

TexasMonthly

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Is This the Most Dangerous Man in Texas?

WALLACE HALL HAS BEEN A ONE-MAN WRECKING CREW IN HIS ATTEMPT TO BRING DOWN THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN. IS HE AN OUT-OF-CONTROL REGENT WHO DESERVES TO BE IMPEACHED? IS HE A SELFLESS HERO WHO IS INTERESTED ONLY IN THE TRUTH? AS AN UNPRECEDENTED BATTLE OF EGO, MONEY, AND POWER ENGULFS THE CAPITOL, THE ONE THING THAT IS CERTAIN IS THAT HALL WON'T BACK DOWN.

by SKIP HOLLANDSWORTH

THU JULY 10, 2014 7:15 AM



RECOMMENDED FOR
Meet the 18-Year-Old
Archer City

Hall, photographed on the front porch of his home with his dog, Jessie, on June 12, 2014.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DARREN BRAUN

Editors' note: Yesterday William Powers, the president of the University of Texas at Austin, submitted his letter of resignation, effective next year. This feature story on Regent Wallace Hall and the ongoing controversy will appear in the August 2014 issue of Texas Monthly, which will be available on newsstands July 24.

On a bright morning in mid-May, Wallace Hall greeted me with a carefree grin at his North Dallas office. “The Legislature is getting ready to impeach you and you’re grinning?” I asked.

“You think I’d be upset because some politicians want me gone?” Hall replied, offering me coffee in a Styrofoam cup. “You’re about to go down in Texas history,” I said, as Hall sat on a couch beneath a white board that was covered with stick figures his children had drawn years earlier. He was wearing a button-down shirt with khaki pants, and he propped his field boots on a coffee table stacked with books on subjects ranging from African wildlife to synthetic biology. He gave me a shrug. “Seriously, this is a big deal,” I said, trying again.

“A big deal?” Hall finally said. “I’m supposed to be anxious because I’m asking tough questions? Because I’m doing the right thing?”

Only two people in the state’s history have been impeached and removed from office: Governor James “Pa” Ferguson, in 1917, who had been indicted for embezzlement, and Judge O.P. Carrillo, in 1976, who had been indicted for tax fraud. Hall, a wealthy, blue-eyed, 52-year-old entrepreneur and investor, could very well be the third.

The difference is that Hall is not an elected official and he hasn’t been charged with a crime. In 2011 Governor Rick Perry appointed him to the University of Texas System Board of Regents, which oversees nine universities, including the flagship University of Texas at Austin, and six health institutions. About a year into his tenure, Hall began telling other regents that William Powers, UT-Austin’s president, had not been honest with them about his knowledge of a secret program that provided “forgivable loans” to the faculty at the UT School of Law, where Powers had previously served as dean. A few months later, he alleged Powers had knowingly and improperly counted nonmonetary gifts as part of the total amount of money raised in the university’s endowment campaign. And in 2013, in his most damning charge, Hall

asserted that Powers had been operating a program out of his office in which he admitted the children of prominent legislators and their benefactors to UT—even if those students did not meet the university's high academic standards.

The allegations set off an uproar, and most of the fury was directed at Hall himself. Politicians, fiercely loyal UT alumni, and some of Hall's fellow regents came to Powers's defense, claiming that Hall was carrying out what many of them described as a "witch hunt." During the 2013 legislative session, Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst arranged for the Senate to pass a resolution praising Powers. Dewhurst went so far as to bring Powers to the floor of the chamber, where he received a standing ovation. Tears glistening in his eyes, Dewhurst turned to Powers and said, "We are lucky to have you."

Speaker of the House Joe Straus then jumped into the fray, empowering the Select Committee on Transparency in State Agency Operations to investigate Hall's conduct. The committee, which began meeting last summer, hired the famous Houston trial attorney Rusty Hardin to act as its "special counsel," and he eventually produced a 174-page report accusing Hall of "disclosing confidential student information, pressuring [Transparency] Committee witnesses to change their testimony, and burdening UT-Austin with impossible document production demands." Hall himself, the report continued, was "myopic," "mean-spirited," "mercenary," and "vindictive"—a man on an "incessant search for things and people to criticize."

Earlier this spring, when Hardin's report was released to the public, the co-chairs of the Transparency Committee sent it to the Travis County district attorney and the Travis County attorney in hopes that they would investigate Hall for criminal wrongdoing. The committee itself then reconvened and voted seven to one that there was enough evidence to impeach Hall. The *Houston Chronicle* thundered that he was "an out-of-control appointee," and the chairman of the UT System board, El Paso oil billionaire Paul Foster, called on Hall to quit, turning to him at the end of a regents' meeting and saying in an almost pleading voice, "I urge you to take a selfless step to benefit the UT System."

But Hall had his own high-powered supporters. In a statement released after the Transparency Committee's vote, Perry commended Hall "for his persistence—in the face of overwhelming opposition from bureaucrats—in trying to ensure the institutions of higher education under his purview are operating effectively,

efficiently, and within the law.” Charles Miller, a former chairman of the UT System board, fired off a letter to Foster claiming that Hall “has been industrious and has given you and the public his best judgment, inconvenient as it may be to the opinion of powerful special interests.” He added, “It’s hard to imagine more troubling behavior from you than to see such a weak response to other people’s angry criticism of a fellow board member.”

Even the *Wall Street Journal*’s editorial board took Hall’s side, writing that his “real offense has been to expose a cozy and possibly corrupt relationship between politicians and the university.” The editorial concluded, “He could have made his life easier by walking away from this volunteer job, but doing so would be a victory for the political and academic elites who don’t want public scrutiny of the UT System. We hope lawmakers walk away instead.”

On July 2, as impeachment hearings loomed, the narrative took a stunning turn. Francisco Cigarroa, the outgoing chancellor of the UT System, met with Powers and demanded his resignation. If he refused, Cigarroa said, he would ask the board to decide whether Powers should be fired. Seven days later, Powers offered his resignation, effective June 2015.

Powers’s supporters were enraged that the president had been forced out largely because of Hall’s allegations. As they praised Powers’s tenure, they ripped into Hall for being an arrogant meddler who had just left an ugly mark on UT’s national reputation as one of the best public universities in the country.

As I had told him back in May, “it’s brutal. It’s like you’ve become the most hated man in Texas.”

“You should see what people are calling me on the blogs,” Hall had said with another shrug. “Someone called me a ‘slimy little bitch.’”

Then he sighed. A slight smile broke across his face. “And they really think they’re going to run me off by calling me names?”

The University of Texas System is one of the largest and most prestigious higher education organizations in the country, with an enrollment of more than 213,000 students and an annual operating budget of \$14.6 billion. The system’s regents, nine in all, are in charge of appointing the universities’ presidents, approving budgets,

creating new schools, and voting on policies and procedures for the students and faculties. Membership is an exclusive club, over the years featuring business titans, philanthropists, ex-governors, the wives of ex-governors, and even a former first lady (Lady Bird Johnson). At their formal meetings at the UT System's headquarters in downtown Austin, the regents gather in a gymnasium-size boardroom and sit at burnished-oak tables, underneath gilt chandeliers as big as pickups. Although they do very important things—in the past few years they have approved a medical school for UT-Austin and a new state university and medical school in South Texas—their work rarely involves much drama.

In fact, when I learned that Hall, whom I've known casually for at least a decade, had been appointed to the board of regents, I didn't think twice about it. When I would run into him at a Dallas coffee shop, he'd talk about various projects he was working on—expanding online learning at the system's universities and so on—and I'd try not to yawn. I certainly didn't imagine that Hall would ever be on the front pages of the state's newspapers, accused of being a rabble-rouser.

The son of a blue-blooded stockbroker, Hall attended Dallas's elite St. Mark's School of Texas and graduated from UT in 1984 with a degree in economics. After working in New York as a securities analyst and a trader on the floor of the New York Futures Exchange, he returned to Dallas in 1985 to join his father's brokerage business before opening his own money market firm, in 1991. He eventually became an investor in oil-production and start-up companies.

Hall and his wife, Kristi—a brainy blond beauty who met Hall in 1980 in chemistry class at UT and later worked on Wall Street for seven years—are the parents of four good-looking, high-achieving children, two of whom are currently attending UT and one of whom will be a freshman at UT this fall. The Halls live in Dallas's tony University Park in a \$3.7 million Prairie-style home. At night, Hall likes to light the fire pit in his front yard and sit in a rocking chair on his porch, reading. (His most recent interest is a series of books on the history of warfare.) When he's not working, he takes the family on vacations to exotic locations around the world or to the family ranch near Pagosa Springs, Colorado.

When I've talked with Hall, he's always been well mannered. I can't recall a conversation where he's ever raised his voice. Yet I've long known about his reputation for standing up to anyone who he believes has wronged him or for a cause he believes in. One story I've heard goes all the way back to just after Hall graduated

from St. Mark's. He learned that an unmarried school official, who was living on campus, had become romantically involved with a classmate's mother, who had recently separated from her husband and was staying at the official's house. The eighteen-year-old Hall phoned two members of the board—both prominent Dallas businessmen—and asked them to lunch, where he told them that the situation was inappropriate and that the official needed to be fired. (The official eventually left the school.)

Over the years, Hall has gone to court many times to take on his adversaries. In a case that drew extensive media attention in Dallas, he won a \$37 million jury verdict against a business partner whom he had accused of fraud in a methane gas operation. He also has no qualms about openly confronting anyone he thinks is not shooting straight with him. When Hall himself was on the St. Mark's board, he arrived at a meeting and accused the chairman—who happened to be a longtime friend—of misleading the board about an issue that it was considering. The two have barely spoken since.

"I've never seen Wallace jump on an employee or an associate just because that person made a mistake," said Hall's close friend Casey McManemin, a St. Mark's classmate who's now the chief executive officer of a Dallas oil company. "But if Wallace feels he is being misled in the slightest manner, it's game over. He is a dog with a bone, and he doesn't quit until he gets to the truth, regardless of the pain along the way."

McManemin paused, then added with a chuckle, "What people don't seem to get is that he simply does not care what they think or say about him. He is prepared to go down in search of the truth. All the way down."

When I interviewed Hall, he told me he had "absolutely no interest" in public life and that he certainly had never aspired to become a UT System regent. He was, he admitted, a rather passive UT alum. He wasn't a member of the Texas Exes, he didn't go to football games, and he didn't contribute a dime to UT's endowment campaigns. Periodically, however, he would get together with Jeff Sandefer, an old friend from his undergraduate days who had become a successful oil and gas man and an unofficial adviser on higher education to Governor Perry. Sandefer had come up with a plan, called the Seven Breakthrough Solutions, that he believed would make higher education more efficient and cost-effective. He argued, for instance, that university professors should spend fewer hours on esoteric, unproductive research and more

hours in the classroom teaching students.

In 2009 Sandefer recommended to the governor's office that Hall be named to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, an agency that evaluates data for all of the state's institutions of higher education. Two years later, Perry tapped Hall to be a UT System regent. Among Austin insiders, speculation immediately began that Perry was bringing in Hall and other new regents—San Antonio real estate developer Gene Powell, Denver oilman Alex Cranberg, and Dallas business consultant Brenda Pejovich—to institute Sandefer's proposals and to oust Bill Powers.

Powers, who's been UT's president since 2006, is unquestionably a brilliant man—he received his undergraduate degree in chemistry from the University of California at Berkeley and a law degree from Harvard—and he possesses a wide-ranging intellectual curiosity. At the age of 68, he is a fan of both the Greek poet Homer and Homer Simpson, and he takes the time to teach a class to freshmen called “What Makes the World Intelligible.” As president, he's known for his administrative skills, his close relationship with the faculty, and his ability to raise money. (He is about to complete a \$3 billion capital campaign for UT, the largest in the school's history.) Just last year he was named chairman of the Association of American Universities, a consortium of the top sixty public and private research universities across the country.

Nevertheless, throughout his tenure, Powers has had plenty of critics. He's been lambasted over everything from poor graduation rates to poor football teams. Some people don't like him because he's not exactly the most affable man in Austin. Even his most devoted allies use words like “stubborn” and “arrogant” to describe him. In 2008, when Perry began to talk up Sandefer's proposals about lower tuition, higher enrollment, and faculty productivity, Powers brusquely ignored him.

“You have to remember that Perry is a rival Aggie,” said a UT insider who knows Perry well. “And he isn't fond of UT people treating him with disdain.”

“So you're telling me the governor would appoint a new group of regents and make them take some sort of vow that they would get Powers fired?” I asked.

“It's not beyond the realm of possibility,” said the insider.

Hall rolled his eyes when I asked if Perry had ordered him to get rid of Powers.

Though Hall had given the governor a \$14,000 campaign contribution in 2010, he told me that he'd never even had a telephone conversation with Perry before his appointment to the board. "And when we did meet, he didn't have a bad word to say about Powers," Hall said. "All that he said he wanted was for the regents to open up the conversation about issues of affordability, accessibility, student debt loads, and educational outcomes at our universities. This conspiracy theory that I am the governor's puppet is not even close."

Hall said that when he first met Powers—they had lunch in Powers's book-lined office on the fourth floor of UT's Main Building—the president was worried that Hall would try to push through policies that de-emphasized academic research at UT. "I said I had no intention of doing anything like that," recalled Hall. "But he didn't seem to believe me. I don't think he was happy at all that I was around." (Powers declined to be interviewed for this article, and one of his confidantes told me, "He knows that no matter what he says, it's not going to slow Hall down on his seek-and-destroy mission.")

Hall mostly kept his head down throughout 2011. He led a task force that studied the expansion of online learning for UT System schools. But in December of that year, everything changed: Powers told the regents that he had asked for the resignation of the dean of the law school, Lawrence Sager, who had asked for and received a \$500,000 "forgivable loan" (in other words, a bonus) from the University of Texas Law School Foundation, a nonprofit fund-raising organization. Powers said that he had known nothing about the payments.

"My antennae went up," said Hall. "Here was this very large concealed payment scheme at the law school—we also eventually learned that other professors were getting forgivable loans—and Powers really wanted us to believe he knew nothing about it?"

And that's how Hall began his search for what he described as "the facts." He met with a member of the board of the law school foundation to ask about the forgivable loan program, and he asked UT System officials to provide him with all documents regarding the foundation's loan activities. "As a regent, I had a fiduciary responsibility to ask questions," he said. "And with every question I asked, I received worse and worse answers."

Hall admitted that he never did find a smoking gun that proved Powers's knowledge

of the loan payments. But he said that so many people at the law school were aware of what was happening “it made no sense that Powers didn’t know.” Hall added, “And if he didn’t know, then that was evidence of incompetence on his part.”

Soon, Hall began asking questions about Powers’s pet project: his \$3 billion fund-raising campaign for UT. Hall announced that he had discovered that Powers and his staff had included a software license, which had been donated by an energy company, as part of its fund-raising total and that they had valued the software at \$215 million. Hall said Powers knew that such gifts could not be counted according to rules established by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), the body that sets the standards for university fund-raising reporting. Powers, in turn, said the rules did indeed allow for the gifts to be counted.

Undeterred, Hall flew to Washington to sit in on a meeting between CASE executives, UT officials, and UT’s lawyers. He told me he wanted to make certain UT was honest with CASE about how it had added up its fund-raising totals and ensure “that UT wouldn’t lie to the regents about what CASE said.” The CASE executives agreed with Hall’s position that the \$215 million should be excluded.

UT administrators and alumni, along with a few of Hall’s fellow regents, were flabbergasted. The way they saw it, Hall had gone to Washington to undermine the university’s interests and, perhaps, embarrass Powers. “It’s always been Hall’s way or the highway for those who disagree with him,” said George Bayoud, a UT graduate and well-known Dallas businessman who has known Hall for twenty years and was furious over his actions. “I believe that Wallace makes decisions with his own agenda in mind.”

“No, what I did was absolutely the right thing to do,” Hall told me about his Washington trip. “Instead of inflating its gift count, UT needed to be completely honest. It was a simple question of integrity.”

“But I’ve heard stories that you were caustic and demeaning to UT’s own lawyers at that meeting,” I said.

“Look, I’m really easy to get along with, by and large,” Hall said. “I can strongly disagree with you, and at the end of the discussion I will shake your hand. But the minute I think someone is being dishonest or misleading me, the more insistent I become. People might call me an asshole, but I’m just very direct.”

In the fall of 2012, Hall made his next move: he asked to see all of the documents UT had provided in response to every open-records request that had been made since January 1, 2011. Hall's explanation was that he wanted to determine whether it was possible to put the material on the UT System's website for the public to access. Hall's critics saw a darker motive: they believed he was on a fishing expedition to bring down Powers.

Nearly forty boxes of documents were delivered to a cramped, windowless office at the UT System's headquarters. Hall drove from Dallas in his white Ford pickup, sat at a small desk, and spent days sifting through the material by himself. Eventually, he did find something—or so he believed. He came across some correspondence from a deputy in Powers's office to the dean of the law school inquiring about the application for the son of Republican state representative Jim Pitts, the powerful chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. The deputy was asking what needed to be done to get Pitts's son into the program, because he apparently didn't have a strong LSAT score. Hall also discovered a letter of recommendation from Democratic state senator Judith Zaffirini, who at the time was the chair of the Higher Education Committee, on behalf of a family friend of another senator whose child had been denied entrance into UT's undergraduate program.

Hall quickly made an open-records request to view all the correspondence since 2009 from legislators who had written Powers directly to recommend students for admission. He told me he was given more than eighty letters, many of them coming from Speaker Straus; state senator Kel Seliger, who had replaced Zaffirini as the chair of the Higher Education Committee; and state representative Dan Branch, who chaired the House Higher Education Committee. Hall suspected that these legislators had made some sort of deal with Powers at the expense of better-qualified kids who didn't have political connections. He also suspected that Powers willingly maintained a backdoor admissions program to make sure those legislators would push through appropriations bills that sent hefty amounts of state taxpayer money to UT. Did Hall have proof? No. But at the very least, Hall said, it was inappropriate that these legislators were able to bypass the UT admissions department and send their letters of recommendation straight to Powers. "Don't we want a fair playing field for everyone who wants to get into UT?" he asked.

The firestorm was instantaneous. A Powers spokesman said there was no list of students who got favored treatment, and the legislators identified by Hall said they had never tried to exert improper influence with Powers. Pitts was so angry that he

proposed to his fellow House members that Hall be impeached. Branch, who up until that point had been Hall's friend—he and his family live four houses away from Hall; he and Hall used to play on a roller hockey team together in the nineties—stopped speaking to Hall altogether. Two veteran UT regents—Austin private equity investor Steve Hicks and T. Boone Pickens's lawyer Bobby Stillwell—also stopped speaking to Hall. (“We don’t say hello when we run across each other in the bathroom,” said Hall.) They claimed that Hall's actions constituted an “abuse of power.”

When I spoke to Hicks, he described Hall as “kind of a grenade thrower.” He said, “I have been on five public company boards, and I know how things are supposed to work. As a board member, you broadly set policy and oversee the operation of the company. It's not your role to play the district attorney and do your own investigations into the CEO's activities without the consent of the board.”

Hicks also complained that with his massive requests for information, Hall was trying to “micromanage” UT's operations. “It's like being on the board of GM and wanting to go pick out paint colors for the line of Corvettes,” he said.

But not everyone I spoke with held that view. Charles Miller told me a regent has “the absolute right” to demand information and conduct investigations into the activities of UT administrators. “Hall was only doing what any good regent is supposed to do, which is to make sure our most prestigious university is being run openly and honestly. Just because no one else wants to do it is no reason to punish him.”

Compared with the other regents, Hall did seem curiously consumed with UT's operations. In 2013 he called the agent for Nick Saban, Alabama's head football coach, to ask about his interest in Mack Brown's job. And he seemed particularly focused on getting rid of Powers, at one point emailing Cigarroa: “How do you justify and defend his behavior?”

It is no secret that Cigarroa, a pediatric surgeon and professor at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio who was named chancellor in 2009, barely gets along with Powers. He has said that Powers becomes “defensive” and, at times, “insubordinate.” In the fall of 2013, Cigarroa had Powers come to his office to discuss Hall's allegations about the admissions process, and according to knowledgeable sources, the exchange turned testy when Cigarroa asked how Pitts's son had gotten into UT law school. Powers fired back that Cigarroa's own daughter had received the same consideration when she was admitted into the program. Cigarroa was livid. His

daughter was a Harvard graduate who had top grades and a high LSAT score. He stood up and reportedly stepped toward Powers, as if he were going to punch him. The meeting quickly ended.

Cigarroa told the regents that his and Powers's working relationship was becoming untenable and that he would be stepping down as chancellor. (Cigarroa, who has said he will leave after the board hires his replacement, would not comment for this story.) Nevertheless, saying he had no interest in creating more controversy, Cigarroa recommended that Powers be asked to come up with his own timeline to announce his retirement.

Hall was beside himself, telling other regents that Powers, whom he called a "prevaricator," didn't deserve "a face-saving exit." Meanwhile, Powers let it be known that he would retire when he wanted to.

Hall stayed on the attack. He asked the other regents to approve the hiring of an outside investigator to look into the matter of the law school foundation's forgivable loans. (The majority of the regents voted no.) He also asked UT to provide him with all records of Powers's privately donated travel, claiming that Powers had been accepting free travel from UT boosters who also did work for the university—a clear conflict. (UT System officials said that some travel was proper.) Hall then said he wanted to investigate UT's awarding a million-dollar-plus contract to a consulting company without the regents' approval. (According to system officials, the contracts didn't need such approval.)

Hall did gain some momentum with his admissions allegations. The UT System Office of General Counsel opened a formal inquiry into UT's admissions process, and although it found no evidence of "systemic" favoritism for students whom lawmakers had recommended to Powers, it did find that such students definitely had higher acceptance rates than the general student population. After reading the report, which was released in May, Cigarroa told the regents that a "firewall needs to be constructed around the admissions committee preventing anyone directly or indirectly from influencing admissions decisions."

And that seemed to be that—until a month later, when Cigarroa did an about-face and ordered outside lawyers to conduct an independent investigation into UT's admissions process. Two weeks later, in what *Austin American-Statesman* reporter Ralph K.M. Haurwitz described as "higher education fireworks on the Fourth of

July,” Cigarroa called Powers to his office and told him he wanted his resignation right then and there.

Cigarroa later released a statement saying he had asked for Powers’s resignation due to “a breakdown of communication, collegiality, trust, and a willingness to work together for the good of the university.” But a well-placed source in the UT System said the real reason Cigarroa turned on Powers was because an individual with “intimate knowledge of UT’s admissions program” met with Cigarroa after the Office of General Counsel’s report was released. This individual said the lawyers in the Office of General Counsel had been misled by Powers and his deputies when they told the lawyers that they didn’t intervene in admissions. According to this individual, they sometimes went so far as to order officials in the admissions office to accept particular students—a charge that, if true, could explain Cigarroa’s decision to ask for Powers’s resignation.

The question now is if Powers’s allies in the Legislature are still hungry for payback. Texas law gives state legislators broad discretion to decide whether an official is fit to stay in office. They can impeach someone for committing “acts of misconduct, malfeasance, or misfeasance,” for acting “with incompetency,” or even for failing to act “in the best interest” of the institution he or she is responsible for governing.

When the Transparency Committee finishes writing its articles of impeachment against Hall, they will be sent to the full House for consideration, and if the House votes in favor of impeachment, Hall will be forced to sit through a full-blown trial in front of the members of the Senate, who will ultimately decide his fate. For months rumors have been flying about what could happen next. Lawmakers might rule that when he originally filled out his application to become a regent, he didn’t include all the lawsuits he had been involved in. (The problem with that argument is that plenty of other state officials, including other UT regents, didn’t include all their lawsuits either.) Or they might rule that he illegally possessed confidential student information during his investigation of UT’s admissions practices. (The problem there is that Philip Hilder, a well-known Houston attorney hired by the UT System to provide legal advice on Hall’s impeachment, has issued a letter to legislators concluding that Hall’s possession of the student information had “a legitimate educational purpose” and that there was “no credible evidence” he broke any law.) The committee could decide that he exceeded his authority with his private investigations of UT and his demands for large volumes of documents. (Though even Paul Foster, the chairman of the board of regents, who asked Hall to resign, has said

publicly that he doesn't believe Hall has violated any rules.)

Or he could be impeached for supposedly trying to intimidate witnesses who testified against him before the Transparency Committee. For instance, when one UT official testified that the university had been forced to produce 800,000 pages of documents to fulfill Hall's request to see open-records material, Hall demanded a retraction, saying it was less than 100,000 pages. (But it could be difficult to prove Hall did anything more than ask that the public record be corrected.)

Some Capitol insiders think Straus will decide that impeachment is not worth the political cost. Dewhurst could push for a trial because he is angry at Hall for giving a \$25,000 campaign contribution to Senator Dan Patrick, who beat Dewhurst in the primary runoff in May and who defends Hall's actions. (Patrick has described Hall as a "public servant" who is being unfairly targeted because he caught legislators "in a potentially huge scandal.")

Most legislators assumed that Hall would resign before enduring the humiliation of impeachment. They couldn't have been more mistaken. Today, as he awaits his fate, he is still trying to find more evidence of wrongdoing. To his critics, Hall is a kind of Ahab, so obsessed with harpooning the great white whale that he is willing to destroy his own reputation in the process.

Hall, of course, sees himself as a man obsessed with the facts, and he interprets the ferocious backlash against him as proof that he's uncovering information that powerful people want to keep hidden. "How can my questions be so threatening unless they fear the answers?" he asked.

Late on the afternoon of July 9, I spoke with Hall about Powers's resignation. He didn't seem particularly triumphant. Powers's side was claiming victory—that with his negotiated June 2015 resignation date, he would outlast Perry and stay through the next legislative session. "The president's forced resignation is a positive step, but the board of regents' tolerance for dysfunction caused by Powers must end," said Hall. "The fact remains, the board cannot do its job as long as he remains president." When I asked him if he planned to force Powers out of office sooner, he would not comment.

And as for his own impending impeachment? "Bring it on," he said.

“Seriously? Bring it on?”

“Do they really think I’m going to stop before the truth comes out?”

Tags: **POLITICS**, **UT**, **WALLACE HALL**, **BILL POWERS**



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**Chang He** • 10 hours ago

Wallace Hall is a complicated hero. But a hero nonetheless.

7 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Czexan** • 8 hours ago

The relationship between Hall, Sandefer and Perry is what's most important in exploring this political tussle - particularly in light of the way A&M's academic reputation has suffered due to the advice of Perry's advisors. I wish the article had included some broader context.

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**ryan** ➔ Czexan • 7 hours ago

Agreed. If this is all true, then I agree it's time for Powers to go (after Perry is out of office). But let's not lose the forest in the trees -- if we really want what's best for the University, this whole debacle should have been avoided.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Chang He** ➔ ryan • 5 hours ago

By not hiring Powers in the first place? Or are you arguing that it would be best if no one knew of his malfeasance? I'm not trying to be hostile, it just isn't clear from your comment.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**mightcan** • 8 hours ago

There's no way any legitimate use of the word hero would include Hall anywhere near that paragraph.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Bill Mitch** • 7 hours ago

"Hicks also complained that with his massive requests for information, Hall was trying to "micromanage" UT's operations. "It's like being on the board of GM and wanting to go pick out paint colors for the line of Corvettes," he said. "

Perhaps if GM had some board members like Mr Hall they wouldn't have had to file for bankruptcy or be faced with the current ignition switch scandal.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**shellypaints** ➔ Bill Mitch • 7 hours ago

Well said.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Bill Mitch** ➔ Bill Mitch • 7 hours ago

**Bill Mitchell** • 7 hours ago

Also had there been a Wallace Hall on Penn States board the Sandusky tragedy might have been avoided.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Shellypaints** • 7 hours ago

As someone who is outside of the UT system and the A&M system, I am not surprised at the allegations and believe that Hall has uncovered corruption. Living in Austin my observation is that Powers is a power hungry arrogant man whose purpose is exerting power in his fiefdom. I'm not surprised that many UT alumni support him, they tend to turn a blind eye to anything negative about UT. I hope Hall beats impeachment and that Powers is proven to have engaged in illegal shenanigans with the law school, and admissions. That would be justice.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

[Show 1 new reply](#)**Czexan** → **Shellypaints** • 7 hours ago

Yeah. That would be really great for the school and, by extension, the state.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Don John** • 7 hours ago

Those that argue that Wallace has damaged the reputation of a great university are simply a mystery to me. Did the young men who came forward to expose sexual child abuse at Penn State cause damage to a great university or was it the actions of Jerry Sandusky? I bet Penn State wishes they had an entire board of Wallace Hall's!!! Hook'em Wallace

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**James Peinado** → **Don John** • 4 hours ago

Agreed UT is lucky to have someone wishing to expose light on issues. It's apparent that President Powers has a bit of an ego trip, and in this article appears to think himself very powerful and unaccountable.

Then there's this comment, "You have to remember that Perry is a rival Aggie," said a UT insider who knows Perry well. "And he isn't fond of UT people treating him with disdain." Is there we're at. This is not a stupid football game Texas. Do we really want to make this a rivalry thing? I went to Texas A&M, but I take no joy or glee of the thought of any public institutions being caught in scandal. Yet if there is suspicion of corruption I wish us to refer to JFK's speeches on the importance shining light on corruption, and warning against those who would try to stifle the light of truth.

The regents, politicians, and other bureaucrats appear to be doing all they can to focus on impeaching Hall rather than looking for truth first. If y'all impeach him, make him a Regent of A&M I'd want him on our board or Regents.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

**Czexan** → **James Peinado** • 3 hours ago

A&M's academic stature has already taken enough of a dive without Hall. Y'all

ADAMS' academic stature has already taken enough of a dive without Hall. I all don't need him.

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The Late Joe Paterno • 2 hours ago

If Bill Powers were President of Penn State, I shudder to think how he would have handled the sex scandal. Sandusky would probably still be molesting kids and still be on Penn State's payroll - because Powers' would have done all he could to cover up and hide the scandal.

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