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NEWS

# Government benefits

## Bush stands to gain from city's condemnation

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ARLINGTON, Texas — The Texas Rangers baseball club, partly owned by Republican gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush, stands to benefit from the government condemnation of land around its new ballpark. In recent weeks, Bush has criticized government actions against private landowners.

The condemnation proceedings contradict Bush's statements supporting landowners' rights and denouncing big government, Democrats charged Wednesday.

They said the proceedings also defy the Texas Republican Party's platform that states "public money or public powers should not be used to fund or implement so-called private enterprise projects."

Court records show that the city of Arlington and a group overseeing the development of the ballpark complex are fighting to control private land near the stadium for ventures that would benefit the owners of the Texas

Rangers, including general managing partner Bush.

Landowners contend the city is needlessly taking away private land to help the owners construct lucrative restaurants and offices at taxpayers' expense.

"This has to do with a group of wealthy businessmen subverting the intent of the law and profiteering," said Chuck McDonald, a spokesman for Democratic Gov. Ann Richards' campaign. "You've got a real difference in his campaign rhetoric and in his private business practices."

Bush defended the condemnation and accused Richards' campaign of diverting attention from the governor's position on federal control of several lakes in Texas.

"The city of Arlington and the Arlington sports authority did condemn property around The Ballpark at Arlington. The property values went up in certain cases. And there is one case in which people have taken their claim to the court of law," he said.

"So there is proper recourse, and it's good public policy to give

people a chance to take their claims to the courts. Ann Richards on the other hand was willing to turn over giant swaths of Texas land and Texas resources to the (federal government), and the citizens of Texas would not have had proper recourse."

Richards in May sought federal protection of five waterways, including Caddo Lake in East Texas, but she changed her position two months later saying she was concerned about increased involvement by the federal government in state affairs.

The Bush campaign also stressed that Richards signed off on the legislation that cleared the way for development of the new ballpark.

McDonald responded: "We signed the bill and thought it was an appropriate public benefit to give the Rangers the kind of home they deserve to have, but it crosses the line when they try to take advantage of the fact that you can benefit at private landowners' expense."

The condemnation dispute involves two tracts of land for de-

velopment of projects approved in conjunction with the new stadium. The city of Arlington and the Arlington Sports Facilities Development Authority (ASFDA) filed suit to acquire the land in 1991.

But the landowners filed a counter claim in 1992 contending the condemnation was illegal. That claim is pending in Tarrant County courts.

However, landowners' attorneys charge that the project "is a private venture designed to benefit a few very powerful, very wealthy, and very well-connected individuals — the owners of the Texas Rangers."

"This is a land grab of unprecedented proportion," said Glenn Sodd, an attorney for the landowners. "We think it's patently illegal to take property from one group of private property owners to give it to a more powerful and influential group of private property owners, even if they are headed by the son of the (former) president of the United States."