



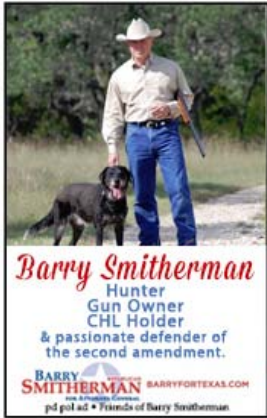
Texas GOP Vote

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Is Justice for Sale in the 247th Family District Court in Harris County (Houston, Texas)?

By Bob Price



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The question of whether **justice is for sale in Texas** is not a new one. Scandals going back to the 1980's have been highly publicized. The topic of campaign contributions from lawyers and litigants to judges has been the source of much discussion across Texas, but particularly in the Harris County family courts.

Now a very wealthy owner of several car dealerships in the Houston area appears to be trying to buy his "justice" and the 247th District Court Judge Bonnie Hellums and Associate Judge Meca Walker certainly appear to be willing accomplices in taking his money - lots of money. According to campaign contribution reports, Judge Meca Walker who is now running for election to succeed Judge Helums, accepted at least \$45,000.00 from nine connected contributions on December 27, 2013. This is according to just one campaign report.

The family courts in Harris County were the subject of lots of protests back in the 1990s. Protesters complaining of the injustices in the family courts were camping outside of the family courthouse round-the-clock. The family courts were occupied by Democrat judges who were accused of being very cozy with the lawyers who appear in their court. Campaign contributions, buying the courts, and *ex parte* (prohibited one-sided) communications between individual lawyers and the judges were the catalyst for such protests.



Meca Walker, the associate judge who is running for the 247th Family Court (her district court judge, Bonnie Hellums is retiring) has accepted \$45,000.00 from just one litigant's family and his employees. The District Court judge in that court, Judge Bonnie Hellums' husband Carel Stith is serving as the campaign Treasurer for her associate judge and is

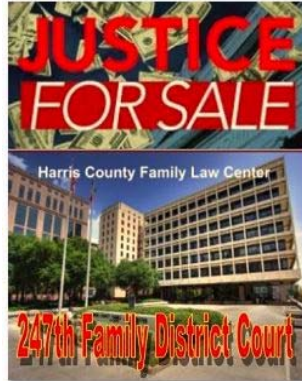
responsible for the campaign report in question. Judge Hellums is by law and judicial ethics rules responsible for supervising her associate judge. These two judges are presiding over the divorce case of a wealthy car dealership owner. Her associate judge is certainly raking in the cash and Hellums husband is the Treasurer. One must wonder if Judge Hellums is also receiving these kinds of donations or has in the past.

The divorce of *Kathryn Ann McGill v. Donald Ray McGill*, cause number 2012-71279 is pending in the 247th Family Court. Relatives of Don McGill and his employees and their wives made \$5000.00 contributions each. Now whether car dealership employee and their spouses can readily afford to give \$10,000.00 to a Republican family court judicial candidate is an interesting question. But generally large contributions to judicial races tend to only come from members of the Bar. Why would a group of car salesmen or dealership employees be interested in this race? Are they even Republicans?



Questions about these donations have been submitted to Judges Hellums and Walker. A response from either judge was not immediately available. TexasGOPVote would welcome their response and will provide an update or additional story when a reply is available.

The case between the McGill spouses has been pending in



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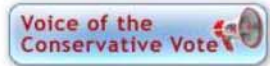


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The case between the meca spouses has been pending in this court since 2012. At stake is a property settlement involving in what is believed to be around \$400 million in assets.

The donors were listed on the campaign disclosure report as follows:

- Lilian Borjas, Comtroller at Don McGill Toyota - \$5,000
Michael Hartmann General Manager at Don McGill and his wife Lekisha - \$5,000 each
Michael Mynatt General Manager at Don McGill and his wife Paula - \$5,000 each
Ricky Simmer II Fixed Operations Manager Don McGill and his wife Tara - \$5,000 each
John McGill Vice President and family member at Don McGill and his wife Jelena - \$5,000 each

The contributions in question were all made on December 27th of 2013. Coincidence? Did these employees receive hefty year-end bonuses as a pass-through from Don McGill? If so, would that constitute a corporate donation? Corporate donations are absolutely prohibited in judicial races and there are individual campaign limits of \$5,000.00 per person. Law requires that employment information be listed on campaign reports. Judge



Meca Walker's campaign reports list Don McGill Toyota as the employer of these donors. Don McGill relatives have the same last name (McGill).

Republicans in Harris County already have enough problems in this closely-contested, purple county where there is already a hot race for the Republican County Chair. And this isn't Judge Walker's only problem. Walker has openly addressed the issue of her voting in the Democratic primary for Barack Obama in 2008. Walker tells Republicans at forums that she read the Republican Party Platform a few years later and became a Republican - just in time for a judicial race. The first time she ever voted in a Republican primary was in 2010 when she voted for herself in the race for the 309th Family District Court.

Whether she read the part in the Platform about marriage being between one man and one woman is also a valid question. Walker has frequently given custody of children to gay individuals. Walker previously ran for judge and finished last in a four-way race receiving only 11.9% of the vote. And what about the Pro-Life aspects of the Republican Party Platform? Has Judge Walker ever approved judicial bypass motions in her court? She is running on the ballot for the 247th Family District Court as "M.L. Walker."



By Bob Price at Feb 7, 2014 12:46 PM

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