



ALLIANCE *for* CONSUMERS

**CONSUMER
PROTECTION REPORT**

Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline Update: The Shady Eight 2026 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 Conroy**

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 Conroy 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 Alaska, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Mexico, Ohio 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 2025.

~\$26 MILLION
in combined
political donations

These “Shady Eight” firms generated nearly \$26 million in combined political donations from 2017-2025 to committees and candidates in the Federal Election Commission (FEC) tracking system. That is the total given by the firms directly, their 1,800 or so combined lawyers, and other employees and staff. Of that, almost \$1 million was generated by the firms during 2025 alone.

99% **to Democrats**
& Their Allies

The partisan slant to this money remains unrelenting. The Shady Eight sent 96% of their combined federal donations in 2025 to Democratic campaigns and allied political committees. This new data keeps their collective donation ratio at 99% over the full set of data from 2017 through 2025.

Every member of the Shady Eight gave at least 90% of their total federal donations to Democrats and their allies over the course of 2025, with Simmons Hanly Conroy marking the lowest percentage after showing a 100% commitment rate during 2024.

On the other hand, two firms showed a 100% commitment to Democrats and their allies—Lieff Cabraser and Baron & Budd—with neither firm recording a single dollar of donations to Republican candidates or aligned committees during 2025.

Two Members Of The Shady Eight Recorded Not A Single Dollar To Republican Candidates or Allied Committees During 2025

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 money generated in 2025 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 Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) was the single biggest recipient of the Shady Eight's support during 2025, ahead of any other organization or candidate.

Senate races were also a priority for the Shady Eight. The top candidates receiving monetary support from the Shady Eight were almost all Democratic Senate candidates: Jon Ossoff (D – GA), Roy Cooper (D – NC), Cory Booker (D – NJ), and Tammy Duckworth (D – IL), and Democratic House Candidate Nikki Budzinski (D-IL-13).

TOP RECIPIENTS OF THE SHADY EIGHT POLITICAL DONATIONS

Jon Ossoff (D, GA)
Roy Cooper (D, NC)
Cory Booker (D, NJ)
Tammy Duckworth (D, IL)
Nikki Budzinski (D-IL-13)

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 2025, with not a single dollar going to Republican candidates or allied committees. The firm sent more than 50% of the more than \$150,000 in donations it generated in 2025 toward the political committees that form the professionalized superstructure of the Democratic Party, including more than \$50,000 to the DCCC.

Since the beginning of 2017, over the full set of Shady Eight Reports, the firm's total federal donations have been nearly \$6 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 2025. The firm generated more than \$200,000 in

FEC donations in 2025, 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, and around 30% of it going to Democratic Senate candidates like Jon Ossoff and Roy Cooper.

Since the beginning of 2017, over the full set of Shady Eight Reports, the firm's total federal donations have been more than \$5.5 million, with 99% of that flowing to Democratic candidates and allied committees, including more than \$2 million flowing to support President Biden and Vice President Harris.

MOTLEY RICE – 94% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2025. The firm generated more than \$150,000 in FEC donations in 2025, with more than 50% 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.

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 98% 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 2025, with not a single dollar going to Republican candidates or allied committees. The firm generated more than \$150,000 in FEC donations in 2025, 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, and around 30% of it going to support Democratic candidates for the United States Senate.

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

COHEN MILSTEIN – 95% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2025. The firm generated more than \$75,000 in FEC donations in 2025, with a mere \$4,000 going to Republican candidates and groups.

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

GRANT & EISENHOFER – 93% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2025. The firm generated more than \$125,000 in FEC donations in 2025, with a combined \$90,000 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 \$1.9 million, with 99% of that flowing to Democratic candidates and allied committees.

BERGER MONTAGUE – 98% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2025. The firm generated more than \$50,000 in FEC donations in 2025, with almost all of that going to Senate races. The largest single recipient of support in 2025 was Senator Corey Booker.

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

SIMMONS HANLY CONROY – 90% of the FEC-recorded donations from the firm and its employees went to Democrats and their allies in 2025. The firm generated more than \$100,000 in FEC donations in 2025, with the vast majority of the 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 almost \$2.7 million, with 98% 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

94%

BARON & BUDD

100%

GRANT & EISENHOFER

93%

BERGER MONTAGUE

98%

COHEN MILSTEIN

95%

SIMMONS HANLEY
CONRORY

90%

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 at times be only a few pages long, sometimes look like they were written by the trial lawyers themselves, and have glaring weaknesses.

These types of weak, under-protective, giveaway-style 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.

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

Is it any wonder then that states have been revisiting these contracts and finding them wanting? From Alaska to Montana and from Utah to Iowa and Kansas, state officials have taken a look at the contracts that have supported the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline and decided that it was time to call an end to the weak, under-protective deals that have long passed muster in this space.

The result of this has been state contract terminations for Motley Rice, Morgan & Morgan, and Baron & Budd, with both Motley Rice and Baron & Budd receiving for-cause terminations that drew substantial media attention.

That kind of cleaning house is a good thing, and something to be celebrated, as it is a mark of tremendous progress in this space that has long called for a change in direction.

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 concerns 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. And it marks a huge consumer victory whenever a state official dismantles the Shady Trial Lawyer Pipeline in their state.

“SHADY 8” DONATIONS 2017 - 2025

FIRM	TOTAL DEM	SENATE (D)	HOUSE (D)	DEM ORGS	DEM PRIMARY	DEM PRESIDENT	% DEM	GOP	OTHER	OVERALL TOTAL
Baron & Budd	\$2,342,238.74	\$490,465.91	\$155,114.98	\$1,330,905.34	\$16,374.27	\$349,378.24	99.74%	\$4,996.10	\$1,100.00	\$2,348,334.84
Berger Montague	\$2,270,334.31	\$416,636.93	\$288,497.50	\$1,183,309.79	\$23,020	\$358,870.09	97.21%	\$37,385.69	\$27,722.00	\$2,335,442.00
Cohen Milstein	\$1,555,663.62	\$504,878.12	\$192,102.51	\$527,139.63	\$11,650.7	\$319,892.66	98.69%	\$12,460.00	\$8,176.93	\$1,576,300.55
Grant Eisenhofer	\$1,862,498.98	\$261,671.66	\$103,475.00	\$1,220,005.95	\$6,355.81	\$270,990.56	98.79%	\$22,600.00	\$250.00	\$1,885,348.98
Lieff Cabraser	\$5,811,711.72	\$1,674,473.71	\$455,294.37	\$2,992,243.58	\$71,332.42	\$618,367.64	99.40%	\$182.05	\$35,125.00	\$5,847,018.77
Morgan & Morgan	\$5,477,754.73	\$368,094.77	\$235,578.51	\$2,662,527.38	\$78,135.33	\$2,133,418.74	98.79%	\$60,050.04	\$6,894.24	\$5,544,699.01
Motley Rice	\$3,431,534.43	\$1,702,664.87	\$727,063.43	\$729,667.92	\$13,675.50	\$258,462.71	98.44%	\$53,298.44	\$1,000.00	\$3,485,832.87
Simmons Hanly Conroy	\$2,656,614.75	\$1,306,962.09	\$490,683.17	\$413,276.92	\$13,545.84	\$432,146.73	98.47%	\$40,859.10	\$401.78	\$2,697,875.63
TOTAL	\$25,408,351.28	\$6,725,848.06	\$2,647,809.47	\$11,059,076.51	\$234,089.87	\$4,741,527.37	98.79%	\$231,831.42	\$80,669.95	\$25,720,852.65

“SHADY 8” DONATIONS 2025

FIRM	TOTAL DEM	SENATE (D)	HOUSE (D)	DEM ORGS	DEM PRESIDENT	% DEM	GOP	OVERALL TOTAL
Baron & Budd	\$150,186.50	\$53,050.00	\$23,500.00	\$73,636.50	\$0.00	100%	\$0.00	\$150,186.50
Berger Montague	\$67,014.00	\$41,000.00	\$11,250.00	\$14,764.00	\$0.00	98%	\$100.00	\$68,364.00
Cohen Milstein	\$79,299.22	\$30,200.00	\$25,625.00	\$23,474.22	\$0.00	95%	\$4,000.00	\$83,299.22
Grant Eisenhofer	\$126,655.38	\$9,500.00	\$500.00	\$116,655.38	\$0.00	93%	\$10,000.00	\$136,655.38
Lieff Cabraser	\$177,867.26	\$45,870.00	\$26,025.50	\$105,971.76	\$0.00	100%	\$0.00	\$178,167.26
Morgan & Morgan	\$199,615.36	\$70,750.00	\$25,000.00	\$103,735.36	\$130.00	97%	\$5,748.46	\$205,363.82
Motley Rice	\$50,674.06	\$12,500.00	\$13,050.00	\$25,124.06	\$0.00	94%	\$3,500.00	\$54,174.06
Simmons Hanly Conroy	\$92,802.50	\$33,500.00	\$52,750.00	\$6,552.50	\$0.00	90%	\$10,000.00	\$102,822.50
TOTAL	\$944,114.28	\$296,370.00	\$177,700.50	\$469,913.78	\$130.00	96%	\$33,348.46	\$979,032.74



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