

## Scalia's "Conflict-of-Interest Airlines"

The late justice's demise at a Texas resort shows why we can't trust judges to police their own integrity

By Jim Hightower

How curious that Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia died, of all places, in an exclusive West Texas hunting lodge.

Yet more curious, all expenses for hizzonor's February stay were paid by the resort's owner, John Poindexter. He's a Houston manufacturing mogul who won a favorable ruling from the Supreme Court in an age-discrimination case last year.

In another curiosity, the names of some 35 other people who were in Scalia's hunting party are being kept secret. Moreover, the late judge — an ardent promoter of corporate supremacy

over people's rights — was flown to the remote getaway for free aboard someone's or some corporation's private jet. The name of this generous benefactor has also been withheld.

Curious, huh?

This isn't a murder mystery — by all accounts, Scalia died of natural causes. It's a moral mystery: Who was buying (or repaying) favors from an enormously powerful member of America's highest court?

There's a bit of poetic justice in the fact that Justice Scalia, in particular,



passed away under such circumstances, for his expiration exposes a little known ethical loophole through which moneyed interests can curry special favors from Supremes: judicial junkets.

The West Texas hunting excursion was hardly Scalia's first freebie. He was the Supreme Court's most frequent flyer aboard "Conflict-of-Interest Airlines," accepting more than 280 privately paid-for jaunts in the past dozen years to luxury destinations, including Hawaii, Hong Kong, Ireland, Napa Valley, Palm Springs, and

Switzerland.

Every lower-court judge is subject to a formal code of conduct, but the nine top court judges have exempted themselves from those rules. Scalia's inconvenient demise shows why we can't trust them to police their own integrity.

For more information, go to [www.FixTheCourt.org](http://www.FixTheCourt.org).

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The trend continued in 1992 when President Clinton strong-armed Congress into passing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which resulted in massive American job losses.

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