

Texts reveal Gary Farmer still lobbying for trial bar

By [Peter Schorsch](#)

The headline above this story probably comes as no shock to those who follow the annual trial bar versus insurance industry drama and have witnessed Sen. **Gary Farmer** buzzing around committees. What's surprising is how casually Farmer has been – messily even – doing the trial bar's bidding.

Public records requested by Florida Politics legitimize what many have quietly whispered: Farmer should just go ahead register as a lobbyist for the trial bar.

His messages from Jan. 23, 2018, offer a glimpse into the inside baseball of the Florida Senate, and demonstrate that lawmakers so engrained in special interests actively interfere in the fate of Florida law.

For weeks prior to the Banking and Insurance Committee meeting, the trial bar had been trying to pressure the insurance industry into a PIP (Personal Injury Protection) compromise using the threat of killing an industry-promoted “Named Driver Exclusion” bill as a means of forcing the industry “to the table” on PIP repeal.

Trial lawyers are behind the attempt to repeal PIP, Florida's Motor Vehicle No-Fault Law, replacing it with a lawsuit-based system and mandatory “bodily injury” insurance, which insurers say reduces consumer choices and [will increase rates](#) for Floridians.

The bill at issue, [SB 518](#), would have essentially allowed families to keep their auto insurance policy even if one of the family members was a poor driver, because that driver could be excluded from coverage under the policy. While this is a common practice in other states, SB 518 provided an opportunity for the trial bar to interfere with its passage as a tool of coercion over the PIP issue, despite it not having any meaningful effect on the liability of drivers (the family member removed from the policy would get coverage elsewhere).

Farmer's texts on Jan. 23 On that day, the [Senate Banking and Insurance Committee](#) heard Named Driver Exclusion. And if you attended the meeting, Farmer, a former trial bar lobbyist who is not on the Committee, made no secret of texting and doing what appeared to be active lobbying of the committee members.

At 3:41 p.m., Farmer texted Senator **Anitere Flores**: “Beach [sic] & steube not here...Please TP named driver... Without them we need you as a no”

Named Driver Exclusion [was voted down](#).

At 5:27 p.m., Farmer texts Flores: “You are the master, I bow down in aw & reverence!!...Thank you!! It’s hard for me not knowing the play.”

In this same time window, Farmer texted Senator **Annette Taddeo**, who had voted no, a quick, “Thank you!”

Bottom line: This is an unsurprising example of how special interest proxies exercise their influence. But maybe next time Farmer will register before he lobbies for the trial bar.