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Who needs county commissioners' votes? All of their top donors.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article194073234.html>

The battle over a proposed mega-mall in Northwest Miami-Dade has many fronts. One is the campaign coffers of six county commissioners seeking reelection this year.

Developers behind American Dream Miami, which would bring about 200 acres of shopping and entertainment outside of Miami Lakes, have given roughly \$26,000 to four of the six incumbents on the ballot in August. That's enough to make the project a top source of campaign dollars in the early stages of this election cycle, but it still trails the top-tier contributors.

At the top of the list sits Turnberry, owner of the Aventura Mall, currently the largest in Florida. Aventura would lose that title to American Dream, an even larger version of the Mall of America that developer Triple Five wants to build about 15 miles away from Turnberry's signature property. Turnberry gave more than \$60,000 to incumbent commissioners since the 2018 cycle began shortly after the 2016 elections.

In all, six commissioners facing reelection — Daniella Levine Cava, Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Sally Heyman, Jean Monestime, Rebeca Sosa and Javier Souto — have raised about \$1.8 million in the last two years. Commissioners rarely lose their seats, and the campaign reports help show one reason why: Incumbents rely on developers, county vendors and their lobbyists for big dollars.

All of the 10 largest sources of donations for the six candidates' campaigns and political committees have financial ties to decisions by the 13-member County Commission. And the major donors don't play favorites.

With eight months to go, each of the 10 top donors gave to at least half of the incumbents. Most gave to four or five, and one, Munilla Construction Management, gave to all six. Last year, the commission voted to back Munilla's ongoing protest of Florida wanting to award an \$800 million contract to a rival firm for a new bridge linking downtown Miami with I-395. Records show Munilla executives and entities gave about \$25,000 through the end of 2017.

As the Aug. 28 election gets closer, the leader board is sure to change as major donors accelerate — and expand — their giving. Llorente & Heckler, a Miami Beach lobbying firm whose clients include Turnberry, has given about \$27,000 through donations to five of the six commissioners running for reelection. The one exception is Commissioner Jose “Pepe” Diaz, but that gap shouldn’t last long.

“I’m doing an event for him this month,” partner Alex Heckler said.

The 13-member commission staggers its elections for four-year terms on even-numbered years, with six seats up for election in 2018 and the remaining seven in 2020. New term-limit rules are forcing historic exits from the board overseeing Florida’s largest local government. Commissioners reelected in 2016 were the first affected by the limits, and must give up their seats in 2020. The commissioners up for reelection this year must leave in 2022.

So far, two challengers have filed their papers to run. In District 2, Monestime faces A.D. Lenoir Sr., a local pastor who ran against him in 2014, too. Lenoir has not reported raising any money. Souto, who started on the commission 25 years ago, faces Jose Garrido, a longtime civic planner who has served on community boards. Garrido has raised about \$6,000. Souto has raised about \$85,000.

That puts Souto at the bottom of the incumbents’ fundraising list. Vying for the top: Levine Cava, who has raised about \$555,000 and Heyman, with \$540,000. Diaz raised about \$350,000, followed by \$143,000 for Monestime and \$98,000 for Sosa. The totals reflect donations to campaigns and affiliated committees.

Sosa, whose husband died last year, said she hasn’t focused much on the campaign yet but plans to ramp up efforts in the coming months. Unlike most commissioners, Sosa does not maintain a separate political committee, meaning she’s left with the \$1,000 cap on campaign contributions to her campaign committee.

Donors routinely amp up their campaign giving by funneling \$1,000 donations through a string of corporate entities. GL Homes, which is pursuing a Kendall development requiring county approval, gave its \$30,000 through more than a dozen companies based in its Broward County headquarters.

GL Homes gave \$5,000 to Sosa. The commissioner, in office since 2001, said she lets donors know they shouldn’t expect their support to be reciprocated.

“I represent the residents of Miami-Dade County,” Sosa said. “I don’t represent companies. If they are right, they are right. If they are wrong, they are wrong.”

Ranking donors in county races isn’t an exact science. For this story, the Miami Herald used its database of more than 24,000 contributions in county races since 2011. Using corporate records, websites, news reports and interviews, the Herald matches individual contributions to major donors in order to compile occasional reports on the money flowing into county races.

Perhaps no major donor has more at stake than Triple Five, the Alberta-based developer behind American Dream Miami. Family-owned by the Ghermezian family, it’s the same company that built the Mall of America in Minnesota in the early 1990s. It wants to bring an even bigger version of that retail theme park to an area of undeveloped land outside Miami Lakes and Hialeah, and needs the County

Commission's permission to change the land's zoning designation. A decisive vote could come later this year.

"The Ghermezian family and Triple Five view Miami-Dade as their home," a company lobbyist and lawyer, Miguel Diaz de la Portilla, said in a statement. "They will invest \$4 billion to build American Dream Miami, an economic development project which will create 25,000 jobs in our community. The Ghermezian family and Triple Five will continue to be energetic participants in the civic life of Miami-Dade."

Turnberry, which needs county approvals for its own residential development project in North Miami and hopes to bring a casino to its Fontainebleau resort in Miami Beach if state gambling laws ever change, has not joined the formal campaign against American Dream Miami. Heckler, who represents Turnberry, also lobbies for a group formed by other large malls in Miami-Dade to oppose American Dream, and they are backed by national companies that he said have not donated to county races.

In a statement Turnberry, run by the brother-and-sister team of Jackie and Jeff Soffer, touted its community involvement in explaining why it gives so much in campaign contributions.

"The Soffer family has a long history of charitable and philanthropic contributions that benefit our community," the statement read. "Their participation in the political process is another part of their civic involvement and is always conducted in a transparent and accountable manner."

Most of 2018's Top 10 list would have been banned from giving big campaign dollars this year under an unsuccessful union-backed effort in 2016 to change Miami-Dade's charter to ban donations from county vendors and their lobbyists.

Miami Beach has a similar rule already, but the countywide petition effort fizzled after a majority of commissioners voted against putting it on the ballot. An appeals court later ratified that decision, which was based on flaws in the paperwork behind the effort funded largely with out-of-state dollars.

Maribel Balbin, one of the local activists involved in the 2016 push, said there hasn't been an effort to revive the restrictions for 2018. But she said the need remains to try and distance elected officials from the campaign cash readily available from county vendors and lobbyists.

"Government functions better when there is no connection between a campaign contribution and policy," she said. "It seems so simple."

But critics of the proposed ban on lobbyist and vendor donations called it unconstitutional and unfair, since it would prevent one sector of people from participating in a key part of the election process.

"Political contributions are free speech," said Eric Zichella, an active "bundler" of campaign donations for commissioners (meaning he recruits other donors to give) and president of the lobbying firm P3 Management. "I give because I like getting my calls returned."

CAMPAIGN DONORS

Six Miami-Dade commissioners are up for reelection in 2018. Combined, they've raised about \$1.8 million. The top sources of those donations are developers, government vendors and lobbyists with financial interests in the commission's votes. The top donors to incumbents are:

Turnberry: \$62,000.

Transportation America: \$45,000.

Ronald Book: \$32,000.

GL Homes: \$30,000.

Landmark Development: \$30,000.

Llorente & Heckler: \$27,000.

Secure Wrap: \$27,000.

American Dream Miami: \$26,000.

MCM: \$24,000.

Weiss Serota: \$24,000.

**Santa Fe New Mexican
January 17, 2018**

Oil and gas lobbyists spend big on campaigns, PACs

http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/legislature/oil-and-gas-lobbyists-spend-big-on-campaigns-pacs/article_cde42f55-e2fa-58a7-a0dd-f3e610f7e9b5.html

Oil and gas industry revenues pay a huge share of the money that goes into the state budget. And lobbyists for big oil companies pay a huge amount of campaign contributions to New Mexico politicians.

An analysis of lobbyist expense reports filed in recent days with the New Mexico Secretary of State's Office shows oil companies dominate the list of the largest donors to campaigns and political committees since last October.

By far the biggest contributor among lobbyists in the new batch of reports was the Austin, Texas-based Stephen Perry, Chevron USA's state government affairs manager for Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma. Perry listed \$183,250 in contributions. That's more than a third of the total of \$521,164 in political donations listed in all the new reports.

"Wow. That's an incredible amount of money for the year before the election," said Viki Harrison, executive director of Common Cause when told of the contributions by Chevron's lobbyist. Referring to all the lobbyist money she said, "It keeps exploding every year."

A huge chunk of Chevron's money — \$77,000 — went to conservative and oil-friendly political action committees. Perry gave \$11,000 each to 579 PAC, Affordable Energy PAC, New Mexico Family First, New Mexico Forward, Progress New Mexico, the Republican Leadership PAC and the Republican Campaign Committee of New Mexico.

Besides the campaign contributions, lobbyists reported spending \$38,542 on meals, drinks and entertainment for legislators and other politicians since October.

Other oil and gas lobbyists who were major political contributors included Leland Gould of Andeavor, parent company of Western Refining, who gave \$27,000 in contributions, and Samantha Omev of Exxon Mobil, who gave \$22,700.

Robert Donaldson, lobbyist for Altria, the corporate parent of Philip Morris and other tobacco companies as well as wineries, was the second largest contributor. He gave \$33,500.

Several longtime New Mexico contract lobbyists, who represent multiple clients, also were among the top spenders. These included:

- Luke Otero, who represents DCP Midstream, Fed Ex, New Mexico Optometric Association and Prime Therapeutics, made \$25,000 in campaign contributions.

- J.D. Bullington, lobbyist for Union Pacific Railroad, Laguna Development Corp. and an online education company called K12 Inc., made \$24,800 in contributions and chipped in \$294 for a lunch at Hotel Santa Fe for the House Democratic Caucus in October.
- Marco Gonzales, who represents Verizon and Santa Fe lawyer Dan Perry of Troutstalker Ranch near Chama, made \$19,500 in contributions.
- Art Hull, whose clients include Public Service Company of New Mexico, The University of New Mexico, Devon Energy and Century Bank, made \$16,100 in campaign contributions — all on behalf of his own company. Hull also spent \$5,625 on meals and beverages between Oct. 31 and Dec. 31 to “inform and discuss concerns with elected officials.”

The leadership of the Legislature normally gets a big share of the campaign contributions from lobbyists. In this round of reports, House Minority Leader Nate Gentry, R-Albuquerque, received more than any other leader in the Legislature.

Gentry received \$27,350, significantly more than House Speaker Brian Egolf, D-Santa Fe, who took in \$19,250.

Lobbyists gave Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth, D-Santa Fe, \$10,200. Senate President Pro Tem Mary Kay Papen, D-Las Cruces, received \$8,950, while Senate Minority Leader Stuart Ingle, R-Portales, collected \$6,950.

State legislators aren't the only recipients of campaign cash from lobbyists. The reports also disclose money given to candidates for statewide office.

U.S. Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham, D-N.M., is the clear favorite of lobbyists who gave to gubernatorial candidates. She received \$15,600 from lobbyists since October, the reports show. In addition to the campaign contributions she received, lobbyist Mark Duran threw a luncheon for her at Sandia Pueblo's resort north of Albuquerque. Duran reported spending \$4,008 on the event. That was the largest single amount any lobbyist reported spending on meals and entertainment.

U.S. Rep. Steve Pearce of Hobbs, who is running unopposed for the Republican nomination for governor, took in \$6,100 from lobbyists. Of that total, \$5,500 came from Chevron's lobbyist.

Lobbyists gave smaller amounts to two other Democratic gubernatorial candidates, state Sen. Joseph Cervantes, D-Las Cruces, (\$1,500) and businessman Jeff Apodaca (\$450).

US News
January 15, 2018

New Mexico Legislature Overhauls Sexual Harassment Policy

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/new-mexico/articles/2018-01-15/new-mexico-legislature-weighs-new-sexual-harassment-policy>

The New Mexico Legislature overhauled its policies against sexual misconduct and harassment Monday, setting new standards for what constitutes harassment and adding outside oversight for investigations of lawmakers.

The policy changes, approved by a panel of leading lawmakers on the eve of a new Legislative session, are designed to make the Capitol work environment safer amid a nationwide debate over sexual misconduct.

The new policies were in response to dozens of public comments at a previous public meeting and by email asking for greater independence in investigations. One change now requires that outside legal counsel participate as lawmakers investigate harassment complaints against their colleagues.

The state Senate and House continue to have the final word on the disciplining of any lawmaker accused of harassment, if probable cause of a violation is found.

"Outside counsel alone can say this goes further" in the investigation process, said Rep. Jim Dines, R-Albuquerque, one of eight lawmakers who drafted the new policy. "It's still up to the Legislature to make the final decision."

Female lobbyists and elected officials have said sexual harassment at the Capitol has gone unchecked under procedures last updated in 2008.

Lawmakers on Monday attended anti-harassment training for the first time since 2004, and the new harassment policy will require lengthier training sessions every two years.

Attorney and human resources consultant Edward Mitnick instructed lawmakers on how to avoid behavior that might be interpreted as harassment by a "reasonable person" — a common legal standard added to the New Mexico harassment policy.

He presented hypothetical situations about behavior running the gamut from sexual coercion to unwelcome compliments and hugs, answering thorny questions about when lawmakers or legislative staff should feel obligated to report harassing behavior.

Legislators were urged to create a culture of mutual respect by their own example.

"Mutual respect is not treating others as you want to be treated, mutual respect is treating others as they want to be treated," he said.

The harassment policy now spells out in greater detail what behavior constitutes sexual harassment. Complaint procedures differ for complaints against state employees, lawmakers or others who work or visit in the Capitol — such as registered lobbyists.

Raul Burciaga, lead attorney to the Legislature, said visitors could be banned from the Capitol for harassing behavior under the new procedures.

Outside civil and criminal legal remedies remain available to victims. Legislative staff can take sexual harassment complaints to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and New Mexico's Human Rights Commission — precursors to court claims for damages.

Harassment as defined under the new policy extends to racially offensive words or phrases along with other demeaning jokes or comments, innuendoes, and unwelcome compliments of a personal or intimate nature. It does not have to be intentional to be considered harassment.

Democratic state Sen. Michael Padilla of Albuquerque was ousted last month as majority whip and ended his campaign for lieutenant governor amid allegations that he harassed women at a previous job a decade ago. He has repeatedly denied the allegations.

Padilla was the only New Mexico state lawmaker over the last 10 years to face major repercussions in response to concerns of sexual misconduct, according to results of public records requests by The Associated Press.

In December, registered lobbyist Vanessa Alarid publicly accused former state Rep. Thomas Garcia of offering to vote for a bill in 2009 if she would have sex with him — allegations he denies. Garcia, a Democrat, left the Legislature in 2012, and no investigation of him is pending at the Legislature.

The State
January 13, 2018

Armed with dozens of lobbyists, power companies wage info war over SC's energy future

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article194556999.html>

An epic battle is unfolding at the S.C. State House and on the airwaves as deep-pocketed power companies fight for a foothold in South Carolina's volatile energy market.

Three dozen lobbyists have been hired by major utilities to be their eyes, ears and advocates at the State House as lawmakers decide what to do about a failed nuclear project that already has cost S.C. power customers more than \$2 billion.

Included in that number are at least eight lobbyists for a Florida-based utility, NextEra Energy, thought to have its eyes on acquiring the Cayce-based SCANA utility and, possibly, the state-owned Santee Cooper utility as well.

In addition, at least eight more lobbyists are representing the solar industry, which sees the nuclear fiasco as an opportunity to expand its footprint in the Palmetto State. The state-owned Santee Cooper utility also has two additional lobbyists. Another group, whose lobbyist is a former congressman, is pushing for the state to sell Santee Cooper. That group, State House sources, say is aligned with NextEra.

The groups also are appealing to the public through commercials, web and social media campaigns, and polls about the biggest event on the horizon: Virginia-based Dominion's proposed \$14.6 billion buyout of SCANA, taking heat for the nuclear project's failure.

Lawmakers are bracing themselves for a lobbying onslaught.

"There's no question they're coming," Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey, R-Edgefield, said of the lobbying effort at the State House. "It's going to be pretty intense. It's probably going to be the most intensely lobbied issue that I've seen.

"And most of it's going to be disingenuous. Everybody's putting their own spin on it."

Lobbying up

State House insiders say big bucks are flowing to the energy lobby, inspiring jokes from lawmakers and lobbyists about the nuclear debacle being the "Lobbyist Full Employment Act."

Two power companies watching the nuclear issue are not new to the State House lobby.

SCANA, with customers in the Midlands and Lowcountry, has eight registered legislative lobbyists. And Charlotte-based Duke Energy, with customers in the Upstate and Piedmont, has registered nine lobbyists.

Both have long been among the biggest spenders on persuasion at the State House.

However, two additional companies are staking out new territory, lobbying records show.

Having entered the state in 2014 with its purchase of SCANA's natural gas pipeline system, Dominion, thus far this month, has doubled its S.C. lobbying staff to 10. The Richmond-based utility is trying to build support for its purchase of SCANA, which announced last July it was abandoning construction on two over-budget nuclear reactors in Fairfield County.

Among Dominion's new lobbying hires is former S.C. Gov. Jim Hodges, a Democrat and senior adviser for McGuireWoods Consulting. That firm and Hodges have a history with Dominion. Hodges worked as a consultant for the utility when it bought SCANA's S.C. natural gas pipeline system in 2014. Also, Dominion chief executive Tom Farrell is a former lawyer for McGuireWoods.

New to the State House lobby is Florida-based NextEra Energy, which has hired eight lobbyists, including veterans Harry Cato and Tommy Moore. Moore and Cato were S.C. lawmakers in 2007 when the Legislature passed a law that enabled SCANA to gamble on the nuclear expansion project with customers' money.

NextEra's first S.C. lobbyist, Darrell Scott, registered with the state in early November, less than a month after news broke that the Florida-based power company was interested in buying Santee Cooper, SCANA's junior partner in the failed nuclear project.

NextEra — a Florida-based utility with no S.C. holdings and, until now, no presence in the S.C. State House — has hired eight lobbyists for the new legislative session.

The utility, which has its eyes on buying SCANA and state-owned Santee Cooper, also is a founding member of the Palmetto Energy Coalition, according to multiple sources with knowledge of the arrangement.

When it launched last fall, that group, led by former U.S. Rep. Gresham Barrett, R-Westminster, described itself vaguely. The group's website does not identify its members publicly.

However, State House sources says NextEra is behind the Energy Coalition.

Former U.S. Rep. Barrett did not return calls Friday requesting comment on his coalition and its membership. And Adam Temple, a public relations consultant working with Energy Coalition, also did not respond to emails asking whether the Energy Coalition is being bankrolled by NextEra.

NextEra's chief spokesman Rob Gould replied in an email, "Sorry, but we won't be offering any comment related to your questions."

However, Barrett and the Energy Coalition are pushing lawmakers to sell Santee Cooper.

The group also criticized Dominion's proposed buyout of SCANA within hours of its announcement, saying — correctly — that Dominion was offering less in refunds to customers than the money those customers have been charged.

"While today's announcement takes some steps in the right direction, it leaves much to be desired for thousands of South Carolina families struggling to pay rates for electricity they didn't and won't receive," the coalition wrote.

The Energy Coalition also has done polling on the nuclear fiasco. For instance, the group has touted its early November online poll that found 76 percent of S.C. residents think it's a good idea to sell Santee Cooper.

The veiled relationship between NextEra and PEC is not the first time the utility has been accused of lurking in the shadows to achieve its goals.

In 2016 in Florida, for example, NextEra subsidiary Florida Power and Light backed a \$26 million ballot measure designed, according to critics, to confuse voters and scuttle another ballot measure, put forth by the solar industry, to expand rooftop solar power.

Selling the deal

SCANA and Dominion are engaged in a massive marketing campaign to win support from the public.

Consultants and lobbyists promoting the deal are using social media to share positive posts and feedback about Dominion or its offer.

Dominion spokesman Chet Wade called it an education campaign to help S.C. residents, lawmakers and others understand what the deal means for customers.

Dominion is pitching a \$1,000 refund to SCE&G customers if the deal goes down. The deal requires approval from a handful of state and federal regulators, including the S.C. commission that regulates utilities.

Wade also said Dominion has polled S.C. residents to see how much they know about the company's offer.

Wayne Cockfield, a 68-year-old retiree from Florence, said he received a call Wednesday, asking leading questions in favor of the \$14.6 billion merger.

It is unclear who paid for that poll. However, Cockfield said the caller asked whether he supports or opposes Dominion's offer to buy SCANA.

Cockfield thinks the offer is a sham and says he told the caller as much.

Then, the caller asked whether Dominion's offer to refund SCE&G customers about \$1,000 each for the failed nuclear project or its plans to cut SCE&G's electric bills for consumers by \$7 a month would change his mind, Cockfield said.

"I've done some politics. I know what push polls are," said Cockfield, who has worked for prolife causes. "To me, it wasn't a real poll. It was a commercial. I don't think they give a hoot about my opinion."

**Wisconsin State Journal
December 30, 2017**

State report: Nearly 15 percent of Wisconsin lobbyists operated without authorization

http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/state-report-nearly-percent-of-wisconsin-lobbyists-lobbied-without-authorization/article_606e5142-b609-5786-a54f-ca283dda1498.html

Nearly 15 percent of Wisconsin lobbyists apparently tried to influence lawmakers and other state officials in 2017 without being authorized to do so, according to a new state report.

The lobbyists and lobbying groups that may have violated the authorization requirement were not named in the report. It was issued Thursday by the state Ethics Commission, which recently completed a wide-ranging audit on which it was based.

It's not yet clear what consequences could be in store for lobbyists and lobbying groups tagged in the audit.

The report says commissioners are still developing a standard process to offer settlements to pay fines for this type of violation. After that's done, commissioners "will deliberate regarding the specific action appropriate for each apparent violation discovered in this audit," the report says.

Commission administrator Brian Bell said the lobbyists and lobbying groups are not named in the report because they should be able to "present their side of the story" to the commission first. If a lobbyist could show they tried in good faith to obtain authorization but, for some reason, couldn't do so, that would be taken into account, he said.

"If in fact there was not a violation, we don't want to falsely tarnish their reputation," Bell said.

The sweeping audit looked at all lobbyists and lobbying groups in the state. Of the 539 lobbyists licensed in Wisconsin during the first six months of 2017, 78 — or 14 percent of all lobbyists — "apparently engaged in unauthorized lobbying," according to the report.

Of the state's 691 registered principals, or interest groups that employ the lobbyists, during that period, 74 — or 10 percent — apparently engaged in unauthorized lobbying.

The commission plans to send letters to all of the lobbyists and lobbying groups found to be in apparent violation, inviting them to respond and explain, according to the report. Bell cast the audit as an escalation of its enforcement work in lobbying, which it oversees in addition to campaign finance and lobbying. Bell said it should ensure "the public and Legislature are on notice, who is lobbying and who they're lobbying on behalf of."

Mike Wittenwyler, an attorney representing the Association of Wisconsin Lobbyists, said it's not clear if all of the instances flagged in the report are actual violations of the requirement. Wittenwyler also said that since the information in the audit was culled from recurring reports that lobbyists are required to submit to the commission, it shows there likely was no intent by lobbyists or lobbying groups to evade disclosure requirements.

"Stealth lobbying is not the intent here," Wittenwyler told commissioners Thursday.

Professional lobbyists — those who, for pay from an interest group, seek to influence lawmakers and other public officials on matters of policy — must obtain licenses from the Ethics Commission. The groups and businesses for whom they lobby, known as lobbying principals, also must register with the commission and authorize each of the lobbyists working on their behalf.

The latter step, authorization, was the focus of the audit. People whose jobs include lobbying, as well as other duties, must be authorized to lobby after they've made five lobbying communications with legislators or administration officials. For those whose duties are limited to lobbying, the requirement kicks in before they make any lobbying communications, according to the report.