

# LOBBYIST SUPERDELEGATES TIP NOMINATION TOWARD HILLARY CLINTON

Lobbyists are not only staffing and financing Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, they're also tipping the nomination process in her favor as superdelegates.

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CHARLOTTE, NC - SEPTEMBER 04: Democratic National Committee Chair, U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) speaks on stage after calling the convention to order during day one of the Democratic National Convention at Time Warner Cable Arena on September 4, 2012 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The DNC that will run through September 7, will

nominate U.S. President Barack Obama as the Democratic presidential candidate. (Photo by Streeter Lecka/Getty Images) Photo: Streeter Lecka/Getty Images

Lobbyists are not only [staffing](#) and [financing](#) Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, they're also tipping the nomination process in her favor by serving as so-called superdelegates to the Democratic National Convention.

Bernie Sanders won the New Hampshire Democratic primary by more than 22 percentage points and by doing so, earned 15 delegates to Clinton's 9. So it came as a [shock](#) to many observers when Clinton, despite losing the second biggest rout [in state history](#), walked away with the same number of delegates.

That's because Clinton had the support of six New Hampshire unpledged delegates – better known as superdelegates – consisting of prominent elected officials and members of the Democratic National Committee, who have the same power as the delegates chosen by voters. An [Associated Press survey](#) found that superdelegates nationally overwhelmingly supported Clinton.

There are 712 superdelegates in all, which is about 15 percent of the total delegates available and 30 percent of the total needed to win the nomination. If the nomination process is close, superdelegates may effectively pick the party's presidential nominee, potentially overriding the will of voters.

The following individuals are unelected, Clinton-supporting superdelegates who simultaneously work in the lobbying industry:

- **Jeff Berman**, well-known for his [delegate-strategy work](#) in the past, is being paid by the Hillary Clinton campaign to organize her delegate-counting effort while himself being a superdelegate. A “[top lobbyist](#)” at Bryan Cave LLP, Berman previously [worked](#) as a lobbyist for the private prison company Geo Group and as a lobbyist helping TransCanada build support for the Keystone XL.

- **Bill Shaheen** is one of the six New Hampshire superdelegates to endorse Clinton. Shaheen is a prolific party fundraiser, and his law firm is registered to lobby local officials in the state. The most recently available lobbying [records](#) show that Shaheen's firm is registered to lobby on behalf of the American Council of Life Insurers and PainCare Centers, among other clients. PainCare has faced increasing [scrutiny](#) as local officials have noted that eight of the 10 most prolific opioid prescribers in New Hampshire's Medicaid program worked for PainCare. The flood of prescription painkillers has fueled the heroin epidemic in the region, as four out of five heroin addicts report [beginning](#) their drug habit with opioids. Bill is the husband of Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H.
- **Joanne Dowdell**, another New Hampshire superdelegate, is the senior vice president for global government affairs at News Corporation, the parent company of *Fox News*. Federal Election Commission reports show Dowdell has contributed directly to multiple Democrats [as well](#) as to the News Corp PAC, a company committee that [splits](#) its donations between lawmakers of both parties. The News Corp government affairs division works to lobby public officials and regulators.
- Superdelegates **Jill Alper**, **Minyon Moore**, and **Maria Cardona** are officials at Dewey Square Group, a lobbying firm that is closely affiliated with the Clinton campaign and retained by the Clinton-supporting Super PACs Priorities USA Action and Correct the Record. Alper and Moore are Clinton advisers who have raised over [\\$100,000](#) for her campaign. Dewey Square Group, as we've [reported](#), was retained by the health insurance industry to undermine health reform efforts in 2009, including proposals to change Medicare Advantage. The firm has previously worked to influence policy on behalf of Enron, Countrywide, Citigroup, Coca-Cola, the U.S. Telecom Association and News Corporation.
- **Jennifer Cunningham** is the managing director of SKDKnickerbocker, a political consulting firm that provides a variety



of services, including advertising and direct lobbying of public officials. In recent years, SKDKnickerbocker helped a coalition of corporate clients [lobby](#) the Obama administration on a tax cut for overseas earnings; [lobbied](#) for weakened rules governing for-profit colleges; and helped a food industry group [undermine](#) Michelle Obama's nutrition guidelines for foods marketed to children. Recent [records](#) show that the firm is providing consulting work for Independence USA PAC, the Super PAC backed by billionaire Michael Bloomberg.

- **Tonio Burgos**, a [fundraiser](#) for Clinton, is a lobbyist [registered](#) to influence New York City officials. Burgos' current client list includes Verizon, Pfizer, and American Airlines.
- **Emily Giske**, also a lobbyist in New York City, is registered to work on behalf of Airbnb, Yum Brands (the parent company of Taco Bell), Pfizer, and the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association, a trade group for Wall Street firms such as Goldman Sachs, Fidelity, and Bank of America.

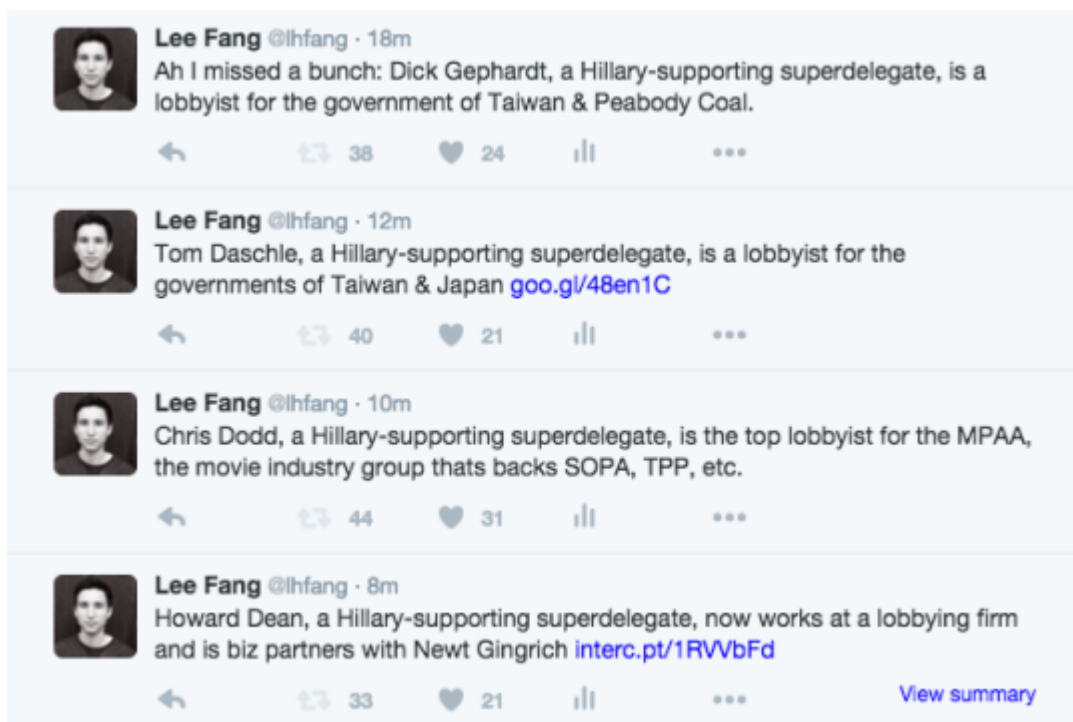
Although they make up only a small proportion of the superdelegates, the presence of lobbyists in such a potentially decisive role adds fuel to the critique that the Democratic Party is influenced by monied special interests. In recent months, the DNC quietly [repealed](#) rules instituted by Barack Obama that banned lobbyists from donating to the party.

Asked about the role of lobbyists as superdelegates, DNC spokesperson Deshundra Jefferson referred us to a [blog post](#) on *Medium* by Patrice Taylor, the director of party affairs and delegate selection. The post does not explain why professional influence peddlers were designated as superdelegates. As many commenters have noted, the post by Taylor also uses a distorted pie chart that [minimizes](#) the share of superdelegates in the total number of party delegates.

Superdelegates were [added](#) to the nomination process as a reaction to the chaotic 1980 Democratic convention, in which supporters of Ted Kennedy attempted to challenge President Jimmy Carter. The goal was to give the party elites more control. In 2008, superdelegates flocked to Clinton over Obama, creating a similar controversy over the possibility of subverting the democratic process.

The party has received increasing scrutiny as many activists have decried what appears to be a system designed to benefit establishment candidates, particularly Clinton. MoveOn.org [sponsored](#) a petition calling for the DNC not to allow the superdelegates to “deny democracy.”

**Update:** After publishing this story, we noticed several other Clinton-supporting superdelegates who work in the lobbying industry. See the tweets below (and [click here](#) to follow the links provided):



**The  
Intercept\_**

