

# Obama Chief of Staff Organized Cleantech Payola Scam and Now Does Same Crimes In Chicago

## Pay-To-Play: Chicago Tribune Blasts Rahm As Data Reveals 70% Of Donors Get Lucrative City Hall Contracts



by [Tyler Durden](#)

What do you get when you combine the most corrupt city in the United States with a mayor that got his political debut serving in the Clinton White House? Well, according to data presented by the [Chicago Tribune](#) today, it may just all add up to the second most sophisticated 'pay-to-play' operation in history...you know, because no one will ever come close to [beating the Clintons at their own game](#).

After reviewing more than 500 contributions made to Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel of at least \$5,000 since July 2015, the **Tribune reports today that nearly 70% of them came from people who have received, or are seeking, lucrative contracts with City Hall.** Frankly, we are 'shocked.'

As Mayor Rahm Emanuel ramps up his campaign fundraising toward a possible third term, he continues to rely on donors who have received City Hall benefits, ranging from contracts and zoning approvals to appointments and personal endorsements from the mayor, the Chicago Tribune has found.

With the February 2019 mayoral election still a year and a half away, Emanuel has collected \$3.1 million in high-dollar contributions. **And more than \$2.1 million of it — nearly 70 percent — has come from 83 donors who have benefited from actions at City Hall.**

Among the contributors: **law firms seeking approval for their clients' projects or lucrative bond business for themselves, developers needing City Hall permission to build here, an events promoter negotiating the financial details of a major music festival and restaurateurs wanting coveted space at Chicago's airports.**

So how does he do it?

Turns out there are plenty of examples which include the following 'doozy' in which **Rahm raked in nearly \$40,000 at a law firm fundraiser and then approved their zoning plans for a new McDonald's facility the very next day.**

For example, Emanuel has received blocks of campaign contributions from DLA Piper, one of the go-to firms for real estate developers to get zoning approval at City Hall. The firm's zoning law practice was built up by David Reifman, a onetime zoning attorney who now holds substantial approval power over all new projects as the city's commissioner of planning and development.

During Emanuel's first run for mayor, DLA Piper lawyers and relatives gave him \$54,000 in political contributions. In his bid for a second term, it was more than \$75,000. This time around, 15 of the firm's lawyers gave \$35,700 after Emanuel stopped by DLA Piper's downtown office for a Sept. 13 breakfast his official calendar listed as "non-city," the label often given to campaign events or fundraisers.

Emanuel's fundraiser took place as **DLA Piper zoning attorneys were lobbying City Hall to sign off on the new West Loop headquarters of McDonald's Corp. The Emanuel administration approved the plans the day after the fundraiser.**



And here's another great example whereby Rahm hired the law firm of **Schiff Hardin for the city's \$1.2 billion bond issue, an engagement on which they made over \$200,000 btw, then strolled through their office just a couple months later for his **kickback** fundraiser.**

Schiff Hardin is another firm whose lawyers have contributed to the mayor's campaign and benefited from decisions made by the Emanuel administration.

**The firm made at least \$205,000 serving as co-counsel on the city's January \$1.2 billion bond issue**, a massive borrowing plan to patch city debt, records show. About three months later, Emanuel attended a lunch at the firm's offices on South Wacker Drive, another event labeled "non-city" on the mayor's calendar. **A week later, Emanuel's campaign deposited \$17,800 from 11 of the firm's lawyers**, records show.

Schiff Hardin partner Bruce Weisenthal said the mayor was invited to speak at the firm. He said Emanuel spoke for about an hour, giving an uplifting talk about the state of Chicago and where the city is going. "He was very generous with his time," Weisenthal said.

That lunchtime event came after a fundraiser in 2013. That year, Schiff Hardin made \$96,000 in fees from a \$276 million city wastewater revenue bond project. Three months later, Emanuel collected more than \$16,000 from 13 Schiff Hardin lawyers at a campaign event.

But, it's not just law firms that seem to be able to buy special access in Chicago. No, this **concert operator got his Lollapalooza music festival extended by a day for the bargain basement price of just \$106,000 in donations.**

While Emanuel bans contributions from the owners of businesses with City Hall contracts, he has accepted them from businesses that have contracts or permits with so-called "sister agencies," such as the Chicago Park District. In such cases, the mayor's campaign has contended there is no contract directly with City Hall, though Emanuel controls the sister agencies and appoints their leaders.

And so Emanuel has taken contributions from C3 Presents, an Austin, Texas-based concert promotions company that puts on the massive Lollapalooza music festival in Grant Park.

In 2014, the Tribune reported that Charlie Jones, one of C3's founders, threw an Emanuel fundraiser at his Austin home during the city's signature South by Southwest festival. Soon after, Emanuel reported pulling in nearly \$104,000 in campaign contributions from Texas donors.

**This time around, Emanuel reported receiving more than \$106,000 from Texas donors in December and January, including maximum \$5,400 contributions from Jones, fellow C3 founder Charlie Walker and their wives.**

Oh, and for the right contributions, **Rahm apparently also likes to dole out those lucrative airport restaurant leases as well.**

**Emanuel also has accepted campaign money from businesses that have benefited from major concessionaire contracts at O'Hare International and Midway International airports.**

The mayor's office and his campaign say those contributions don't run afoul of Emanuel's executive orders because the businesses don't hold a contract directly with City Hall, but instead are licensees under two umbrella groups that have the contracts.

The restaurants at both airports do, however, stand to make millions of dollars from decisions made by Emanuel's Department of Aviation, where the mayor's hand-picked commissioner signs off on every souvenir shop, restaurant and book store at the airports.

Restaurant giant Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises has been granted access to travelers beyond security checkpoints under the two airport concession deals.

Company founder Richard Melman has been a longtime supporter of Emanuel, and several Lettuce restaurants — including Tallboy Tacos, Big City Chicken, Big Bowl, M Burger and R.J. Grunts — were selected for new spots at Midway under a contract approved Feb. 22.

The mayor's calendar shows Emanuel attending a "non-city" Jan. 12 lunch at Melman's RPM Steak restaurant in River North. Emanuel's calendar also shows the mayor meeting with Melman and Lettuce executive Christopher Meers at his fifth floor City Hall office Feb. 10 — **less than two weeks before the Midway contract won City Council approval.**

Meanwhile, the Tribune notes that the Rahm administration issued a statement on how they passed legislation "cracking down" on pay-to-play activities when they first took office back in 2011. **That said, as the Tribune also notes, the legislation has proven to be a complete farce as there are endless loopholes that essentially render it completely useless.** But, at least they 'tried.'

On the day he took office in May 2011, Emanuel issued executive orders aimed at cracking down on the pay-to-play politics that long served as a staple at City Hall. He banned business owners with city contracts and registered City Hall lobbyists from giving to the mayor.

In practice, the orders have proven to be narrowly drawn, allowing Emanuel to accept contributions from donors who benefit from his administration's actions. For example, registered lobbyists at a law firm can't give, but their colleagues can. The owners of companies with city contracts can't give, but their employees can.

Emanuel declined an interview request to discuss his fundraising efforts. Asked why the mayor heavily relies on individuals and firms who do business with the city for campaign contributions, Emanuel spokeswoman Shannon Breymaier issued a statement.

"On Mayor Emanuel's first day in office, he enacted several executive orders that set the highest ethical standards in the city's history," Breymaier said. "These orders include a first-of-its-kind ban on mayoral contributions from lobbyists and a prohibition on mayoral contributions from contractors doing business with the city of Chicago."

Of course, we're sure these are just more attempts to "[criminalize behavior that is normal](#)" ...right, Donna?