

WILLIAM PRYOR ON CORPORATE INTERESTS

Highlights:

- William Pryor supported legal efforts to protect corporations.
 - Pryor worried that tobacco company litigation set a dangerous precedent for all corporations.
 - Pryor founded the Republican Attorneys General Association, with the goal of integrating more corporate influence into politics.
 - Pryor supported tort reform to limit corporate penalties.

Pryor Supported Legal Efforts To Protect Corporations

PRYOR SUPPORTED THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY AS OTHER STATES SUED THEM TO RECOUP MEDICAL COSTS

Pryor Argued That Lawsuits Against The Tobacco Industry Threatened Business In General

Pryor Gave A Speech In Which He Warned That Lawsuits Against The Tobacco Industry Threatened The Entire Business Community. While appearing at the Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Senator Feingold said, ‘After its formation you gave a speech to the Steering Committee of the Civil Justice Reform Group. You said, ‘Two years ago, I warned that the lawsuits filed by my fellow State Attorneys General against the tobacco industry threatened the entire business community.’ [Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, [6/11/03](#)]

Pryor Said He Believed Taxes Should Be Raised On Tobacco, Rather Than Trying To Litigate

Pryor Said He Believed States Should Raise Taxes On Tobacco To Recoup Medical Costs Rather Than Trying To Litigate. According to Wall Street Journal, ‘So far, he has received the most attention for the case he advised Mr. Sessions not to file -- litigation against tobacco companies. In 1994, Mike Moore, the attorney general of Mississippi, stepped forward with a suit that he hoped would offer a way for states to get help paying smokers’ medical bills. He urged other states’ officials to join him. But Mr. Pryor headed a task force of Alabama officials last year that determined that the cases, now filed by 29 states, are nearly impossible to win. He argues instead that states should raise taxes on cigarettes to recoup medical costs rather than trying to collect money through the courts.’ [Wall Street Journal, [5/21/97](#)]

Pryor Coordinated With The Tobacco Industry

Pryor Shared His Research On The Tobacco Cases With The Tobacco Industry. According to Wall Street Journal, ‘Others gripe about how Mr. Pryor has shared his research with the tobacco industry. On March 13, the day before Mississippi Attorney General Moore received a copy of the task-force report, the tobacco companies filed a copy in that state’s Supreme Court as part of their response to Mr. Moore’s suit. But Mr. Pryor takes those criticisms in stride. The tobacco companies, which his task force contacted in the course of its research, had made a standing request for a copy of his report, so he sent it to them after a local newspaper reporter asked for it as well. ‘Why does it matter who I gave it to first?’ he asks. ‘If I’m their monster, [the states’ attorneys general] created me in that role.’ [Wall Street Journal, [5/21/97](#)]

Pryor Bragged About Leaving Alabama Out Of Big Tobacco Suit

Pryor Bragged About His Decision To Not Have Alabama Join In Suing Big Tobacco, Saying That Court’s Should Be Left Out Of It And Asked, “Who’s Next? McDonald’s?” According to Wall Street Journal, ‘Now Mr. Pryor is rolling, and it’s on to Topic No. 2, Alabama’s refusal to join other states in suing Big Tobacco. If states want to force cigarette makers to pay for smokers’ health care, he says, they can raise taxes through their legislatures. But leave the courts out of it, he urges. ‘Who’s next? McDonald’s?’ he asks rhetorically. ‘They build playgrounds to lure children in and get them hooked on fatty foods. Obesity kills hundreds of thousands of Americans.’ As the applause ends, Mr. Pryor has finished another day as the

intellectual leader of Alabama Republicans. For now, he is running for the November 1998 election to remain the state's top law enforcement official.' [Wall Street Journal, [5/21/97](#)]

PRYOR FOUNDED THE REPUBLICAN ATTORNEYS GENERAL ASSOCIATION, WITH THE GOAL OF INTEGRATING MORE CORPORATE INFLUENCE INTO POLITICS

Pryor Said He Believed That The Tobacco Industry Lawsuits Showed A Need For Greater Corporate Involvement In Politics

Pryor's Solution To Curbing Lawsuit Abuse Included – Most Importantly – Ensuring The Business Community Was “Heavily Engaged In The Election Process.” While appearing at the Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Senator Feingold said, “You [Bill Pryor] offered five ideas for those who want to curb this new form of lawsuit abuse. Number five was the business community must be heavily engaged in the election process as it affects legal and judicial offices. You said, ‘Frankly, this need is the most important of all.’” [Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, [6/11/03](#)]

1999: Pryor Founded The Republican Attorneys General Association

1999: Pryor Co-Founded The Republican Attorneys General Association (RAGA). While appearing at the Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Senator Feingold said, “In 1999, you helped found an organization called the Republican Attorneys General Association, or RAGA, to promote the election of Republican candidates for Attorney General, and I understand you served as its first treasurer.” [Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, [6/11/03](#)]

RAGA Was Designed To Allow Corporations The Ability To Anonymously Funnel Money To Sympathetic Attorneys Generals

RAGA Donations Were Funneled Through A Variety Of Entities That Ultimately Went To Support Republican Attorney General Elections. While appearing at the Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Senator Feingold said, “As I understand it, RAGA raised money from large corporate donors and then sent those contributions to the Republican National State Elections Committee, the RNSEC, which is a soft- money fund run by the RNC for use in State Attorney General's elections. I am concerned about involvement of the top law enforcement officer of a State in this kind of an operation, and I am not alone in that concern. A number of Democratic and Republican State Attorneys General criticized your organization as unnecessarily partisan, and some have characterized its fundraising practices as fraught with ‘ethical land mines.’” [Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, [6/11/03](#)]

RAGA Skirted Campaign Finance Laws By Allowing Corporations To Give Unlimited Checks Anonymously To Support The Campaigns Of Pryor And Other “Free-Market Oriented” Attorneys General. According to Mother Jones, “But it also obscured the most important factor in Pryor's swift rise from Mobile, Alabama, to the national stage: his longtime courting of corporate America. ‘The business community must be engaged heavily in the election process as it affects legal and judicial offices,’ Pryor told business leaders in 1999, after refusing to join other attorneys general in lawsuits against the tobacco and gun industries. To facilitate that engagement, Pryor created a controversial group called the Republican Attorneys General Association, which skirted campaign-finance laws by allowing corporations to give unlimited checks anonymously to support the campaigns of Pryor and other ‘conservative and free market oriented Attorneys General.’” [Mother Jones, [November 2003](#)]

RAGA Was Set Up To Be “Completely Hidden From Public View Within The RNC.” According to the Center For Public Integrity, “Not only is there no limit, but no disclosure, and no paper trail. RAGA has set itself up to be completely hidden from public view within the RNC. It works through the Republican National State Elections Committee, a soft-money fund of the RNC that transfers money to state parties, to the National Republican Governors Association and to RAGA. Donations are recorded as going to the RNC, but from there it is impossible to determine what goes into the RAGA fund or how RAGA spends the money.” [Center for Public Integrity, [3/21/00](#)]

Known RAGA Donors Included Corporate Giants Like Microsoft, Aetna, National Rifle Association And Tobacco Companies

RAGA Refused To Disclose Its Donors, But News Reports Indicated That Contributors May Have Included Aetna, SBC, GTE, Microsoft And Tobacco Companies. While appearing at the Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Senator Feingold said, “RAGA solicits financial contributions from large corporations that may be subject to State investigations. According to several news accounts, RAGA’s contributors may include Aetna, SBC, GTE, Microsoft, and many tobacco companies. Yet RAGA has refused to disclose its contributors.” [Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, [6/11/03](#)]

Microsoft Was A Donor To RAGA As The Company Had Anti-Trust Litigation Pending In 23 States. According to the Center For Public Integrity, “Democratic Attorney General Mike Moore of Mississippi led the states charge against the tobacco industry. He told the Center that the attorneys general ‘only go against the wrongdoers and only those that break the law. We are not anti-big-business but anti-law breakers. It is clear that RAGA is courting the very corporations that currently or potentially face litigation over their consumer practices. Microsoft Corp. spokesman Rick Miller acknowledged to the Center that Microsoft is a member, donated \$10,000, and plans to attend the associations March 30-31 conference at the Barton Creek Resort outside Austin, Texas. Microsoft has antitrust litigation pending in 23 states. ‘Microsoft’s contribution to RAGA is the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard,’ said Moore of Mississippi. ‘With a case in 23 states, to align itself with this organization, there could easily be conflicts of interest here. RAGA will go solicit money from the corporate interests that some of their brothers and sisters have suits against. It isn’t the right thing for chief legal officers to be doing from a legal and ethical standpoint.’” [Center for Public Integrity, [3/21/00](#)]

Lobbyists Of High-Dollar Donors Were Invited To Socialize With Republican Attorneys General Via RAGA

The National Rifle Association Contributed At Least \$25,000, As Gun Lobbyists Played Golf, Shot Skeet, And Visited Spas With Republican Attorneys General. According to Mother Jones, “The National Rifle Association, clearly pleased by his refusal to sue gun makers, also contributed to the fund after Pryor called for a donation, the phone records show. The undisclosed checks for up to \$25,000 got lobbyists invitations to shoot skeet, play golf, and enjoy a ‘stress-relief spa’ with Republican attorneys general.” [Mother Jones, [November 2003](#)]

Pryor Dismissed Concerns Over The Flow Of Corporate Donations As Just The System

When Pressed Further On RAGA’s Corporation Donations And Conflicts Of Interest, Pryor Said, It Was The System In America That ‘Requires Candidates To Raise Funds To Wage Campaigns.’ While appearing at the Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Senator Feingold said, “Senator Feingold. This doesn’t concern you at all in terms of your role as Attorney General? Mr. Pryor. The system that we have in America of elections requires candidates to raise funds to wage campaigns. I have done that, and I’ve disclosed every donation that my campaign has ever received.” [Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, [6/11/03](#)]

Pryor Himself Received RAGA Funneled Funds From Companies That Were Under His Purview For Potential Prosecution

Pryor’s Opposition To The Tobacco & Gun Industry Lawsuits, Clean Water Act Regulations, And Support For “Gutting” Federal Protections Of Disabled Workers On Constitutional Grounds “Allowed Him To Rake In Business Contributions.” According to Mother Jones, “PRYOR POSITIONED HIMSELF early to win the favor of the business community. As far back as 1998, he announced that Alabama would not join lawsuits against the tobacco and gun industries. He urged federal courts to roll back the Clean Water Act, testified before Congress against the Clean Air Act, and argued for gutting federal protections of disabled workers on constitutional grounds. Such views allowed him to rake in business contributions.” [Mother Jones, [November 2003](#)]

Mother Jones: Pryor’s 2002 Campaign Received “\$100,000 Of Legally Laundered Cash From The Republican Attorneys General Association, A Group That Attracted Companies As Far-Ranging As Microsoft, Eli Lilly, Anheuser-Busch, And Philip Morris.” According to Mother Jones, “Pryor’s 2002 re-election campaign eventually received \$100,000 of legally laundered cash from the Republican Attorneys General Association, a group that attracted companies as far-ranging as Microsoft, Eli Lilly, Anheuser-Busch, and Philip Morris. The money contributed to a 3 to 1 fundraising advantage Pryor built over his Democratic challenger, whom he defeated in a landslide.” [Mother Jones, [November 2003](#)]

Leaked Documents Showed Pryor Solicited Funds From The “Same Companies He Refused To Prosecute On Behalf Of Alabama Citizens.” According to Mother Jones, “Pryor never identified the source of this war chest. But recently leaked documents show he knew at the time that he was raising money from the same companies he refused to prosecute on behalf of Alabama’s citizens. According to phone records, he personally solicited funds for the Republican Attorneys General Association from executives at R.J.Reynolds, Philip Morris, and other Fortune 500 companies.” [Mother Jones, [November 2003](#)]

When Challenged On The Conflict Of Interest, Pryor Claimed He Only Saw The Funds As Coming From The Republican State Committee – Not As Originating With RAGA Donors

In 2003 Confirmation Hearings, Senator Feinstein Noted That As Attorney General, Pryor Had Authority To Effectively Determine Whether Or Not To Pursue A Lawsuit Against One Of RAGA’s Donors. While appearing at the Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Senator Feingold said, “As Alabama Attorney General, you have asserted that your office has sole authority to determine which lawsuits will be filed on behalf of the State of Alabama. Consequently, one of RAGA’s contributors--the identity, of course, is concealed from the public--could be under State investigation. You still have the last word on whether a lawsuit will be filed against that company. Don’t you agree that this scenario would present at least the appearance of conflict of interest given your role in RAGA?” [Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, [6/11/03](#)]

When Asked To Reconcile The Flow Of Corporate Money, Pryor Demurred And Said He Only Viewed The Money As Coming From The State Elections Committee. While appearing at the Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Senator Feingold said, “Senator Feingold. Our information is that there is a different trail to the money and there is a direct connection to RAGA, but we will pursue that with a written question. Let me also assure you the mere fact that the Democrats also do it, based on my 7 years of experience with soft money, is no defense. Despite RAGA’s refusal to disclose its contributors, we do know that soft money raised by RAGA and funneled to the Republican National State Elections Committee was then used in State campaigns in Alabama. In fact, the RNSEC made a contribution of \$100,000 to your own re-election campaign for State Attorney General. How do you reconcile RAGA’s relationship with the RNSEC and the RNSEC’s contribution to your own campaign with your duty as State Attorney General? Do you think it is appropriate for Attorneys General to solicit funds or receive funds from corporations who they may later have to investigate? Mr. Pryor. Well, I wasn’t receiving in that instance a direct contribution, of course, from a corporation. I was receiving it from the Republican National State Elections Committee, just as I received contributions from the Alabama Republican Party and from political action committees in my own State. And it has never created a conflict of interest. If that was—” [Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, [6/11/03](#)]

PRYOR SUPPORTED TORT REFORM TO LIMIT CORPORATE PENALTIES

Pryor Said No Issue Has Been “Closer To My Heart” Than Trying To Rein In Damage Awards In Alabama.

According to the Wall Street Journal, ‘In his work for two big Birmingham firms, Mr. Pryor saw firsthand some of the more controversial examples of the huge damage awards for which Alabama’s civil courts have earned the nickname ‘tort hell.’ For example, he watched as a finance company his firm represented lost a fraud lawsuit over a \$4,000 car-loan agreement and was ordered to pay a stunning \$50 million. ‘No issue has been closer to my heart’ than trying to rein in the plaintiffs’ bar, he says.’ [Wall Street Journal, [5/21/97](#)]

Pryor Fought Against Federal Domestic Violence Protections

PRYOR FILED AN AMICUS BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF DOMESTIC ABUSERS RETAINING GUN OWNERSHIP

Trace: Pryor “Injected” Himself Into A Texas Case Involving A Man Who Had Been Charged With Violating The Federal Ban On Possessing Firearms While Under A Domestic Violence Restraining Order. According to the Trace, “As Alabama’s AG, Pryor also injected himself into the case of a Texas man who had been charged with violating the federal ban on possessing firearms while under a domestic violence restraining order, calling the government’s interpretation of the law ‘a sweeping and arbitrary infringement on the Second Amendment.’ In 2001, the NRA’s lobbying arm gave Pryor its Harlon B. Carter Legislative Achievement Award, its top honor.” [Trace, [11/18/16](#)]

Pryor Filed An Amicus Brief In Support Of Allowing A Man Who Had Restraining Order For Domestic Violence Be Permitted To Possess A Gun. While appearing at the Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, “Senator Durbin. Are you familiar with the case of United States v. Emerson? Mr. Pryor. Yes. Senator Durbin. Which was filed in Texas, the case involving Timothy Joe Emerson, the subject of a domestic violence restraining order prohibiting him from threatening his wife or daughter or causing them bodily injury, and under Federal law he was prohibited from possessing a firearm because he was under this restraining order against domestic violence; and that although this was a Texas case being decided by the Fifth Circuit, you decided to file an amicus brief on behalf of the people of the State of Alabama in support of Timothy Joe Emerson being allowed to carry a gun. Can you explain why you went out of your way to say that a man that is under a restraining order for domestic violence who would threaten the life of his wife or former wife’s boyfriend should be allowed to carry a gun? Mr. Pryor. I was arguing a position to get the Fifth Circuit in that case to look at the Federal statute itself and avoid the question that the district court had ruled upon. The district court dismissed the indictment of that individual on the basis of the Second Amendment, claiming that the Federal law in question was unconstitutional under the Second Amendment. There were some confusing aspects to the Federal statute in question that I thought the court ought to look at. The court ended up looking at that and rejected my argument. But I had urged the court to--if my argument had prevailed, to avoid the question of a Second Amendment defense.” [Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, [6/11/03](#)]

PRYOR LEAD A SINGLE-MAN CRUSADE AGAINST THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Pryor Was The Only Attorney General To File An Amicus Brief Opposing The Violence Against Women Act On The Grounds That It Violated States’ Rights. According to PBS, “The Violence Against Women Act was passed by Congress in 1994 and was enhanced in 2000. The Act provided stiff penalties for repeat offenders as well as federal support and funding for programs like domestic violence hotlines, education and crime prevention programs. The Act also allowed victims to bring gender-based violence suits in federal courts. In United States v. Morrison, the Act was challenged on the grounds that this right to sue was beyond the scope of Congressional authority. Thirty-six states filed amicus briefs in support of the right to sue under VAWA. Attorney General Pryor filed the only amicus brief opposing the law on the grounds that it violated states’ rights.” [PBS, [7/11/03](#)]

Schumer: Pryor Was The Only Attorney General To File An Amicus Brief Urging The Supreme Court To Undo Significant Portions Of The Violence Against Women Act And Wondered Why It Had Such “Political Support, Especially In Congress.” While appearing at the Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Chuck Schumer said, “When it comes to States’ rights, the record gets even more disturbing. Attorney General Pryor has been one of the staunchest advocates of the Rehnquist Court’s efforts to roll back the clock, not just to the 1930’s, but even to the 1880’s. He is an ardent supporter of an activist Supreme Court agenda, cutting back Congress’s power and the Federal Government’s power to protect women, workers, consumers, the environment and civil rights. For instance, on States’ rights, as Alabama’s Attorney General Mr. Pryor filed the only amicus brief from among the 50 states, urging the court to undo significant portions of the Violence Against Women Act. In commenting on that law, Attorney General Pryor said, quote, ‘One wonders why VAWA enjoys such political support, especially in Congress.’” [Committee On The Judiciary, U.S. Senate, [6/11/03](#)]