

NICAR24

March 7-10 • Baltimore



# Cracking the courts with data



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# Download the Tips Sheet with Links:



<https://bit.ly/TipSheetNICAR-CourtData>



# Getting Started:

- Register for a CourtListener account, if you don't already have one at  
[www.courtlistener.com](http://www.courtlistener.com)
- Get your FREE API key -  
[www.courtlistener.com/profile/api-token](http://www.courtlistener.com/profile/api-token)



# Free Law Project

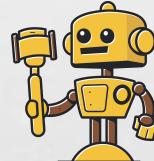
Free Law Project, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, uses technology, data, and advocacy to democratize access to legal information, regardless of socioeconomic status. We strive to make the law understandable and accessible to all, using advanced technology and data analysis to break down barriers.

Free Law  
Project



COURT  
LISTENER

RECAP  
BYCEK





## What is PACER?

- The Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) service provides electronic public access to every federal court record.
- About 1.5B records — the largest paywall on the planet.
- Access to case information costs \$0.10 per page, capped at \$3.00 for most documents.
- Criticisms: out of date, hard to use, expensive, anti-democratic, illegal.
- RECAP is a response that crowdsources documents and makes them freely available.
- Metadata about 350M documents, but only 10M docs.
- Full text searchable.
- Free

# COURT LISTENER

What is CourtListener, and how is it helpful?

- CourtListener is a free legal research website containing millions of legal opinions from federal and state courts.
- Fully searchable using real expressions, natural language, and emojis.
- 9M opinions from over a thousand jurisdictions
- Nearly complete SCOTUS record
- More opinions scraped from court websites daily (about 300/day)
- Search and docket alerts for journalists, lawyers, and the public
- API, bulk data, searchable interface

[www.courtlistener.com](http://www.courtlistener.com)



# COURT LISTENER

## What is in CourtListener?

- Nearly complete record of US Case Law
  - Case Law Search
  - Citation Look Up
  - Citation Visualizations
- RECAP Archive
- Largest collection of Oral Arguments
- Judges database
- Judicial Financial Disclosures

[www.courtlistener.com/help/coverage](http://www.courtlistener.com/help/coverage)

# RECAP The Law – “Turning PACER Around” since 2009

- Browser extensions for Chrome, Safari, Edge, and Firefox that save you money while you use PACER.
- Everything you purchase gets added to our public archive and gets a permalink.
- Everything anybody else purchased you get for free.
- Use RECAP to save money and contribute to a public archive.
- Over 20k users

👉 <https://free.law/recap/> 👈



# CourtListener.com - RECAP Archive

- Biggest open collection of federal filings online — 60M cases and 350M items
- Sourced from:
  - Crawling free opinions from PACER
  - RECAP Extension and @recap.email
  - PACER RSS feeds
  - Bulk data gathering services
  - Big Cases Twitter bot & handful of topical case bots
- Full text searchable including scanned docs

# CourtListener.com - RECAP Archive

- Excellent for investigative research:
  - Full text search makes background checks more complete
  - Biggest open and searchable collection of federal court filings
- Innumerable historical documents from federal cases:
  - U.S. v. Manafort, U.S. v. Gates, U.S. v. Michael Cohen
  - The “Citizenship on the Census” case
  - “DNC v. Russian Trolls” case
  - Trump Emoluments
- Alerts for dockets to know when new filings are available
- Services available for bulk research without having interns click thousands of PACER documents

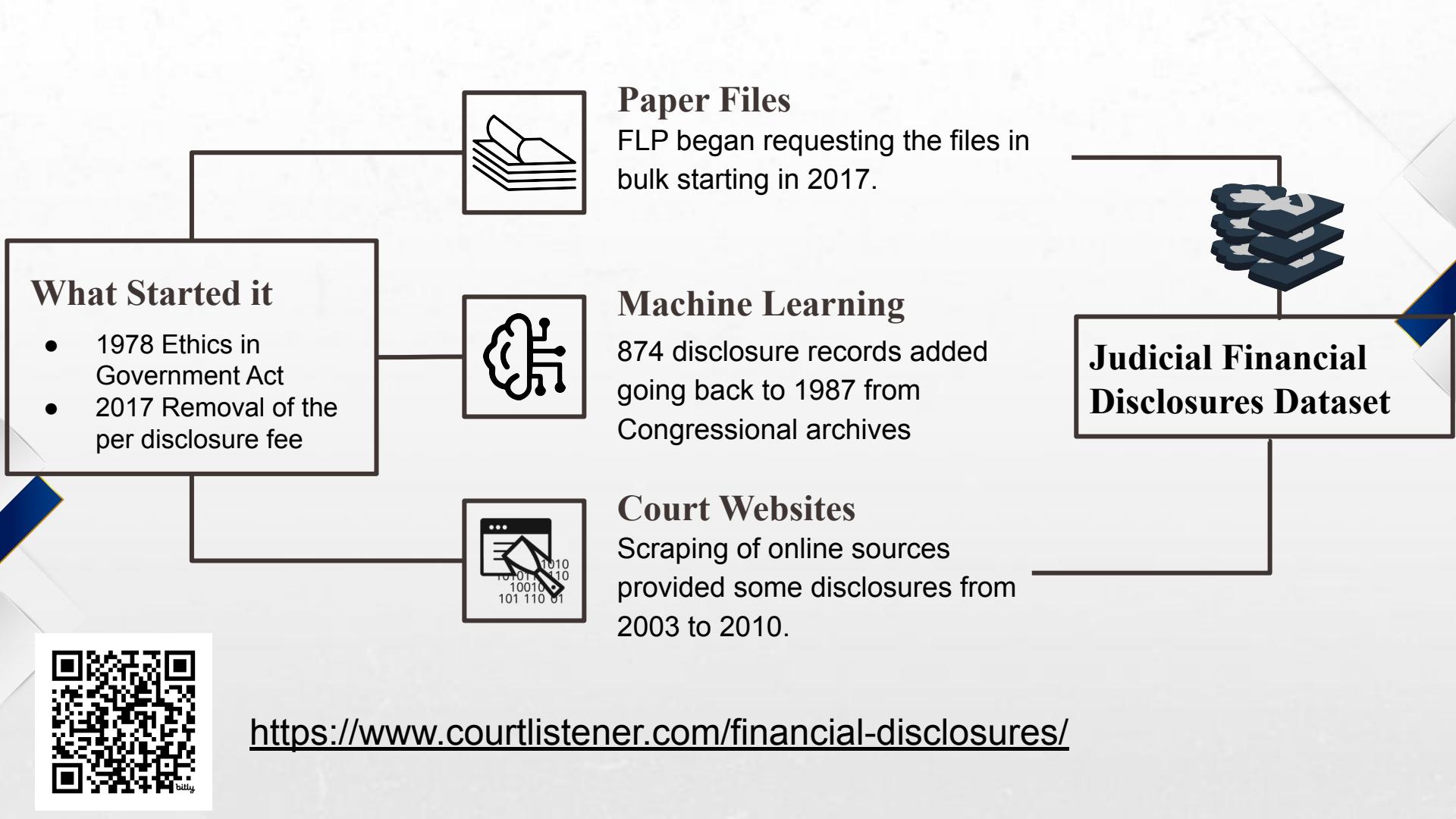
# RECAP Demo



Recorded Demo: <https://youtu.be/NdfuLIcL1CU>



# Building the Judicial Financial Disclosures Database



# Federal Judicial Financial Disclosures

Justices' and judges' financial disclosures must be provided to "any person" who requests them.

*– the Ethics in Government Act.*

AO 10 Rev. 1/2021		FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REPORT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2020		Report Required by the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. app. § 101-111)	
1. Person Reporting (last name, first, middle initial) Golmap, James R.		2. Court or Organization US District Court, Eastern District of Texas		3. Date of Report 12/07/2021	
4. Title (Article III judges indicate active or senior status; magnistrate judges indicate full- or part-time) United States District Judge (Active)		5a. Report Type (check appropriate type) <input type="checkbox"/> Nomination <input type="checkbox"/> Initial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annual <input type="checkbox"/> Final		6. Reporting Period 01/01/2020 to 12/31/2020	
7. Chambers or Office Address 100 East Houston Street Marshall, TX 75670					
IMPORTANT NOTES: The instructions accompanying this form must be followed. Complete all parts, checking the <b>NONE</b> box for each part where you have no reportable information.					
I. POSITIONS. (Reporting individual only; see pp. 8-11 of filing instructions)					
<input type="checkbox"/> NONE (No reportable positions.)		NAME OF ORGANIZATION/ENTITY			
POSITION					
1. Trustee		Tommy B. & Lucille Jackson Slaughter Foundation No. 2			
2. Trustee		T. Whitfield Davidson Foundation			
3.					
4.					
5.					
II. AGREEMENTS. (Reporting individual only; see pp. 14-16 of filing instructions)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NONE (No reportable agreements.)					
DATE		PARTIES AND TERMS			
1.					
2.					
3.					

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REPORT		Name of Person Reporting		Date of Report	
Page 4 of 17		Golmap, James R.		12/07/2021	

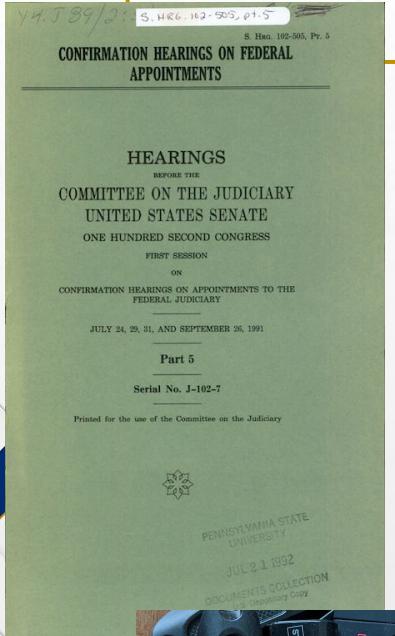
**VII. INVESTMENTS AND TRUSTS** – income, value, transactions (includes those of spouse and dependent children; see pp. 34-40 of filing instructions.)

A Description of Assets (including trust assets)		B Income during reporting period		C Gross value at end of reporting period		D Transactions during reporting period				
Place "X" after each asset exempt from prior disclosure		(1) Annual Code 1 (A-F)	(2) Temporary or def. int. or art.) Code 2 (I-P)	(1) Value Code 3 (Q-W)	(2) Value Method Code 3 (Q-W)	(3) Type (e.g., long/br., redemption)	(4) Date mm/yy	(5) Value Code 3 (A-F)	(6) Gross Code 1 (A-F)	(7) Inquiry of buyer/seller (of private transaction)
1. Allianz Bernstein Large Cap Growth Fund class A		A	Dividend	J	T					
2. American Electric Power-common stock		D	Dividend	M	T					
3. AT & T Inc.-common stock		A	Dividend	J	T					
4. Berkshire Hathaway Class B common stock		A	Dividend	K	T					
5. Boeing Co. common stock		D	Dividend	N	T					
6. Cargill Sys Inc.-common stock		A	Dividend	J	T					
7. Citigroup common stock		A	Dividend	J	T					
8. Coca Cola Co. common stock		B	Dividend	M	T					
9. Colgate Palmolive Co. common stock		A	Dividend	J	T					
10. Corning Inc. common stock		A	Dividend	J	T					
11. Dell Technologies Inc. common stock		N	Dividend	J	T					
12. Disney Co. common stock		B	Dividend	N	T					
13. Emerson Electric common stock		A	Dividend	K	T					
14. Exxon Mobil common stock		C	Dividend	K	T					
15. Federated März Ulrichsen & Co. #253		A	Dividend	L	T					
16. Ford Motor Co. common stock		A	Dividend	K	T					
17. General Electric common stock		C	Dividend	N	T					

1. Income/Gain Code	A = \$1,000 or less	B = \$1,001 - \$1,000,000	C = \$1,001 - \$1,000,000	D = \$1,001 - \$1,000,000	E = \$1,001 - \$10,000
2. Value Codes	I = \$1,000 or less	J = \$1,001 - \$1,000,000	K = \$1,001 - \$10,000,000	L = \$10,001 - \$100,000,000	M = \$100,001 - \$1,000,000
(See Columns C1 and D1)	N = \$1,001 - \$10,000	O = \$10,001 - \$100,000	P = \$100,001 - \$1,000,000	PT = \$1,000,001 - \$10,000,000	PT = \$10,000,001 - \$100,000,000
3. Value Method Codes	Q = Aggregates	R = Cost (Real Estate Only)	S = Aggregates	T = Cost	U = Estimated
	U = Book Value	V = Other	W = Estimated		

Form AO 10

# What Free Law Project Collected



- Really long TIFFs - <https://bit.ly/longTIFF>
- Hundreds of TIFFs for one disclosure - <https://bit.ly/100sTIFFS>
- Files on jump drives
- 250K pages of documents from Senate hearing records
- Forms with redactions, corrections, misspellings, old companies

NAME		FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REPORT		Annual Report Due 10 days after Audit Report	
Name (Last, First, Middle initial)		Comments		Date of Report	
Smith, Fern M.		U.S. Dist. Ct. N.D. Cal.		5/10/88	
Judge		May 9, 1988		11/17	
Name of office		Superior Ct. San Fran. Dept. 264 455 Golden Gate Ave. San Fran. Cal. 94102		05/01/88	
<p><b>IMPORTANT NOTES:</b> Please list the individuals accompanying you. The report should include information concerning your financial interest in any corporation, partnership, or other business entity. Identify the corporation, partnership, or other business entity and the nature of your interest. The report should also include information concerning your financial interest in any trust, partnership, or other business entity in which you are a trustee, co-trustee, or co-partner. Identify the trust, partnership, or other business entity and the nature of your interest. The report should also include information concerning your financial interest in any corporation, partnership, or other business entity in which you are a trustee, co-trustee, or co-partner. Identify the trust, partnership, or other business entity and the nature of your interest.</p>					

<u>I. POSITIONS.</u> (Reporting individual only; see pp. 15-16 of instructions.)		<u>NAME OF ORGANIZATION/ENTITY</u>
<u>POSITION</u>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>NONE (no separate position)</u>	
<u>Judge</u>	<u>Superior Court, San Francisco</u>	
<u>Trustee</u>	<u>Fern M. Smith Trust</u>	

II. AGREEMENTS. (Reporting individual only; see p. 17 of instructions.)	
DATE	PARTIES AND TERMS
<input type="checkbox"/> <small>NONE (or reiterate agreement)</small>	
<u>Sept 1986</u> Fern M. Smith and Bessie Bessie & M. Kinner, Part of <u>Partnership Share as of Sept 1986 to be made in</u>	

ANNUAL INVESTIGATOR'S REPORT STATE DRAFTED		
III. NON-INVESTIGATION INCOME. (Please describe for spouse see pp. 18-20 of instructions.)		
DATE (Indicate month only)	SOURCE AND TYPE	GROSS INCOME (Enter the amount)
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>NONE</b> (No reported non-investigation income)		
1	State of California - Wages	\$ 8660
1	City/County of San Francisco - Wages	\$ 12,760
1	William A. Bowers, Inc. (S)	\$ 1
1	Benson, Benson & Associates	\$ 4600

<b>FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REPORT</b>		Name of Person Reporting	Date of Report
Page 5 of 39		Sidney H. Stiles	8/16/2005
<b>2.7. INVESTMENTS and TRUSTS</b>			

# Enhancing the Data:

- Free Law Project developed a parsing system for the disclosures.
  - Takes the disclosure, whether it's a single-page TIFF, multi-page TIFF or PDF, scanned document or text, and converts it into machine-readable JSON data.
- A machine learning model to identify pages in the Senate hearing records that looked like financial disclosure documents.
  - Extracted 843 Financial Disclosure from over 250k pages of documents.
- Disclosures were converted into good PDF files and ingested the data into the database
- All data available via CourtListener APIs and website
- Connection of Financial Disclosures dataset with FLP's Judges database

# What's in the Dataset? (*So Far*)

**32,336** disclosures documenting:

- **1,901,720** investments
- **37,050** positions held outside of the judiciary
- **10,007** legal agreements
- **15,302** sources of non-investment income
- **20,175** sources of spousal income
- **33,472** reimbursements
- **2,028** gifts to judges and judicial employees
- **18,775** debts



Coverage Page: [www.courtlistener.com/help/coverage/financial-disclosures/](http://www.courtlistener.com/help/coverage/financial-disclosures/)

TA 32.80 10.59% LYEL 17.00 8.70% NOA

GWRS 1 TA 32.80 10.59% LYEL 17.00 8.70% NOA

TA 32.80 10.59% LYEL 17.00 8.70% NOA

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Buy		
Buy	03/01/18	59% LY
Sold	01/01/18	NOA
Buy	01/01/18	6 NOA
Sold		

**VII. INVESTMENT**  
 **NONE (No reporta**

(1) Type (e.g., buy, sell, redemption)

**FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE**  
Page 2 of 18

# Investigating Judges and the Courts

WSJ

## Hidden Interests

Project with James Grimaldi, Joe Palazzolo,  
& Coulter Jones

<https://on.wsj.com/3tRxpla>



# Project Idea

Federal law prohibits judges and justices from hearing cases in which they or their families have a “legal or equitable interest, however small” in order to promote confidence in the judiciary.

– 28 U.S. Code § 455 (d)(4)

*Tip: Compare data sets to find stories*

# Judges' Dockets

- WSJ and Free Law Project scraped district court websites to obtain the dockets of all judges
- The Journal compared judges' financial disclosure forms against their dockets and created long lists of potential conflicts
- James, Joe and Coulter went through thousands of potential conflicts using PACER

*Tip: Whenever covering a federal suit, look up the judge's disclosure*

[www.courtlistener.com/person](http://www.courtlistener.com/person)

# RECAP Dockets

## ★ In the Matter of Search Warrants Executed on April 9, 2018 (1:18-mj-03161) District Court, S.D. New York

[View on PACER](#)[Search this Docket](#)[Get Alerts](#)

Last Updated: Jan. 16, 2019, 8:52 a.m. EST

Assigned To: Kimba Maureen Wood

Date Filed: April 13, 2018

Date of Last Known Filing: Aug. 20, 2018

[DOCKET ENTRIES](#)[PARTIES AND ATTORNEYS](#)[Filed](#)

YYYY-MM-DD

[to](#)

YYYY-MM-DD

[Documents](#)[to](#)[Ascending](#)[Descending](#)

Document Number	Date Filed	Description	
1	Apr 13, 2018	MEMORANDUM OF LAW in Opposition to Michael Cohen's Motion for a Temporary Restraining Order by USA as to UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. (vb) (Entered: 04/13/2018)	<a href="#">Main Document</a> Memorandum of Law in Opposition <a href="#">Download PDF</a>
	Apr 13, 2018	Case Designated ECF	
	Apr 13, 2018	Case Designated ECF as to In the Matter of Search Warrants Executed on April 9, 2018. (jm)	
	Apr 13, 2018	Show Cause Hearing	

# Dossiers

We prepared detailed lists of each recusal violation we found and then contacted the judges

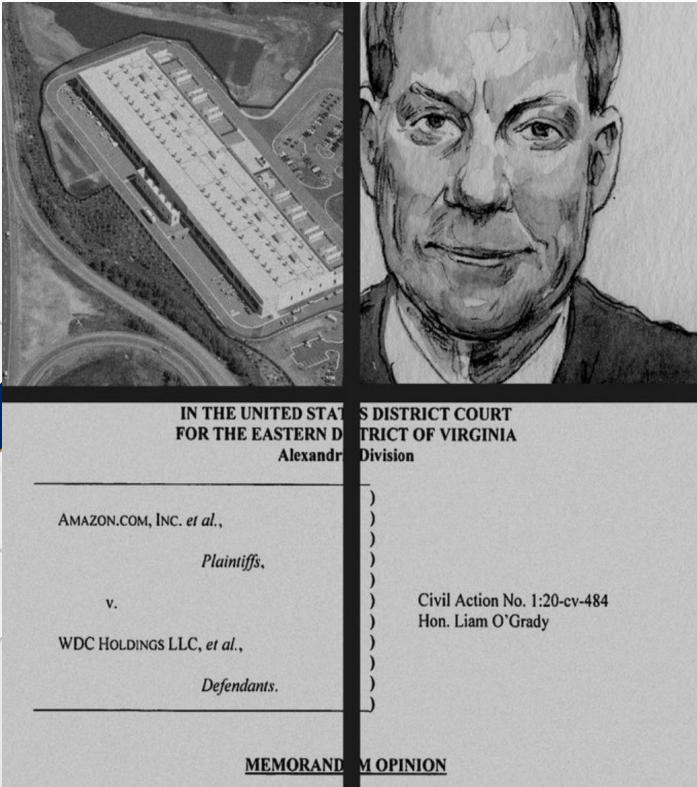


## *ExxonMobil Oil Corporation v. TIG Insurance Company*

*Judge Ramos's 2016 and 2017 financial disclosure forms show that a brokerage account held \$15,001 to \$50,000 of Exxon Mobil Corp. common stock in those years (lines 92 and 82). His 2018 disclosure form shows that the same brokerage account held \$15,000 or less of Exxon stock (line 78).*

*Judge Ramos was assigned to ExxonMobil Oil Corp. v. TIG Insurance Co. (1:16-cv-09527) on 12-12-2016. He granted Exxon's motion to compel arbitration on 2-2-2017 and confirmed the arbitration award on 5-18-2020. The case is currently on appeal.*

# Findings



- 152 federal judges around the nation have violated U.S. law and judicial ethics by overseeing 1,076 court cases involving companies in which they or their family owned stock.
- 61 judges didn't just own stocks of companies that were litigants. Accounts held by the judges or their families **traded** shares as suits were progressing.

[on.wsj.com/3zU8a5Q](https://on.wsj.com/3zU8a5Q)





In New York, U.S. District Judge Edgardo Ramos handled a suit between an Exxon Mobil Corp. unit and TIG Insurance Co. over a pollution claim while owning between \$15,001 and \$50,000 of Exxon stock. He accepted an arbitration panel's opinion that TIG should pay Exxon \$25 million and added \$8 million of interest to the tab.

***Tip: Tap expertise of nonpartisan legal experts***

# Results

- After Journal stories, judges in 883 cases have notified courts that they improperly the cases that now are eligible to be reopened
- The U.S. Senate and House immediately responded with a bill to speed up online posting of financial disclosures.

## President Biden Signs Judicial Ethics Law Bolstering Stock Disclosures

Supreme Court justices, federal judges now required to promptly report their finances; legislation comes after WSJ investigation



[on.wsj.com/3bmQ3Lz](https://on.wsj.com/3bmQ3Lz)

*Tip: Contact congressional judiciary committees for expertise*

# Flaws in the Data

## Newer forms: [pub.jefs.uscourts.gov/](http://pub.jefs.uscourts.gov/)

**Get Access and Search**

You must agree to the following to access and search reports.

I understand that it is unlawful to obtain or use this or these reports for: any unlawful purpose; any commercial purpose other than by news and communication media for dissemination to the general public; determining or establishing of the credit rating of any individual; or use, directly or indirectly, in the solicitation of money for any political, charitable, or other purpose (5 U.S.C. § 13107).

I understand that whoever, in any manner within the jurisdiction of the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the Government of the United States, knowingly and willfully (1) fabricates, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact; (2) makes any materially false fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation; or (3) makes or uses any false writing or document, knowing the same to contain any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or entry, shall be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned not more than five years, or both. [Register for Access to the Database](#)

Section 13107 of title 5, United States Code :  
requested. Failure to comply with these statu  
disclosure report filed with the Administrative  
of the Financial Disclosure Requirements if  
be disclosed to members of the Judicial Con  
judiciary officers and employees who have a  
the individuals whose reports are accessed, i  
information in the performance of their duty:

Your Name (First Last) \*  \* Indicates Required Field  
Occupation \*   
Email    
Telephone   
Address Line 1 \*   
Address Line 2   
City \*   
State / Province \*   
Zip / Postal Code \*   
Note: Users must register each time they acc  
  
Begin Registration

**Gilstrap**

Year Report Type Court Name Position Sort By

Relevance Best Matches First

Check the box to the left for each financial disclosure report you wish to download. Refine your search to narrow by categories or adjust your keywords for search. Multiple options in each category may be selected.

**Gilstrap, James R.**  
District Judge  
U.S. District Court - Texas Eastern

Annual, 2022  Periodic Transaction Report, Oct 11, 2022  Periodic Transaction Report, Sep 21, 2022  Periodic Transaction Report, Sep 1, 2022  Annual, 2021

I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. (28 U.S.C. § 1746)

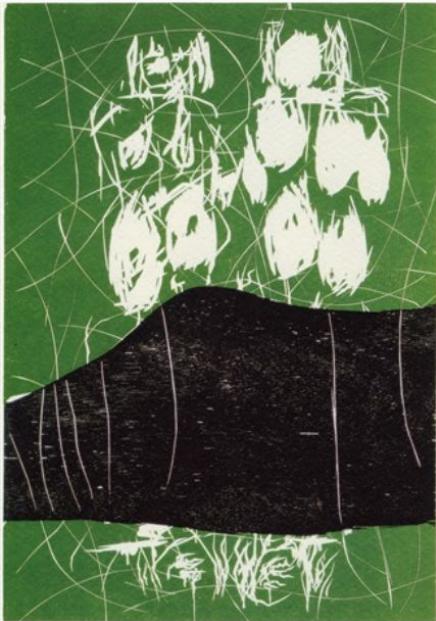
Please note, section 13107(b)(2)(A) of title 5, U.S. Code requires that you provide your name, occupation and address. Section 13107  
(b)(2)(B) requires that if you are obtaining a report at the request of, or on behalf of, another individual or an organization, you must  
specifically list that individual or organization. Failure to comply with these statutory requirements is cause to deny your request.

A close-up photograph of a stack of newspapers on a table, showing the edges and some text on the front pages.

# What Else Can be Done With The Data?

# Inside the Data: Art Collections

Millions of dollars in art investments



Georg Baselitz, *Der Berg*, 1991



George Condo, *Conversations*, 2011



George Condo, *Blue Expanding Figures*, 2006

Examples of Artwork Owned by Judge Helene N. White,  
U. S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

API CALL -> [/investments/?description\\_\\_icontains=Artwork](/investments/?description__icontains=Artwork):

# Inside the Data: World Travelers

Travel Reimbursements to over 600 locations across the globe.

## FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REPORT

Page 3 of 6

Name of Person Reporting	Davis, Michael J	Date of Report
		04/18/2008

## V. GIFTS. (Includes those to spouse and dependent children; see pp. 28-31 of filing instructions.)

**NONE (No reportable gifts.)**

<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>VALUE</u>
1. Minneapolis Club	Honorary Membership	\$ 4,500.00
2. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Government	2 brief cases, Figs, crystal obelisk	\$ 150.00
3.		



13.	Japanese Government	Nov. 17-22, 2007	Tokyo, Japan	Educational conference	travel and lodging
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14.	Judicial Yuan of Taiwanese Government	Nov. 23-27, 2007	Taipei, China	Educational conference	travel and lodging
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API CALL -> [/reimbursements/?source\\_\\_icontains=Saudi](/reimbursements/?source__icontains=Saudi) OR [/reimbursements/?source\\_\\_icontains=figs](/reimbursements/?source__icontains=figs)

# Inside the Data: Investments of the 1%

**9,653 investments greater than \$1,000,001 \***

- 8,588 investments between \$1,000,001 and \$5,000,000
- 613 investments between \$5,000,001 and \$25,000,000
- 64 investments between \$25,000,001 and \$50,000,000\*
- 118 investments above \$50,000,001



\* This does not account for duplicate investments over multiple years

API CALL -> [/investments/?gross\\_value\\_code=P3](#)    OR    [/investments/?gross\\_value\\_code=P4](#)

# Redactions:

<https://storage.courtlistener.com/us/federal/judicial/financial-disclosures/8587/matthew-joseph-kacsmaryk-disclosure.2016.pdf>

[https://storage.courtlistener.com/us/federal/judicial/financial-disclosures/8587/matthew-joseph-kacsmaryk-disclosure.2021\\_1.pdf](https://storage.courtlistener.com/us/federal/judicial/financial-disclosures/8587/matthew-joseph-kacsmaryk-disclosure.2021_1.pdf)

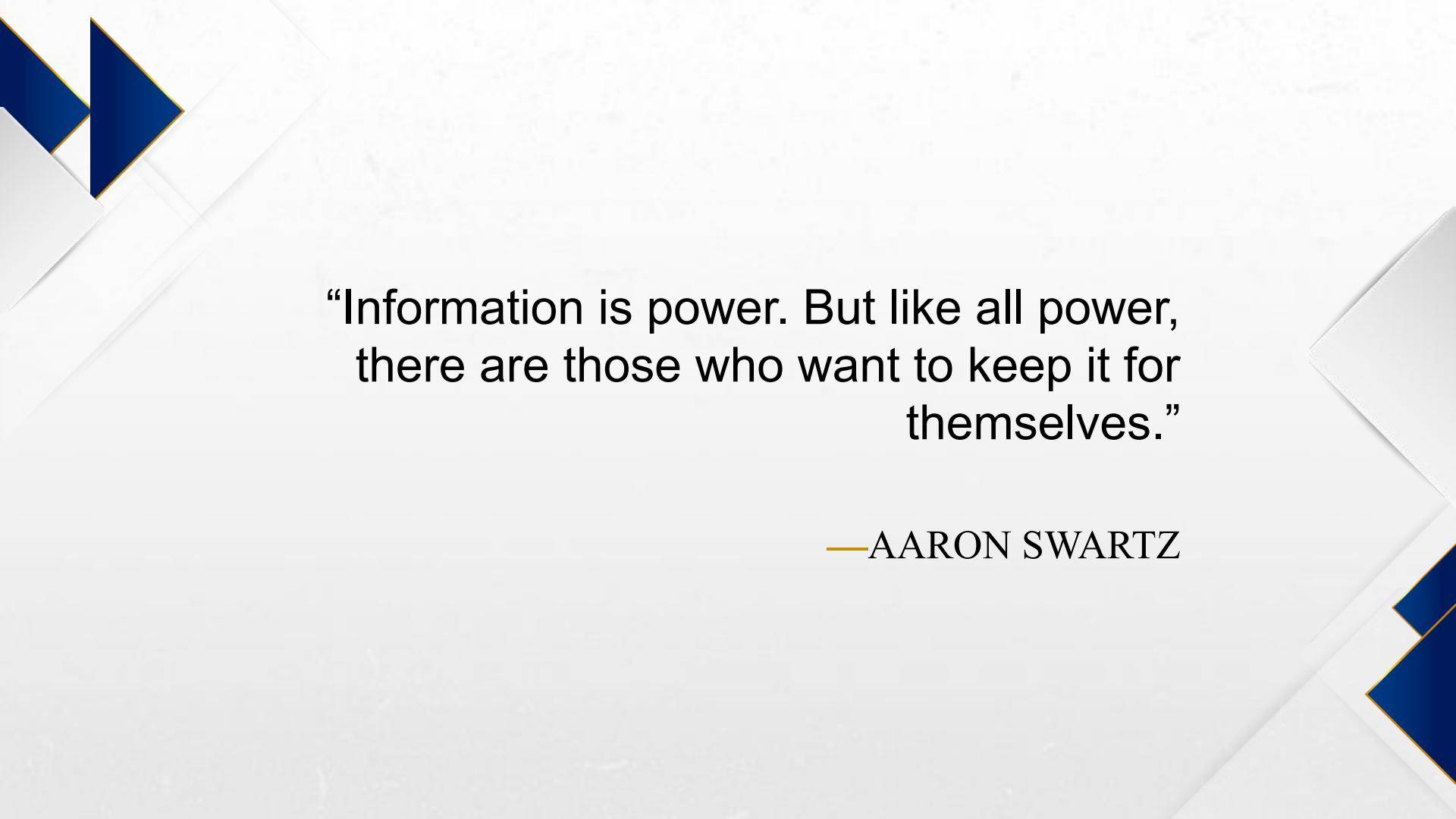
10. College Invest 529 Aggressive Growth Allocation	A	Distribution	J	T			
11. Publix Supermarkets, Inc., Common Stock . (Private)	G	Distribution	P1	U			
12. Wells Fargo Bank Accounts	A	Interest	K	T			
13.							

13. CollegeInvest Age-Based Aggressive Growth	B	Dividend	K	T		
14. [REDACTED] Common Stock	G	Dividend	P2	T		
15.						

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124 }  
125   
126 font-size: 22px;  
127 color: #800000;  
128 font-family: 'montserratregular';  
129 }  
130 }  
131 em.mail{  
132 background: url(../img/mailico.png) no-repeat center;  
133 display: inline-block;  
134 width: 12px;  
135 height: 14px;  
136 float: left;  
137 margin: 2px 7px 0 0;  
138 }  
139 }  
140 em.phone{  
141 background: url(../img/phoneico.png) no-repeat center;  
142 display: inline-block;  
143 width: 20px;  
144 height: 18px;  
145 float: left;  
146 margin: 3px 3px 0 0;  
147 }  
148 }  
149 private/var/folders/t1/g703s97xg3c95drdpam/0000gp/T/8c08621-937-467  
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# Hands On



“Information is power. But like all power,  
there are those who want to keep it for  
themselves.”

—AARON SWARTZ



Questions?

# Thank You!



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The Wall Street Journal

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William Palin

Free Law Project

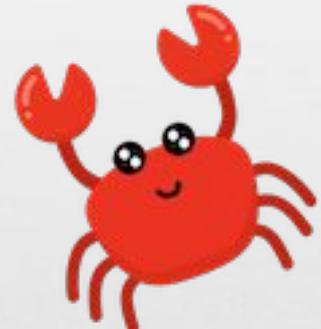
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@flooie

# Converting to PDFs:

- Disclosures all converted into good PDFs using Doctor. Free Law Project's Open Source microservice for converting and extracting documents and audio files at scale.

<https://free.law/projects/doctor>



# Disclosure Extractor

- Bill - add short description of extractor here

[Link to Extractor](#)



# Query into Dockets

- Using CourtListener Search -  
<https://www.courtlistener.com/recap/>
- Using Python and how to make modifications -  
NEED LINK

