



ALLIANCE *for* CONSUMERS

**CONSUMER  
PROTECTION REPORT**

# **Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline Update: The Shady Eight 2025 Update**

A continuing look into how trial lawyers use public contracts with state and local governments to boost left-wing political efforts while diverting money away from consumers

One of the biggest consumer protection problems we face is the growing trend of trial lawyers and public officials diverting money from victims and everyday consumers.

A stark example of this problem is the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline—politicians handing out lucrative public contracts to trial lawyers who give millions of dollars to liberal political campaigns. This is often done under the guise of consumer protection. But, while the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline helps politicians funnel public money toward left-wing politics, it leaves everyday consumers and taxpayers with a horrible deal.

Alliance For Consumers launched a series of Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline Updates in 2022, starting with a look at federal political giving from 2017-2020 by eight law firms—referred to as the Shady Eight—that serve as Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline posterchildren.

## THE SHADY EIGHT

**Morgan & Morgan  
Lieff Cabraser  
Motley Rice  
Baron & Budd  
Grant & Eisenhofer  
Berger Montague  
Cohen Milstein  
Simmons Hanly**

These eight law firms are archetypal participants in the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline. Each has been ranked by the National Law Journal or Legal500 as a leader amongst plaintiff-side trial firms. And each is powered in part by public contracts on prominent litigation. Simmons Hanly has represented local governments in major opioid litigation, Motley Rice has won the Elite Trial Lawyers Award for government representation from American Lawyer Magazine, and Morgan & Morgan, Lieff Cabraser, Baron & Budd, Grant & Eisenhofer, Berger Montague, and Cohen

Milstein have benefited from state contracts in places like Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Mexico, and New Jersey.

Alliance For Consumers has provided an annual Shady Eight Update since 2022. This Alliance For Consumers Consumer Protection Report on the Shady Eight analyzes the federal political activity by the so-called Shady Eight during 2024.

**~\$25 MILLION**  
**in combined**  
**political donations**

These “Shady Eight” firms generated nearly \$25 million in combined political donations from 2017-2024 to committees and candidates in the Federal Election Commission (FEC) tracking system. That is the total given by the firms directly, their 1,750 or so combined lawyers, and other employees and staff. Of that, over \$4 million was generated by the firms during 2024 alone.

**99%** **to Democrats**  
**& Their Allies**

The partisan slant to this money remains unrelenting. The Shady Eight sent 99% of their combined federal donations during 2024 to Democratic campaigns and allied political committees, continuing the 99% commitment to Democrats and their allies from the previous Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline Updates covering 2017-2023.

Only two members of the Shady Eight gave less than 99% of their total federal donations to Democrats and their allies over the course of 2024—Morgan & Morgan at 97%, and Berger Montague at 94%.

On the other hand, five firms showed a 100% commitment to Democrats and their allies—Lieff Cabraser, Motley Rice, Grant & Eisenhofer, Simmons Hanly, and Baron & Budd. Combined, these firms generated more than \$2.5 million in federal donations in 2024.

# Members Of The Shady Eight Recorded Not A Single Dollar To Republicans Candidates or Allied Committees

As for the specifics of where the money went, that too, reveals quite a bit about the Shady Eight's partisan agenda.

More than 50% of the combined money generated in 2024 by the Shady Eight went to the political committees that form the professionalized superstructure of the Democratic Party—party committees at the state and federal level, leadership committees, and other similar organizations.

The Democratic National Committee (DNC) was the single biggest recipient of the Shady Eight's support during 2024, with Vice President Harris's committees a close second. Altogether, the Shady

Eight generated almost \$1.4 million in combined donations in 2024 for the Harris campaign and the DNC.

Midterm Senate races were also a priority for the Shady Eight. Besides the support going to Vice President Harris, the top candidates receiving monetary support from the Shady Eight were all Democratic Senate candidates: Ruben Gallego (D – AZ), Sherrod Brown (D – OH), Bob Casey (D – PA), and Jon Tester (D – MT).

## TOP RECIPIENTS OF THE SHADY EIGHT POLITICAL DONATIONS

**Kamala Harris (D)**

**Ruben Gallego (D, AZ)**

**Sherrod Brown (D, OH)**

**Bob Casey (D, PA)**

**Jon Tester (D, MT)**

## SHADY EIGHT FIRM-BY-FIRM PARTISANSHIP

**LIEFF CABRASER** – 100% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2024. The firm sent more than 70% of the over \$1 million in donations it generated in 2024 toward the political committees that form the professionalized superstructure of the Democratic Party, including over \$100,000 to the DNC, nearly \$100,000 to the DSCC, over \$75,000 to the DCCC, and smaller amounts to a litany of other groups, like state party committees and groups like Emily's List.

Since the beginning of 2017, over the full set of Shady Eight Reports, the firm's total federal donations have been over \$5.5 million, with 99% of that flowing to Democratic candidates and allied committees.

**MORGAN & MORGAN** – 97% of the FEC-recorded donations by the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies

in 2024. The firm generated almost \$700,000 in FEC donations in 2024, with over half of that money going to support organizations that form the professionalized superstructure of the Democratic Party that supports liberal candidates for state and federal office, including over \$300,000 to the DNC. The firm also generated over \$250,000 for Vice President Harris's campaign efforts.

Since the beginning of 2017, over the full set of Shady Eight Reports, the firm's total federal donations have been over \$5 million, with 99% of that flowing to Democratic candidates and allied committees, including over \$2 million flowing to support President Biden and Vice President Harris.

**MOTLEY RICE** – 100% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2024. The firm generated more than \$750,000 in FEC donations in 2024, with almost 50% of that money going to

support Democratic Senators, including more than \$50,000 each to Senators Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, Jon Tester of Montana, and Jacky Rosen of Nevada.

Since the beginning of 2017, over the full set of Shady Eight Reports, the firm's total federal donations have been nearly \$3.5 million, with 99% of that flowing to Democratic candidates and allied committees.

**BARON & BUDD** – 100% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2024. The firm generated more than \$400,000 in FEC donations in 2024, with more than 75% of that money going to organizations that form the professionalized superstructure of the Democratic Party that supports liberal candidates for state and federal office, including sending over \$100,000 to the DNC.

Since the beginning of 2017, over the full set of Shady Eight Reports, the firm's total federal donations have been over \$2 million, with 100% of that flowing to Democratic candidates and allied committees.

**COHEN MILSTEIN** – 99% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2024. The firm generated more than \$400,000 in FEC donations in 2024, with a mere \$4,500 going to Republican candidates and groups. The two largest recipients of the money generated by the firm in 2024 were the DNC and Vice President Harris, each of whom netted more than \$100,000.

Since the beginning of 2017, over the full set of Shady Eight Reports, the firm's total federal donations have been just shy of \$1.5 million, with 99% of that flowing to Democratic candidates and allied committees.

**GRANT & EISENHOFER** – 100% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in

2024. The firm generated more than \$250,000 in FEC donations in 2024, with no money going to Republican candidates and groups. Of the more than \$250,000 that the firm generated in 2024 for Democratic candidates and groups, over \$200,000 went to organizations that form the professionalized superstructure of the Democratic Party, including more than \$75,000 to the DNC and \$20,000 each going to the DSCC and DCCC.

Since the beginning of 2017, over the full set of Shady Eight Reports, the firm's total federal donations have been almost \$1.75 million, with 99% of that flowing to Democratic candidates and allied committees.

**BERGER MONTAGUE** – 94% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2024. The firm generated almost \$350,000 in FEC donations in 2024, with almost all going to organizations that form the professionalized superstructure of the Democratic Party, including the DNC, DCCC, and similar groups. The largest recipient of the money generated by the firm in 2024 was a group led by Jim Messina called Democracy Defenders PAC.

Since the beginning of 2017, over the full set of Shady Eight Reports, the firm's total federal donations have been over \$2.25 million, with 97% of that flowing to Democratic candidates and allied committees.

**SIMMONS HANLY** – 100% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2024. The firm generated more than \$125,000 in FEC donations in 2024, with virtually of that money going to support Democratic candidates for the U.S. Senate and U.S. House.

Since the beginning of 2017, over the full set of Shady Eight Reports, the firm's total federal donations have been over \$2.5 million, with 99% of that flowing to Democratic candidates and allied committees.

**This partisan political giving is supported by money from public contracts signed by politicians and public officials; money that belongs to the taxpayers and consumers.**

## SHADY EIGHT % DONATIONS TO DEMOCRATS AND ALLIED COMMITTEES

MORGAN & MORGAN

**97%**

LIEFF CABRASER

**100%**

MOTLEY RICE

**100%**

BARON & BUDD

**100%**

GRANT & EISENHOFER

**100%**

BERGER MONTAGUE

**94%**

COHEN MILSTEIN

**99%**

SIMMONS HANLEY

**100%**

## THREAT TO CONSUMERS AND TAXPAYERS

This partisan political giving is supported by money from lucrative public contracts signed by politicians and public officials, money that really belongs in the pockets of taxpayers and consumers.

Consumers and taxpayers lose out from the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline in many ways, but one particularly dire aspect is how the public contracts that are the gateway to the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline are so often missing basic protections (including basic ethics protections) that should be in all outside-counsel contracts. The contracts can be only a few pages long, sometimes look like they were written by the trial lawyers themselves, and have glaring weaknesses, such as:

- The contracts often have no expiration date or clear language tying the engagement to a particular defendant or case;
- The contracts rarely include appropriate conflicts protection, even though trial lawyers often represent multiple governments that may have very different interests in the same case;

**The Shady Eight are stark examples—although far from the only ones—of how the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline works**

- The contracts usually fail to require that the trial lawyers provide the best pricing terms that lawyers are offering to any other governmental client on the same matter; and
- The contracts almost never ensure that contingency fees for the trial lawyers will not be taken out of money set aside for restitution to victims.

These types of weak, under-protective, giveaway contracts make some sense if the goal is to fund left-wing campaigns—as the political activities of the Shady Eight demonstrate—but they make no sense if your goal is to help consumers and protect taxpayers.

**These types of contracts make some sense if the goal is to fund left-wing campaigns—as the political activities of the Shady Eight demonstrate—but they make no sense if your goal is to help consumers and protect taxpayers.**

Alliance For Consumers is focused on putting more money in the pockets of everyday consumers and ensuring that consumers and the rule of law are not left behind by trial lawyers and public officials. Raising concern about the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline is central to the mission of Alliance For Consumers because the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline undercuts this mission.

The “Shady Eight” are stark examples—although far from the only ones—of how the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline works, with politicians feeding

sweetheart contracts to trial lawyers who give 99% of their political donations to liberals and will happily turn around and pump millions of dollars into left-leaning candidates, committees, and allied organizations.

Good governance and honest stewardship call for better. The consumer should never be on the losing side of a left-wing political money game like what is on display in the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline.

FIRM	TOTAL DEM	SENATE (D)	HOUSE (D)	DEM ORGS	DEM PRIMARY	BIDEN/HARRIS	% DEM	GOP	OTHER	OVERALL TOTAL
Baron & Budd	\$2,192,052.24	\$437,415.91	\$131,614.98	\$1,257,268.84	\$16,374.27	\$349,378.24	100%	\$4,996.10	\$1,100.00	\$2,198,148.34
Berger Montague	\$2,203,320.31	\$375,636.93	\$277,247.50	\$1,168,545.79	\$23,020.00	\$358,870.09	97%	\$37,285.69	\$26,472.00	\$2,267,078.00
Cohen Milstein	\$1,476,364.40	\$474,678.12	\$166,477.51	\$503,665.41	\$11,650.70	\$319,892.66	99%	\$8,460.00	\$8,176.93	\$1,493,001.33
Grant Eisenhofer	\$1,735,843.60	\$252,171.66	\$102,975.00	\$1,103,350.57	\$6,355.81	\$270,990.56	99%	\$12,600.00	\$250.00	\$1,748,001.33
Lieff Cabraser	\$5,633,844.46	\$1,628,603.71	\$429,268.87	\$2,886,271.82	\$71,332.42	\$618,367.64	99%	\$182.05	\$34,825.00	\$5,668,851.51
Morgan & Morgan	\$5,278,139.37	\$297,344.77	\$210,578.51	\$2,558,792.02	\$78,135.33	\$2,133,288.74	99%	\$54,301.58	\$6,894.24	\$5,339,335.19
Motley Rice	\$3,380,869.37	\$1,690,164.87	\$714,013.43	\$704,543.86	\$13,675.50	\$258,462.71	99%	\$49,798.44	\$1,000.00	\$3,431,658.81
Simmons Hanly	\$2,563,812.25	\$1,273,462.09	\$437,933.17	\$406,724.42	\$13,545.84	\$432,146.73	99%	\$30,859.10	\$381.78	\$2,595,053.13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$24,464,237.00</b>	<b>\$6,429,278.06</b>	<b>\$2,470,108.97</b>	<b>\$10,589,162.73</b>	<b>\$234,089.87</b>	<b>\$4,741,397.37</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>\$198,482.96</b>	<b>\$79,099.95</b>	<b>\$24,741,819.91</b>

### “SHADY 8” DONATIONS 2024

FIRM	TOTAL DEM	SENATE (D)	HOUSE (D)	DEM ORGS	BIDEN/HARRIS	% DEM	GOP	OVERALL TOTAL
Baron & Budd	\$408,842.29	\$48,810.83	\$24,100.00	\$313,338.84	\$22,592.62	100%	\$151.00	\$408,993.39
Berger Montague	\$329,629.09	\$23,235.00	\$22,005.00	\$269,789.00	\$14,600.09	94%	\$20,150.00	\$349,779.09
Cohen Milstein	\$401,755.57	\$101,350.24	\$43,412.50	\$149,851.76	\$107,141.07	99%	\$4,500.00	\$406,255.57
Grant Eisenhofer	\$267,047.19	\$1,350.00	\$16,455.00	\$219,067.27	\$30,174.92	100%	\$0.00	\$267,047.19
Lieff Cabraser	\$1,184,630.61	\$163,478.59	\$110,254.27	\$867,136.51	\$43,761.24	100%	\$152.05	\$1,184,782.66
Morgan & Morgan	\$673,746.59	\$7,162.50	\$27,501.00	\$354,394.49	\$284,688.60	97%	\$19,685.42	\$693,432.01
Motley Rice	\$770,645.20	\$325,950.00	\$165,600.00	\$150,090.42	\$129,004.78	100%	\$2,884.18	\$773,529.38
Simmons Hanly	\$132,993.78	\$61,433.34	\$57,858.32	\$8,145.12	\$5,557.00	100%	\$159.10	\$133,152.88
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,169,290.32</b>	<b>\$732,770.50</b>	<b>\$467,186.09</b>	<b>\$2,331,813.41</b>	<b>\$637,520.32</b>	<b>98.87%</b>	<b>\$47,681.85</b>	<b>\$4,216,972.17</b>



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