

Andrea + Dean McWilliams



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This political power couple still finds time for romantic surprises. Andrea recently arrived home from a business trip to China to Dean picking her up in a new black sports car with a big red bow on it. He's been taking time for grand, romantic gestures like this one since their engagement at the [Driskill Hotel](#). Together, they have three children and lobby for a diverse array of clients, like the Kickapoo tribe in Eagle Pass. The dynamic duo started working together before they were married during their junior staffer days at the Capitol, running a side business making political materials for campaigns. But, they weren't juniors for long, as Andrea was the chief of staff for a state representative by the time she was 20. In 2009, Andrea was ranked by the [Austin Business Journal](#) as the number one Lobbyist in Texas. [The Dallas Morning News](#) also ranked her as one of Texas' top grossing lobbyists in 2005, while [Texans for Public Justice](#) recognized her as the top female Texas lobbyist on their elite Million Dollar Lobbyists list. Their idea of a date night? Working out with their personal trainer together three times a week. They will have been married for 17 years this month. Andrea says: "Everything that we have accomplished we did together. Dean is my best friend as well as business partner."

THE MEETING

He Says: Andrea and I were both junior staffers working at the Capitol which meant we got the inferior parking spaces and had a trek to get into the building. One day I was stopped at the light and this woman with amazingly long legs walked across the street in front of me. It was a Kismet kind of moment, and I wanted to find out who she was. Later when Andrea crossed in front of my desk on her way into one of the representatives' offices, I saw that walk again so I stopped her and that was our first interaction. At first my request for a dinner date was "denied" but that is where lobbying and persistence paid off.

She Says: To be perfectly honest, when I walked in front of that car I knew someone was checking me out, and I did work it a little bit as I walked across the street. I wasn't expecting to see him again. I played hard to get and started with conversation, then lunch, and finally dinner. So Dean was persistent and I was the negotiator—both qualities we still use in our personal and professional lives.

WHY IT WORKS

He Says: We built what we have by supporting each other and through a lot of hard work. We were married for nine years before we had our first child, but we see this as a family business. The three stars on our company logo represent our three children and are an ever-present reminder of why we are in this business. Sometimes a lot gets written about our differences—that Andrea is a Democrat and I am a Republican or she is a Longhorn and I am an Aggie. In truth we are a team and we run a bi-partisan firm and a bi-partisan family. We are friends and sometimes I say we "share a brain" meaning that we think alike, we have the same values and we are strengthened by our faith.

She Says: We understand who we are and what we do. Even when we were first married we rented a house very close to the Capitol. Today our world is still encompassed in a small geographic area—our office and the Capitol, our home and the children's schools are all within mere miles of each other. No work issue rattles us, although the legislative sessions are jam-packed and tense. We have an extremely high threshold for tension. We have seen it all together. When tough times come, Dean and I always close ranks and plow through it together. My cancer diagnosis five years ago while pregnant with our youngest son, gave our relationship tremendous perspective. I fought my cancer—Dean did too—and we learned to depend on and appreciate each other. Once you have been through that kind of health situation together everything else is just noise.

He Says: Because we are married and in business together we share a bond and a trust that other business partners don't have. They don't have a family bond and a romantic bond. That level of trust allows us to take risks, be aggressive, and do a better job for our clients.