker Craddick have reported since 1999 have come from individuals or entities who gave them each \$2,500 or more. In fact,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ethics.state.tx.us/php/cesearch.html> - By not including any contributions that were less than \$2,500 to either man and not including non-electronically available information for years prior to 1999, this total is undoubtedly lower than the exact total amount of money donated to the two men by the same contributors. The \$13.6 million figure does not take into account contributions of less than \$2,500, or contributions made to any of the various PACs that have been under Craddick's control over the years. In addition, the millions of dollars that Jim Leininger has funneled through various PACs (like Texans for a Republican Majority, Stars Over Texas, Texas Republican Legislative Campaign Committee, Future of Texas Alliance, the Republican Party of Texas, All Children Matter, and the Associated Republicans of Texas), that was ultimately spent to elect house members loyal to Tom Craddick are not included in this total.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ethics.state.tx.us/php/cesearch.html> - These totals don't include contributions of less than \$2,500.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

57% of the total dollars contributed to Tom Craddick since 1999 have come from individuals and/or entities that have also given Abbott at least \$2,500.<sup>7</sup>

Given the fact that Abbott and Craddick rely on the same group of Republican moneymen, corporate political action committees, and Austin lobbyists to fund their political careers, one must ask how realistic it is to think that any opinion from Abbott on the scope of Craddick's powers will be anything but favorable to his close ally.

Second, the representation of Craddick by Gregory Coleman of Yetter & Warden is also troubling. Gregory Coleman and his firm donated to Abbott's initial campaign for Attorney General.<sup>8</sup> Of all the attorneys in Texas, the fact that Craddick chose an attorney and a firm who are both campaign contributors to Abbott is unsettling. As Chief Justice Philips used to say, how can you ever convince losing counsel that the campaign contributions from winning counsel didn't play a role in the decision?

The foregoing undermines the confidence Texans should have in the Attorney General's ability or willingness to issue a fair opinion.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ethics.state.tx.us/php/cesearch.html> - Use the basic search function on the TEC web site linked in this footnote and search "Coleman" and "Yetter" in the contributor field.