

By [Molly Ivins](#), [AlterNet](#). Posted [May 31, 2006](#).

I'll be damned if Enron's No. 1 show pony politician, George W. Bush, should be allowed to walk away from this.

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A Houston jury convicted both Ken Lay and Jeff Skilling, despite the fact that Kenny Boy packed his Bible to the courtroom every day.

Since it is a long and noble Texas tradition for the accused to fight all allegations by finding Jesus, this indicates a major degree of guilt. (While on trial for murder, T. Cullen Davis, the Fort Worth millionaire, not only found Jesus but also threw a big party to celebrate at the mansion, with piles of shrimp and

BBQ and a soundtrack that announced over and over throughout the grounds that night, "The son of Stinky Davis has found the son of God.")

Meanwhile, Houston reacted as though the Rockets had won the NBA championship.

Many a thoughtful analyst has given us to understand that Lay and Skilling are guilty of arrogance and hubris. Actually, they were convicted of fraud -- massive, overwhelming and monstrous fraud. They also stole money and looted pension funds. They rigged energy markets and almost drove California (seventh-largest economy in the world) into bankruptcy.

And all along the way, this monstrous fraud was connected to government. Enron bought the politicians who bent the rules that let them steal, con and gyp. Lay and Skilling talked state after state into following the California model and deregulating electricity. Happy summer, everyone.

And then, of course, there was the thumbing-the-nose thievery, the offshore partnerships tricked out with the clever names so insiders would know how slick they were.

As the late Rep. Wright Patman Sr. observed: "Many of our wealthiest and most powerful citizens are very greedy. This fact has many times been demonstrated."

The interesting thing about Lay and Skilling is they weren't trying to evade the rules, they were rigging the rules in their favor. The fix was in -- much of it law passed by former Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas, whose wife, Wendy, served on the board of Enron.

Where does that sense of entitlement come from? What makes a Ken Lay think he can call the governor of Texas and ask him to soften up Gov. Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania on electricity deregulation? Not that being governor of Texas has ever been an office of much majesty, but a corporate robber wouldn't think of doing that if it were Brian Schweitzer of Montana or Bill Richardson of New Mexico.

The extent to which not just state legislatures but the Congress of the United States are now run by large corporate special interests is beyond mere recognition as fact. The takeover is complete. Newt Gingrich and Tom DeLay put in place a system in which it's not a question of letting the head of the camel into the tent -- the camels run the place.

It has all happened quite quickly -- in less than 20 years. Laws were changed and regulations repealed until an Enron can set sail without responsibility, supervision or accountability. The business pages are fond of trumpeting the merits of "transparency" and "accountability," but you will notice whenever there is a chance to roll back any of New Deal regs, the corporations go for broke trying to get rid of them entirely.

I'm not attempting to make this a partisan deal -- only 73 percent of Enron's political donations went to Republicans. But I'll be damned if Enron's No. 1 show pony politician, George W. Bush, should be allowed to walk away from this. Ken Lay gave \$139,500 to Bush over the years. He chipped in \$100,000 to the Bush Cheney Inaugural Fund in 2000 and \$10K to the Bush-Cheney Recount Fund.

Plus, Enron's PAC gave Bush \$113,800 for his '94 and '98 political races and another \$312,500 from its executives. Bush got 14 free rides on Enron's corporate jets during the 2000 campaign, including at least two during the recount. Until January 2004, Enron was Bush's top contributor.

And what did it get for its money? Ken Lay was on Bush's short list to be energy secretary. He not only almost certainly served on Cheney's energy task force, there is every indication that the task force's energy plan, the one we have been on for five years, is in fact the Enron plan. Lay used Bush as an errand boy, calling the governor of Texas and having him phone Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania to vouch for what swell energy deregulation bills Enron was sponsoring in states all over the country.

It seems to me we all understand this is a systemic problem. We need to reform the political system, or we'll lose the democracy. I don't think it's that hard. It doesn't take rocket science. We've done it before successfully at the presidential level and tried it several places at the state level. Public campaign financing isn't perfect and can doubtlessly be improved upon as we go. Let us begin.

Molly Ivins writes about politics, Texas and other bizarre happenings.

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adult-back-to-school-student

Posted by: Pendelton on May 31, 2006 2:12 PM [\[Report this comment\]](#)

Molly, It all boils down to Campaign Finance Reform.

With funding of ALL elections by public monies & NO private funding, the elected become again of the people, for the people & by the people.

This is not a dream, Moveon.org has a grass roots movement trying to put such an idea in place.

Pendelton

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Revenge on California

Posted by: Artkansas on May 31, 2006 2:42 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

I always thought that a lot of the Energy crisis was payback time for California eschewing Bush when he ran for President. I still can't figure out Steve Peace though. His road to hell was sure paved with good intentions.

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deaudonnee

Posted by: deaudonnee on May 31, 2006 4:54 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

Billy Sol Estes, that boy really cooks!

Hey, billy, billy, hey billy, billy, BILLY!

He had one shining purpose and two sets of books.

Hey, billy, billy, hey, billy billy sol.

While other kids saved up their nickles and dimes

For jellybeans, licorice and fudge,

Well Billy saved, too, and when he had enough

He bought him a Federal Judge.

Just for you - Lay and Skilling & bush

PS: this song has more verses, you know.

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redemption

Posted by: vespasian01 on May 31, 2006 7:07 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

Cute lead about the "show pony." You're kind of fresh, M.

Don't worry, though, there is redemption. I'm convinced George Jr's retirement years will be spent healing the sick of the world, eliminating the scourge of landmines and writing fine poetry. So his place in history is set. At least Lay and Skilling will get to spend long hours chasing crabs with a flashlight and tweezers under one of those nasty wool blankets.

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Is the Bush nightmare over? Hey, progressives. Come out, come out, wherever you are.

Posted by: Sojourner on May 31, 2006 9:55 PM [[Report this comment](#)]

A systemic problem? Then it doesn't go away or get better if you leave it alone. It's a disease that just keeps getting worse.

Cancer is a systemic problem, because it takes over the body as a whole. In the Enron context, I expect Molly means it to be equivalent to "business as usual." That is, putting Lay and Skilling away is only temporary relief, at best. Nothing has changed yet at the root of the problem.

Corporate control of our government has metastasized. Unless the disease is attacked vigorously and deliberately, it will continue to spread. Judging by the now daily volume of rot that finally is being exposed to the light of day, I feel certain that thousands, if not tens of thousands, of political allies of Bush,Inc knew at least bits and pieces of exactly what was going on.

Our sickness is well entrenched. It's long past the time when we need leadership screaming out the truth.

However, I tip my hat to the courageous and honest doctors who have gotten the indictments and prosecuted the cases. My worst fear since Reagan's second term was that America would never find its way home again. I realized things would have to get worse before they got better. But invading a sovereign nation? Selling the People's Will to the highest bidder?

Is the worst of it over yet? I don't think so. The question always is, are we strong enough still to fight our way back to full health? Where are this generation's political heroes, willing to speak truth to power? As Tom Paine (not well loved in his own time) wrote, "These are the times to try our souls"—again. Time to get back to work, to put some substance behind the slogans.

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Campaign Finance Bribery is non-partisan.

Posted by: Lincoln fan on Jun 1, 2006 4:06 AM [\[Report this comment\]](#)

Effective campaign finance reform on the national level is impossible until we take control of both parties. The only group that wants reform is the people and we aren't represented by either party. The corporations are in control and we can't vote them out. Our votes are worthless in an election.

The only time our votes have power is before the election. Now is the time to use that power. It's High Noon time for the showdown. We must tell both parties that we refuse to play in a game with the cards stacked against us.

Join The Lincoln Initiative. Make "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" a reality. Click on [Lincoln Initiative](#)

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the American will of the people seems to be growing for sure

Posted by: concerned Canadian on Jun 1, 2006 5:10 AM [\[Report this comment\]](#)

You Americans need the same type of intelligent people (who spoke cogently and with the laws of Physics and Chemistry on their side to pooh -pooh the 'official' (read Cheney and Bush) version of the 911 Massacre of your own people), to cogently and with the laws of the true (not the rigged or the ignored) Constitution on their side restructure the American government to represent the will of the people and not the will of the corporate power structure. They already have enough power. I believe in the will and the power of true patriotic North Americans. Otherwise we will all get sucked into more than what you face now - your Cheney is barking and baring his teeth in order to restart Cold War 2. Send him, send his family to fight if he wants to. Don't go yourselves.

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reforming

Posted by: rsaxto on Jun 1, 2006 5:34 AM [[Report this comment](#)]

Reforming the political system would require that every vote be counted correctly and accurately, that all recent past election stealers be prosecuted, that all criminal electoral activity from the White House/congress/states be prosecuted, that campaigns be publicly financed, that the electoral college be killed and White House murderers be impeached. And then we would need to do whatever else is necessary to insure democracy. The bad news is that might take a hundred years and a hundred wars before all that can be accomplished because corporations are really hung up on greed and dominion.

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