

News Release

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For Immediate Release:
June 29, 1999

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Texas PAC Spending Leaps 20%

892 PACs Spent \$52 Million in Last Election Cycle, Study Finds

Austin: The number of general-purpose political action committees (PACs) active in Texas declined from **910** in the 1996 election cycle to **892** in the 1998 cycle. Despite diminishing numbers of PACs, total PAC expenditures **increased 20 percent** over the same period, from **\$43 million** in the 1996 cycle to **\$52 million** in the most recent election cycle, a new report has found.

“Political spending by special interest PACs in Texas is rising sharply,” said Texans for Public Justice Director Craig McDonald. “It comes as no surprise that corporate and business-related PACs dominate political spending in the state, just as they dominate the legislative process. Political spending by groups representing consumers, workers and environmentalists doesn’t hold a candle to the unbridled PAC power of the corporate community.”

The new 12-page report, [*Texas PACs: 1998 Election Cycle Spending*](#), builds on an earlier Texans for Public Justice (TPJ) report that analyzed PAC spending as far back as 1995. Like the earlier report, the new study identifies the biggest PACs in Texas and classifies PACs according to their underlying interests. The report analyzes PAC spending by three broad interest categories (Business, Labor and Ideological & Single-Issue PACs). Then it breaks down these interests into subcategories that highlight trends among individual industries and interest groups.

Other major findings of *Texas PACs* include:

- Business PACs spent 61 percent of the total (\$32 million), Ideological and Single-Issue PACs spent 35 percent (\$18 million) and Labor PACs spent 4 percent (\$2 million);
- The biggest Single-Issue PACs were **Texans for Lawsuit Reform** (\$1.2 million) and the **Texas Civil Justice League** (\$356,331), which advocate weaker tort laws;
- The largest Business PACs were those of **Vinson & Elkins** (\$1.2 million) and the **Texas Association of Realtors** (\$1.1 million);
- The **Texas State Teachers Association** ran the biggest Labor PAC (\$432,004);
- Partisan **Democratic** PACs spent \$7.7 million, edging out the \$7.3 spent by all partisan **Republican** PACs. Many other top Business and Single-Issue PACs also favor the GOP; and
- The 50 largest PACs accounted for 63 percent of all PAC expenditures (\$32 million) and the top 100 PACs accounted for 76 percent (\$39 million).

PACs that are directly affiliated with Business interests far outspend both Labor and Ideological & Single-Interest PACs.. The three industries exhibiting the most growth are Lawyers & Lobbyists (43 percent), Construction (32 percent) and Energy & Natural Resources (17 percent). (The report discusses which PACs and issues fed these changes.)

“Texas politicians have tapped a real PAC gusher,” said TPJ Research Director Andrew Wheat. “These crude special-interest dollars are the fuel that finances most political campaigns. No wonder too many politicians serve their PAC masters rather than the voters back home.” •

Copies of *Texas PACs* are available from Texans for Public Justice.

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[Texans for Public Justice](#) is a non-profit, non-partisan research and advocacy organization that tracks the role of money in Texas politics.