



Political Surge:

January 9, 2013

Charter Schools Master Texas Civics Lessons

Top Charter Chains Doubled Their Campaign Investments.

People affiliated with Texas’ top six charter-school chains more than doubled campaign contributions in recent years as charter schools successfully lobbied lawmakers to increase the state’s cap from a maximum of 215 privately operated public charters to 305.

The Associated Press [published](#) a variant of TPJ’s charter numbers last month.¹ This report provides more details on the top contributors and recipients of charter-related political funds.

In the two election cycles preceding the 2013 charter-cap increase, big-six charter contributions more than doubled to a total of \$517,875. Houston-based KIPP Public Charter Schools and Harmony Public Schools drove the surge in political funds. KIPP boasts a board of wealthy business people. Meanwhile Harmony had the most contributors writing checks to politicians. This narrowed the contribution gap between those schools by the 2012 cycle.

Campaign Contributions Tied to Top Charter Chains (Jan. 2005 to July 2013)

Charter Chain (Abbreviation)	2013 Students	TOTALS	2006 Cycle	2008 Cycle	2010 Cycle	2012 Cycle	Early 2013	No. of Donors
KIPP (K)	8,584	\$481,877	\$66,904	\$66,513	\$214,134	\$ 94,276	\$40,050	30
Harmony (H)	24,616	\$103,115	\$1,475	\$1,025	\$14,375	\$ 84,440	\$1,800	49
Uplift (U)	7,570	\$124,702	\$34,783	\$29,876	\$25,517	\$ 29,276	\$5,250	14
IDEA (I)	12,567	\$88,657	\$28,500	\$33,050	\$15,350	\$ 11,757	\$0	10
YES Prep (Y)	5,934	\$31,950	\$1,050	\$ 900	\$20,850	\$7,900	\$1,250	10
Responsive (R)	14,411	\$500	\$0	\$ 500	\$0	\$0	\$0	1
TOTALS	73,682	\$830,801	\$132,712	\$131,864	\$290,226	\$227,649	\$48,350	114

Note: Data cover donors who have worked for the charters or sat on their boards. John and Laura Arnold are included by virtue of a \$10 million KIPP contribution.

Top Big-Six Charter Contributors (Jan. 2009 to July 2013)

Amount	Contributor (Charter)	City	Affiliation	Top Recipient(s)
\$92,550	Ralph Stan Marek (K)	Houston	Marek Companies	Bill White
\$41,000	Douglas L. Foshee (K)	Houston	El Paso Corp.	Bill White
\$32,389	Michael/Susanna Dokupil (K)	Houston	SFC Capital Management	Ted Cruz
\$30,000	John/Laura Arnold (K)	Houston	Centaurus Energy LP	Wendy Davis
\$25,000	Jeffrey Hines (K)	Houston	Hines Interests	Bill White
\$20,400	Douglas/Cathryn Selman (Y)	Houston	ExxonMobil Chemical Co.	Bill White
\$17,850	M. Kevin/Adenilda Bryant (U)	Dallas	Crow Holdings	D. Branch; S. Carter
\$17,050	Benjamin S./Joy Warren (K)	Houston	ITC Trading Co. LTD	Bill White
\$15,500	James Chao (K)	Houston	Westlake Chemical Corp.	Fr. of Baylor Med.
\$15,100	Roberto Contreras (K)	Sugar Land	St. Christopher Holdings	Rick Perry
\$15,000	Shawn Hurwitz (K)	Houston	MAXXAM, Inc.	Jeff Wentworth
\$13,505	Alp/Muberra Yaradanakul (H)	Dallas	Macrocosm Srvcs & Solutions	Rick Perry
\$13,000	Katherine Bradley (K)	Washington	CityBridge Foundation	Stand for Children
\$12,925	R. David/Edna Guerra (I)	McAllen	Intern'l Bank of Commerce	Bill White
\$12,750	Kern/Margaret Wildenthal (U)	Dallas	UT SW Medical Center	SW Research/Med
\$12,201	Mark M. Jacobs (K)	Houston	Reliant Energy	RRI Energy PAC
\$10,000	Bilal Akin (H)	Richardson	University of Texas-Dallas	Rick Perry
\$8,600	Anthony W. Dona (U)	Dallas	Thackeray Partners	Real Estate Council
\$7,500	Peter Shaper (K)	Houston	CapRock Communications	Bill White
\$7,250	Hakan Yagci (H)	Houston	AZ-EZ Janitorial	Rick Perry
\$7,000	Jose H. Villarreal (K)	San Antonio	Akin Gump	Bill White
\$6,500	Ismayil Ahmadov (H)	Stafford	Harmony Public Schools	Rick Perry
\$6,000	Soner Tarim (H)	Houston	Harmony Public Schools	Rick Perry
\$5,800	Barry F. McNeil (U)	Dallas	Haynes & Boone	Wendy Davis
\$5,700	Zekeriya Yuksel (H)	Houston	Harmony Public Schools	L. Van de Putte
\$5,032	Jill Koehler (I)	Brownsville	IDEA Public Schools	Alex Dominguez
\$5,000	Robert P. Peebler (K)	Houston	ION Geophysical Corp.	Bill White
\$5,000	Shawn A. Taylor (K)	Sugar Land	G&T Restaurant; Zaxby's	Bill White
\$5,000	Ruben M. Lopez (I)	Harlingen	Valley Baptist Medical Center	Eddie Lucio III
\$5,000	Charles C. Foster (H)	Houston	Foster & Quan, LLP	G. Coleman; KBH
\$4,500	Janet F. Clark (Y)	Houston	Marathon Oil Corp.	Bill White
\$4,420	Rod Paige (K)	Houston	Ex-Education Commissioner	Rick Perry
\$4,250	Yalcin/Ebru Akyildiz (H)	Stafford	Harmony Public Schools	Sylvester Turner
\$3,700	Philip O. Montgomery (U)	Dallas	POB Montgomery & Co.	Cindy Burkett
\$3,500	Mark Endacott Gregg (Y)	Houston	Kiwi Energy, Ltd.	Barry Smitherman
\$3,100	William Carey Carter (U)	Dallas	Deloitte & Touche	Greg Abbott
\$3,000	Ilker Gure (H)	Sugar Land	Harmony Public Schools	Eddie Lucio Jr.
\$2,850	Mesut/Yasmin Ekici (H)	Houston	Harmony Public Schools	Eddie Lucio Jr.
\$2,750	George P. Bush (U)	Dallas	St. Augustine Partners	Maverick PAC
\$2,625	James Hernandez (K)	Houston	Andrews & Kurth LLP	Eddie Lucio III
\$2,505	Yetkin Yildirim (H)	Austin	Harmony Public Schools	Donna Howard
\$2,500	Samim Cetinkaya (H)	College Sta.	HAS Garland	Rick Perry
\$2,350	Mehmet Okumus (H)	Houston	Cosmos Fdn./Harmony	Alma Allen
\$2,215	Tugba Guclu (H)	Richardson	Harmony Public Schools	Rick Perry
\$2,038	Randall G. Ray (U)	Dallas	Gardere Wynne Sewell	Gardere PAC

Note: Contributors above gave 92 percent of charter money tracked since 2009.

Top Recipients of Big-Six-Charter Money (Jan. 2009 to July 2013)

Amount	Recipient (Party)	Office Held/ Sought	Top Charter Contributors (Charter)
\$131,755	Bill White (D)	Gov.	Douglas Foshee (K); Jeff Hines (K)
\$63,500	Rick Perry (R)	Gov.	Roberto Contreras (K)
\$12,600	Wendy R. Davis (D)	S-10	Laura Arnold (K)
\$11,950	Greg Abbott (R)	At. Gen'l	Ralph Stan Marek (K)
\$11,600	Kay Bailey Hutchison (R)	Gov.	John Arnold (K); Ralph Marek (K)
\$10,500	Ted Cruz (R)	At. Gen'l	Michael/Susanna Dokupil (K)
\$9,050	Dan Branch (R)	H-108; At. Gen'l	Kevin Bryant (U); Kern Wildenthal (U)
\$7,750	Alma A. Allen (D)	H-131	Mehmet Okumus (H)
\$7,250	Sylvester Turner (D)	H-139	Yalcin/Ebru Akyildiz (H)
\$6,300	Eddie Lucio III (D)	H-38	Ruben Lopez (I)
\$6,000	Don Willett (R)	Sup. Ct.	Michael/Susanna Dokupil (K)
\$5,250	Carol Alvarado (D)	H-145; S-6	John Arnold (K)
\$5,032	'Alex' Dominguez (D)	H-37	Jill Koehler (I)
\$5,025	Jerry E. Patterson (R)	Land Com; Lt. Gov.	Ralph Stan Marek (K)
\$5,000	Jeff Wentworth (R)	S-25	Shawn Hurwitz (K)
\$4,500	Eddie Lucio Jr. (D)	S-27	Mesut/Yasmin Ekici (H); Ilker Gure (H)
\$4,250	Rodney G. Ellis (D)	S-13	Umit Pecen (H)
\$4,000	Leticia Van De Putte (D)	S-26; Lt. Gov.	Zekeriya Yuksel (H)
\$3,400	Cindy G. Burkett (R)	H-113	Philip O'Bryan (U)
\$3,220	Lon Burnam (D)	H-90	Alp/Muberra Yaradanakul (H)
\$3,000	Stefani D. Carter (R)	H-102	Michael Kevin/Adenilda Bryant (U)
\$3,000	Joe Straus (R)	H-121; Speaker	R. David/Edna Guerra (Y)
\$2,650	Angie C. Button (R)	H-112	Alp/Muberra Yaradanakul (H)
\$2,600	Jose Menendez (D)	H-124	Zekeriya Yuksel (H)
\$2,500	Barry Smitherman (R)	Rail. Com; Lt. Gov.	Mark Endacott Gregg (Y)
\$2,500	Trey Martinez Fischer (D)	H-116	Shawn Hurwitz (K)
\$2,500	Harvey Hilderbran (R)	H-53; Comp.	Shawn Hurwitz (K)
\$2,300	Linda Harper-Brown (R)	H-105	Alp/Muberra Yaradanakul (H)
\$2,050	Dan Patrick (R)	S-7; Lt. Gov.	Shawn Hurwitz (K); Ralph Marek (K)
\$2,024	Rafael M. Anchia (D)	H-103	Barry McNeil (U)
\$2,000	Rob Eissler (R)	H-15	Ismayil Ahmador (H)
\$2,000	'Tan' Parker (R)	H-63	Alp/Muberra Yaradanakul (H)
\$1,900	Ellen R. Cohen (D)	H-134	Barbara Hurwitz (K)
\$1,813	Michael Massengale (R)	COA-1	Michael/Susanna Dokupil (K)
\$1,700	J. David Bradley (R)	SBOE-7	Erdal Caglar (H)
\$1,650	John Whitmire (D)	S-15	Ralph Stan Marek (K)
\$1,500	Christi L. Craddick (R)	Rail. Com.	Kern/Margaret Wildenthal (U)
\$1,500	Juan Partida (D)	DJ-275	R. David/Edna Guerra (Y)
\$1,500	James R. Pitts (R)	H-10	Shawn Hurwitz (K)
\$1,500	Michael Soto (D)	SBOE-3	Jose Villareal (K)

Notes: Recipients above pocketed 64 percent of charter money tracked since 2009.

The biggest charter-related contributions tracked here come from Houston businesspeople affiliated with KIPP. Yet charters are not the primary political issue for these donors. “I think charter schools are great,” contractor and KIPP board member Stan Marek told the Associated Press, “but I’m not going to send money to X politician for that alone.”

Houston energy investors John and Laura Arnold donated \$10 million to KIPP. Yet Laura Arnold did not appear to have charters on her mind when she gave \$10,000 to Wendy Davis hours after the senator’s famous 2013 filibuster against abortion restrictions.

Harmony contributors—who dominate charter contributions of less than \$10,000—may have a more disciplined focus on charters. A recent [Lobby Watch](#) discussed ties between Harmony’s

Turkish immigrant founders and exiled Muslim leader Fethullah Gulen. One criticism of Harmony is that Texas’ largest charter chain steers construction, technology and other school contracts to fellow members of this Turkish immigrant community. Such contracts could make the business interests of some Harmony contributors indistinguishable from the charter-expansion agenda.

Some Gulen-tied contributors are not included in the data presented above because researchers found no evidence that they had served as Harmony employees or board members. Several of these contributors run Harmony contractor companies TDM Construction and Brighten Technologies. The Turquoise Council of Americans and Eurasians and the Raindrop Foundation are Gulen-related groups that pay for Texas lawmakers to go on junkets to Turkey.

Other Gulen-Tied Contributors (Jan. 2009 to July 2013)

Amount	Houston Contributor (Affiliation)	Top Recipient
\$13,100	Turquoise Council of American & Eurasians	Joe Deshotel (\$9,300)
\$7,605	Anthony W. Oksuz (TDM Construction)	Rick Perry (\$7,325)
\$5,000	Osman Kanlioglu, (North American College)	Rick Perry (\$5,000)
\$4,950	Ali Kemal Civelek (Aurora Export & Import)	Rick Perry (\$2,500)
\$3,200	Raindrop Foundation, Inc.	Leticia Van de Putte (\$3,200)
\$2,000	Yosuf Duzgun (Brighten Technologies)	Rodney Ellis (\$2,000)

Land Commissioner candidate George P. Bush (whose father championed Florida charters) sits on the board of Dallas-based [Uplift Education](#).

Governor Perry’s sister, Milla Perry Jones, previously served on that board. Rep. Alma Allen serves on a Harmony advisory board.

Texas Lawmakers Reporting Recent Turkey Junkets

Legislator	Main Flight	Apparent Passengers	Reported Value	Date	Reported Gulen Patron
J. Deshotel (D)	Hou-Istanbul	2	\$9,300	8/30/11	Turquoise Council
Van de Putte (D)	Hou-Istanbul	1	\$8,900	8/9/10	Raindrop Foundation
E. Lucio Jr. (D)	Hou-Istanbul	1	\$3,800	10/10/10	Turquoise Council
R. Anchia (D)	DFW-Istanbul	2	\$3,208	9/15/11	
T. Fraser (R)	Rome-Istanbul	2	\$789	10/10/10	Turquoise Council
TOTALS:		8	\$25,997		

Source: Texas Ethics Commission travel reports.

Notes

¹ [“Texas Charter-School Donations Rising,”](#) Associated Press, December 2, 2013.