

# Sex offender Jeffrey Epstein has been donating to NM politicians since 1990

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DT. [daily-times.com/story/news/local/2019/07/26/democratic-candidates-recipients-epsteins-donations-new-mexico/1843347001/](https://www.daily-times.com/story/news/local/2019/07/26/democratic-candidates-recipients-epsteins-donations-new-mexico/1843347001/)

Mike Easterling, Daily Times



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## List of recipients includes prominent Democrats

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Mike Easterling | Farmington Daily Times



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## Show Caption

FARMINGTON — As new revelations and allegations continue to mount in regard to wealthy financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's private life, the fallout has extended to a lengthy list of prominent politicians who have received campaign donations from him over the last nearly 30 years.

That includes several Democratic New Mexico politicians, although none of them are current officeholders.

A former physics and math teacher from New York, Epstein later founded his own financial management firm while becoming a multimillionaire, and developing friendships and associations with well-known figures ranging from Bill Clinton to Donald Trump.

Epstein was arrested earlier this month in New Jersey on charges related to the sex trafficking of minors in New York and Florida and pleaded not guilty. He pleaded guilty in 2008 to charges of soliciting a prostitute and procuring a minor for prostitution, serving 13

months in state custody — a sentence that drew outrage from many observers after it was exposed in a series of recent articles in the Miami Herald, likely prompting federal investigators to take another look at his alleged crimes.

He also is the owner of the Zorro Ranch near the small community of Stanley, which he bought many years ago from the family of former Gov. Bruce King. The isolated spread totals more than 7,000 acres and is located just off N.M. Highway 41, north of Interstate 40. It lies east of the Sandia Mountains between U.S. Highway 285 and N.M. Highway 14, both popular routes for tourists seeking to reach Santa Fe from Interstate 40.

But Epstein's connections to New Mexico extend well beyond the ranch. He has donated substantial amounts of money to political candidates in the state, just as he has done across the country.

His primary recipients are two of New Mexico's more prominent Democrats. According to [followthemoney.org](http://followthemoney.org) and campaign finance documents obtained through the New Mexico Secretary of State's Office, Epstein donated \$50,000 to Bill Richardson's successful re-election campaign for governor in 2006 and more than \$15,000 to Gary King when King, son of the former governor, ran successfully for attorney general in 2006. In 2014, when King mounted an unsuccessful run for governor, several Virgin Islands-based companies affiliated with Epstein donated more than \$35,000 to his campaign.

Epstein also donated \$10,000 to Democrat Jim Baca's campaign for state land commissioner in 2006.

Richardson, King and Baca all reportedly returned the money or donated an amount equal to the donations to charity. A history of Epstein's political donations on [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org) reveals that he also donated \$1,826 to Richardson's campaign for the 3rd Congressional District seat in New Mexico in 1994, well before the sex trafficking allegations against him came to light.

During that earlier era, Epstein was a regular donor to other Democratic politicians and groups in the state. [Opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org) documents show that Jeff Bingaman received more than \$5,000 in donations from Epstein in 1993 and 1994 for his successful re-election campaign to one of the state's U.S. Senate seats. But more than \$2,000 in funds were returned to Epstein from Bingaman's campaign on the day they were donated in December 1993.

In 2000, John Kelly, a Democrat who mounted an unsuccessful bid for the 1st Congressional District seat in New Mexico, received \$2,000 in donations from Epstein. And in 1993, the Democratic Party of New Mexico received a \$1,000 donation from him.

Epstein's generosity went far beyond New Mexico politicians. According to [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org), he donated nearly \$185,000 to federal political candidates and committees across the country between 1990 and 2018, with more than \$147,000 of that amount going to

Democrats and only a little more than \$18,000 going to Republicans. His list of recipients includes former presidents Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush, as well as former U.S. senators John Kerry, Bob Packwood, Christopher Dodd and Bob Dole, along with current U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer.

## **AG's Office, NM Land Office get involved**

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Now there are hints that the allegations against Epstein could have an even more direct link to New Mexico. Earlier this month, New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas announced his office had interviewed possible victims of Epstein who visited his New Mexico ranch. Balderas has not offered specifics on what those talks had yielded, but he said he has been in touch with the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of New York, which is prosecuting Epstein for the new round of charges.

A spokesman for the AG's Office did not respond to a phone message from The Daily Times on July 26 seeking comment on the status of the state's investigation.

## **State Land Office reviews leases**

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Politicians aren't the only ones seeking to distance themselves from Epstein as his troubles have multiplied. The New Mexico State Land Office announced on July 16 that it had forwarded more than 400 pages of documents related to existing and expired state land trust leases with a company owned by Epstein to the state Attorney General's Office to aid in that agency's investigation.

The company, Cypress Inc., holds two agricultural leases totaling nearly 1,250 acres with the agency. The state land office says the livestock grazing agreements originated in 1997 and were renewed in 2016. They are due to expire in 2021.

The release states the State Land Office was reviewing all its leases with Cypress for possible lease violations. An agency spokesman said on July 26 that nothing had changed on the matter since the July 16 press release, although he did indicate the AG's Office is now handling the review of potential violations and that the land office is simply providing follow-up and access to the leases to investigators.

"It is absolutely horrifying to discover that we have existing leases with an individual who has caused irreparable harm to so many women and girls," New Mexico Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard stated in the release. "The best thing that we can do at this time is to provide the Attorney General with any and all resources at our disposal to assist with their investigation. The leases that we sign are legally binding contracts, but we are pursuing every legal avenue to terminate Epstein's leases with the State Land Office as soon as possible."

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