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## Rep. Laney Has Avoided Property, Payroll Taxes for Years

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By: [Seton Motley](#)

Two planes not rendered at Hale County tax office

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This is part three in a series on former Speaker of the Texas House and current State Representative James E. "Pete" Laney (Democrat – Hale Center)

Representative Laney owns two aircraft: a Piper Cheyenne II worth between \$500,000 and \$750,000 and Cessna172-N worth about \$50,000. But no one at the Hale County tax and appraisal has any record of either of his planes, for they are unable to find any rendering for either one for tax purposes, a requirement of state tax law.

Laney has the larger Cheyenne II registered through his company JEL Farms, Ltd., which would suggest that perhaps he is trying to get an agricultural tax exemption for the craft.

The eight-seat plane, which travels at speeds in excess of 180 mph, would be of little use in any farming endeavor.

Laney has also often failed to pay any payroll taxes for the three pilots to whom he gave money as staffers involved with the planes in question. His office has paid some payroll taxes in the past, but it cannot be determined whether or not these monies covered the pilots' employment. And there are broad spans of time during which he earmarked some of his campaign coffer check cashing as payments to one of his three airmen, Mark Allen Thompson, where Laney paid no payroll taxes at all.

In 2000, for example, Thompson received \$1,300 a month from Laney, \$15,600 in all, yet Laney made no payroll tax deposits that year. In all, between January of 1999 and December of 2003, Thompson has been paid \$83,400 from Laney's campaign funds by Laney himself without ever being listed by Laney as a personal employee.

Two other pilots, Larry Graham and Tim Hardage, have also received monies totaling \$87,740 from Laney without ever being listed as employees on any of Laney's tax records.

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