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**Remarks by Leland Beatty on
The Texas Observer Realignment Poll
May 29, 2008**

Major Points:

- 1. The Texas primary confirmed that a genuine political realignment is underway among Texas voters. Democrats claimed more new primary voters, more newly registered voters, and more crossover voters than Republicans, all by substantial margins.**
- 2. Democrats face two big challenges in realizing their fall potential.**
 - a. New primary voters, who made up 55% of the Democratic turnout, are largely unfamiliar with Texas issues and downballot candidates. Downballot Democrats must be able to fund an education effort among these voters**
 - b. Some presidential campaign partisans are reluctant to commit to supporting the other Democrat in the fall. This reinforces the need to gain support for downballot candidates among new primary and crossover voters, because voters who have an interest in more than one race are more likely to vote in a given election, and to adopt party identification.**
- 3. The number of new primary and crossover voters who say they supported McCain at the time they voted in the Democratic Primary was large enough to have changed the outcome of the primary election.**

Comments

The 2008 Democratic Primary drew a record number of voters across Texas, raising questions about whether a fundamental political realignment is underway.

A complete realignment analysis would have to include a number of factors beyond the 2008 Texas primary, and would focus on the voter preference trends that, since 2002, have steadily suggested that such a realignment is occurring. Additionally, there were a number of unique factors in 2008, chief among them that the Democratic nomination was still in play at the time of the 2008 primary, for the first time since 1988, while the uncertainty on the Republican side had already been resolved.

However, a number of indicators from the 2008 Texas primary support the belief that a major realignment is, in fact, taking place. Most obviously, the Democrats outdrew the Republicans in this year's Texas primary by a ratio of 2.1 to 1. In 2000, when Texan George W. Bush was on the Republican ballot, Republicans outdrew Democrats 1.4 to 1.

Perhaps the most encouraging numbers for Democrats, and the most discouraging for Republicans, is the share of new primary and crossover voters in each primary. The Democratic Primary drew 74% of new primary voters, while the Republicans drew only 26%. A person's first primary vote is a telling commitment, but to be effective must be cemented by commitments down the ballot. This is a challenge for Democrats, because a third of their primary voters quit voting before they got to the first statewide race on the ballot. Up to 40% quit voting before reaching the state representative level on the ballot.

Democrats have a difficult challenge ahead of them on this score. If they are to convert their new primary voters into Democratic voters, they'll have to give their downballot candidates enough funding to educate the new primary voters about their other attractive candidates. Without that crucial funding, Democrats will likely realize only a portion of their potential downballot gains.

Among crossover voters, who shift back and forth between party primaries, Democrats claimed about 300,000 voters with Republican primary history, while Republicans claimed fewer than 230,000 voters with Democratic primary history. This is perhaps the first time in two-party Texas history that Democrats have pulled more voters with Republican history than Republicans attracted from voters with Democratic primary history. However, as we will see, a significant share of the crossovers in the Democratic primary this year may have preferred John McCain at the time of their vote.

Perhaps the biggest question about the 2008 Texas Democratic Primary concerned the extent to which voters who did not support any of the Democratic nominees voted in the Democratic primary, ostensibly to create "chaos" in the Democratic Primary. This question has largely been provoked by Rush Limbaugh's Operation Chaos, which encourages Republicans to cross over and vote in the Democratic Primary for Hillary Clinton. While Limbaugh claimed in his March 19 broadcast that his efforts turned "a virtual draw into a slight Clinton victory," in the weeks after the Texas primary, I and others discounted that claim based on analyses of voters in the Democratic Primary who in previous cycles had voted in the Republican primary. But the questions continued, aided by former President Bill Clinton's appearance on the Limbaugh radio show the day of the Texas primary, and by Limbaugh's repeated claims to have affected primaries in other states as well.

In our search for the answer to the realignment question, we focused not only on the crossover Republican voters but also on the record number of new primary voters who voted in the 2008 Democratic Primary in Texas. We asked four questions of a random sample of new primary and crossover voters who voted in the Democratic Primary, and recorded complete responses from about 1,250 voters in each group.

One advantage of the short survey used in our poll is that a short questionnaire gets a higher response rate. Traditional long-survey polls generate complete responses from a very small percentage of the voters who are called. We achieved a 50% completion rate in this survey, significantly higher than one can expect from traditional long-survey polls. Rather than asking voters about their demographic and vote history information, as long-survey polls do, we derived that information from an annotated voter file. This approach gave us a broader view of voter opinion, even though it does not provide all of the depth available from a traditional long-survey poll.

The results suggest much greater participation in the Democratic Primary by voters who intended to vote for the Republican nominee in the fall than I and other political analysts originally thought.

The overall results of question 1, *“If the election were held today, would you vote for John McCain, Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama,”* were:

Voter Type	Share of P08D	McCain	Clinton	Obama	Undecided
New Primary Voters	54.7%	13.7%	34.8%	37.6%	13.9%
Crossover Republicans	10.8%	33.1%	21.7%	25.1%	20.1%

About 1 of 7 new primary voters preferred McCain, slightly more than that were undecided, and Obama held almost a three percentage point advantage over Clinton.

We then asked McCain supporters and the Undecideds, *“Have your feelings changed since the Texas primary two months ago?”* Over 85% of the McCain supporters said that their feelings had not changed.

Voter Type	Share of P08D	Always McCain	
		Sample Share	Share of P08D
New Primary Voters	54.7%	11.4%	6.2%
Crossover Republicans	10.8%	28.9%	3.1%
Total	65.5%		9.4%

From this we can see that at least 9.4% of the Democratic Primary vote was cast by voters who say their first choice at the time of the primary was John McCain.

We asked the Clinton and Obama supporters who they would support if the the race came down to the other Democrat and McCain, McCain gained a significant share of both Clinton and Obama supporters. Less than half of Clinton supporters said they would support Obama in a race against McCain, while most Obama supporters said they would support Clinton.

After Nomination Obama and Clinton Voter Preferences		
	New Primary Voters in P08D	Crossovers in P08D
Clinton Voters		
Obama	49.2%	46.3%
McCain	27.9%	32.5%
Undecided	22.9%	21.3%
Obama Voters		
Clinton	64.4%	54.0%
McCain	16.3%	26.2%
Undecided	19.3%	19.7%

These secondary preferences suggest that Democrats face a significant challenge in the fall retaining the voters who have supported the candidate that gets the party's nomination. When we apportion these preferences based on the share of the Democratic Primary vote represented by the new primary and crossover voters, we see that an additional 4% of the primary vote (if Clinton wins the nomination) to 6% of the vote (if Obama wins the nomination) could be lost to McCain.

McCain Share if Other Democrat Is Nominated			
Preference, Sample	Sample Share of P08D	McCain Against Other Democrat-- Sample Share	McCain Share of P08D
Clinton Voters, New Primary D	18.6%	27.9%	5.2%
Clinton Voters, Crossover R	2.3%	32.5%	0.8%
Total	20.9%		5.9%
Obama Voters, New Primary D	20.3%	16.3%	3.3%
Obama Voters, Crossover R	2.7%	26.2%	0.7%
Total	22.9%		4.0%

Once the nomination is decided, self-described defectors among the two-thirds of the Democratic Primary vote who were new primary voters and crossover voters appear to make up 14% to 16% of the Democratic Primary vote, mostly from voters who supported McCain all along.

There may also be some support for McCain among regular Democratic Primary voters, but we did not test this. People vote in the Democratic Primary for a number of reasons. If there are important local races, for example, a voter may choose to vote in the Democratic Primary even if he or she doesn't support Democrats at the national level. I believe, however, that we can be fairly confident that regular Democratic Primary voters will support Democrats somewhere on the ballot, whether at the national, state, district or local level.

The news for Democrats is very good overall. Two out of three crossover voters said they supported a Democratic candidate or were undecided about who to vote for, and

86% of the new primary voters said they supported a Democratic candidate or were undecided.

Background

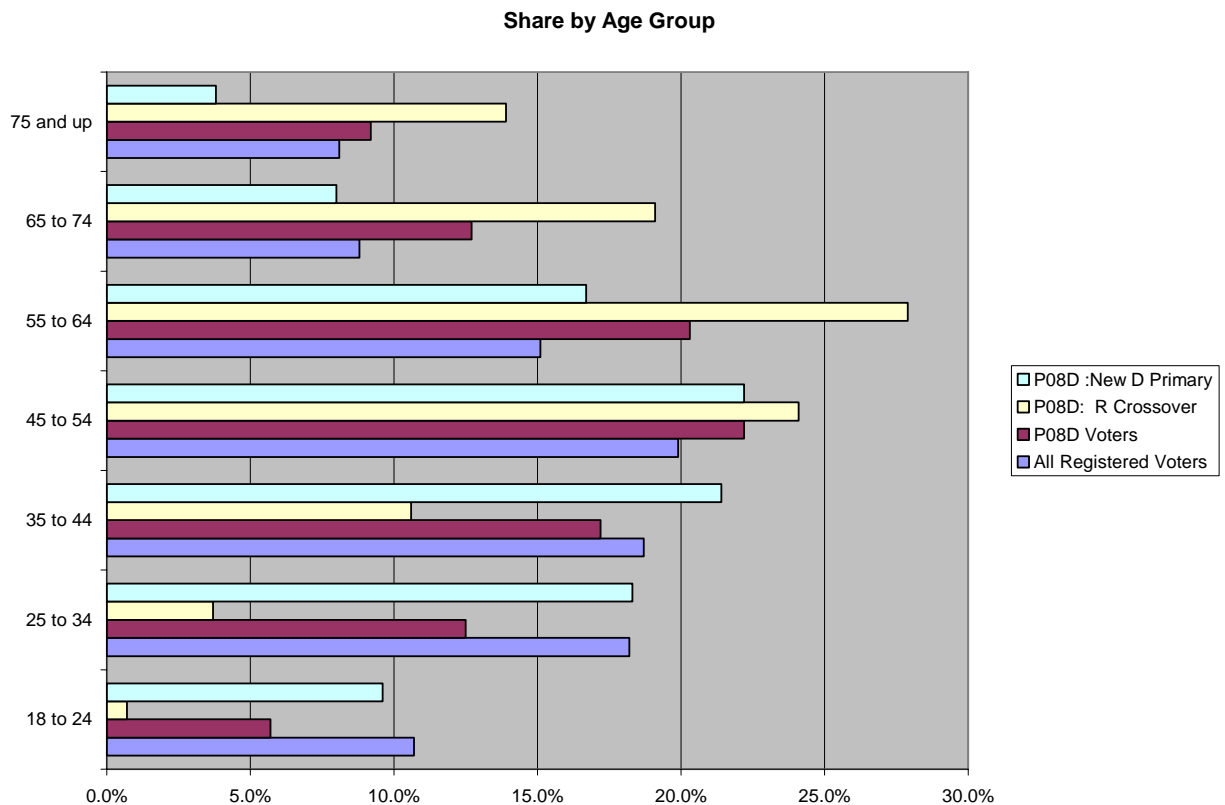
Voter Demographics.

Age

The new primary voters in the Democratic Primary are substantially younger and the Republican crossover voters are substantially older than the Democratic Primary voters as a whole.

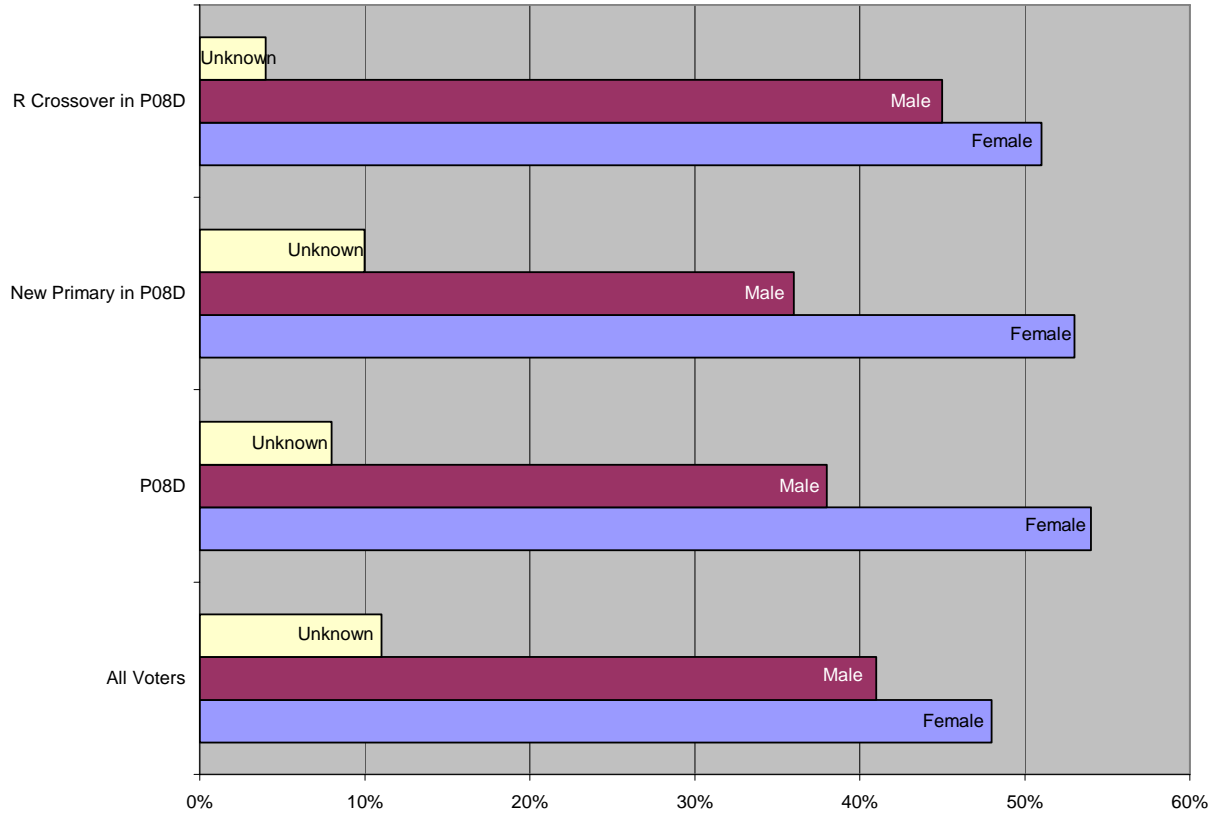
The mean age for Democratic Primary voters is 51.2 years. The mean age for all registered voters is . The mean age for new primary voters in the Democratic Primary is 45.3 years, and for Republican crossover voters is 58.6 years.

Voter Shares by Age Group



Gender

Women retain their dominance in the Democratic Primary, whether among all Democratic Primary voters, new primary voters, or Republican crossover voters.



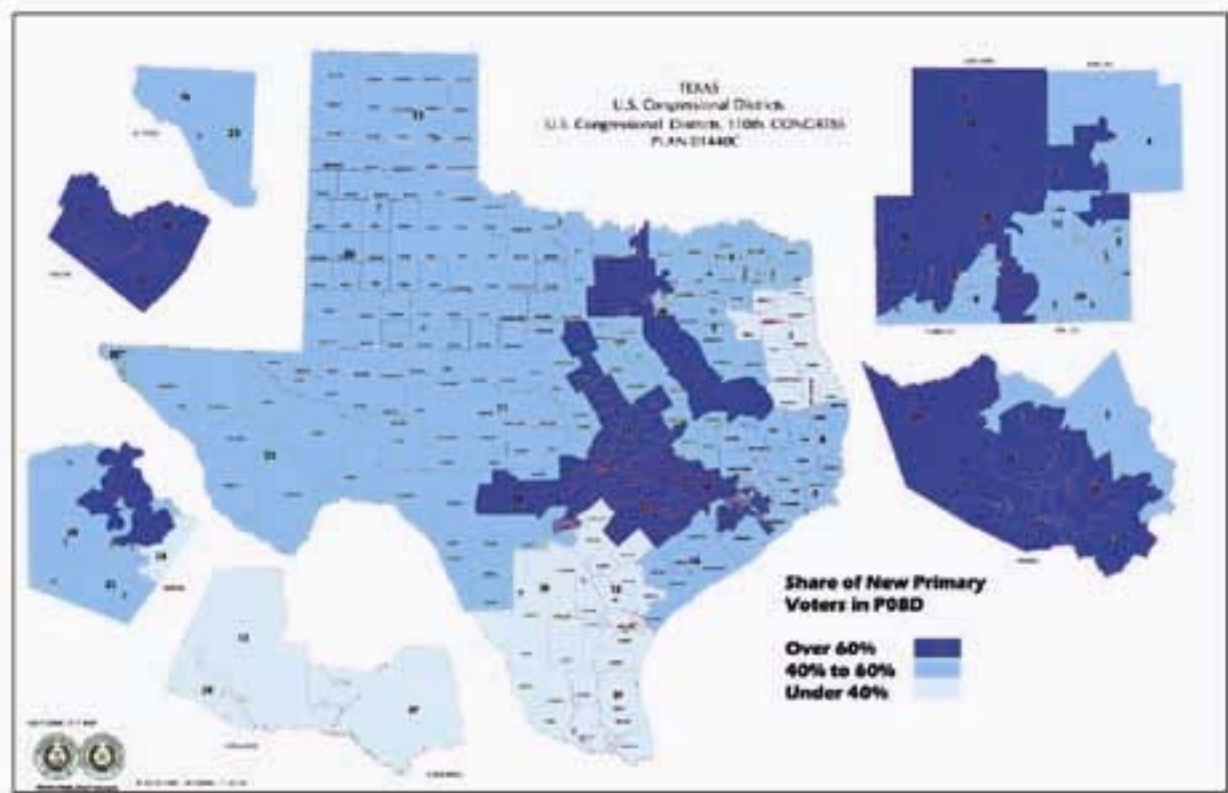
Geography.

Statewide, 21.2% of all registered voters participated in the 2008 Democratic Primary. Predictably, turnout was greatest where Democrats are the most numerous. All of the top ten Congressional Districts in Democrat Primary turnout were safe Democratic districts. But beginning with 11th place, some “safe” Republican districts begin to place, beginning with Sessions North Dallas District 32, McCaul’s Austin-to-Houston District 10, Poe’s Northeast Harris-to-Beaumont District 2, and Tom Delay’s old District 22.



New Primary Voters in the 2008 Democratic Primary

Geography



Republican Crossover Voters

For several election cycles, Republican crossovers have made up an increasing share of the Democratic Primary. In 2004, for example, in some prosperous Republican districts, Republican crossover voters accounted for up to 20 percent of Democratic Primary voters.. While some may view converts with suspicion, one of them, Kirk England, is now the Democratic State Representative from Grand Prairie. Others, such as Austin’s Donna Howard, Dallas’ Allan Vaught and Houston’s Ellen Cohen, on their margins largely with former Republican voters.

In some areas, this news is especially bad for Republicans. In Travis County, for example, more than one out of five of those who had ever voted in a Republican Primary voted this year in the Democratic Primary. These affluent, well-educated crossovers are not likely to be ditto-heads; their defection marks them as persuadable rather than Republican voters.

However, radio commentator Rush Limbaugh’s “Operation Chaos” encouraged hard-core ditto-heads to sabotage the Democratic primary. Since the margin in the primary was about 3.5%, it does not appear that the insincere crossover voters were able to change the outcome of the primary by themselves.

A second consideration is determining which candidate the insincere crossovers voted for. While Limbaugh’s advice was to vote for Hillary Clinton, his message was simply to cause chaos. In truth, many Republican women crossed over because they really supported the first woman with a real chance to become President. And many Republican crossovers, exit polls showed, preferred Barack Obama. Might not the nomination of a black candidate be, in the mind of an agent of “chaos”, a reasonable choice. This part of the mystery is more difficult to unravel.

The Republican crossover voters, for most part, had almost as much Democratic Primary participation in the past as Republican.

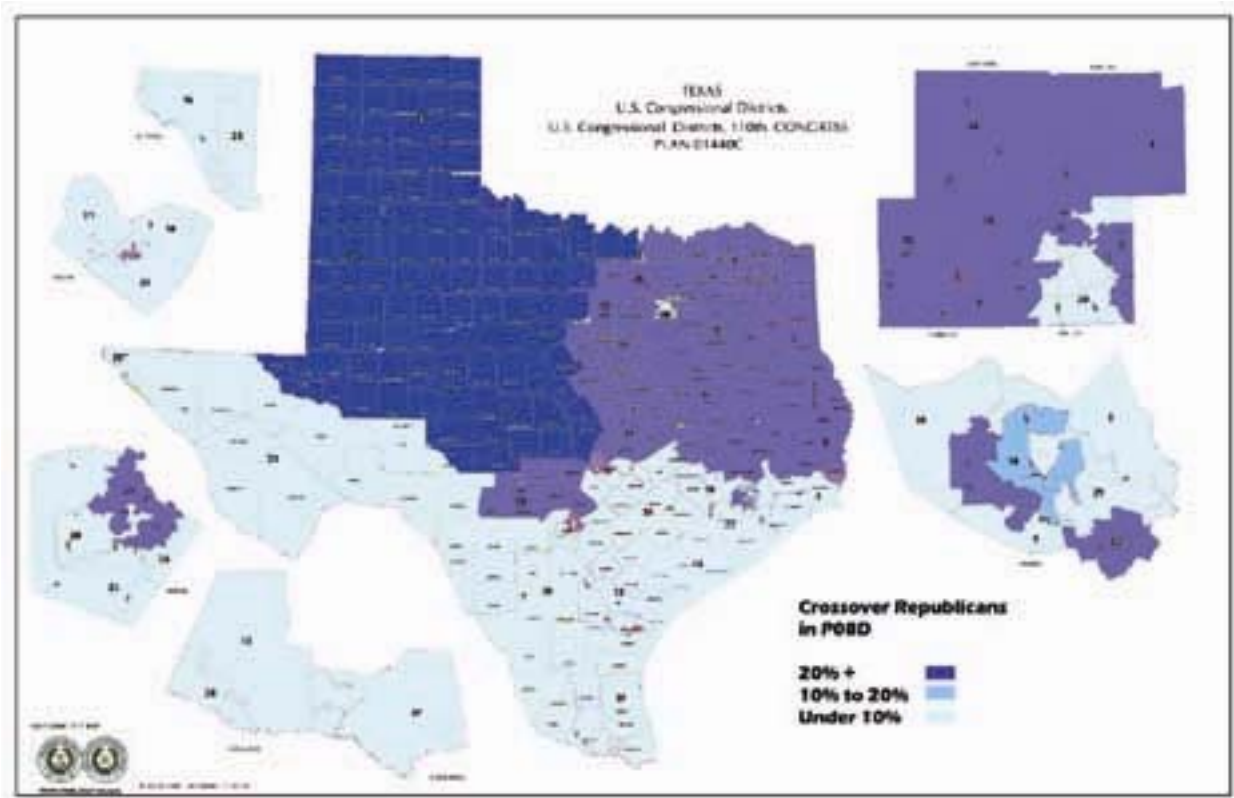
R Crossover Voters in P08D by Number of Primaries in Each Party										
Number of D Primary Votes, 1992-2008	Number of R Primary Votes, 1992-2008									Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1	86,059	30,031	15,911	9,745	6,107	3,977	2,383	920	3	155,136
2	29,828	10,871	5,899	3,655	2,223	1,282	490	2	0	54,250
3	18,318	6,619	3,553	2,055	1,211	478	3	0	0	32,237
4	13,277	4,456	2,239	1,213	436	2	0	0	0	21,623
5	10,100	3,207	1,407	457	2	0	0	0	0	15,173
6	8,309	2,196	507	3	0	0	0	0	0	11,015
7	6,245	939	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,189
8	2,871	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,877
9	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31
Total	175,038	58,325	29,521	17,128	9,979	5,739	2,876	922	3	299,531

By Geography

Two important measures of Republican crossover vote are

- a. Share of the total Democratic Primary vote, and
- b. Share of all voters with Republican Primary history

Of the top half of Congressional Districts in share of the total Democratic Primary vote, Republican Districts comprise all but two: Chet Edwards (17) and Nick Lampson (22) .



Republican Crossover in 2008 Democratic Primary, by Congressional District							
Representative	District	Total Voters	with Rprim History	Crossover Rs in P08D	Crossover R of Rprim Voters	P08D Votes	Rcrssov Share of P08D
Neugebauer	19	378,550	102,734	13,675	13.3%	55,637	24.6%
Tornberry	13	391,440	108,511	13,048	12.0%	61,581	21.2%
Conaway	11	408,928	118,905	10,666	9.0%	50,616	21.1%
Edwards	17	401,222	94,259	12,484	13.2%	71,885	17.4%
Gohmert	1	424,321	101,414	13,581	13.4%	79,931	17.0%
Culberson	7	416,366	99,621	14,553	14.6%	87,646	16.6%
Carter	31	442,269	90,666	14,019	15.5%	86,834	16.1%
Sessions	32	309,519	64,853	11,118	17.1%	70,599	15.7%
Smith	21	497,969	117,856	14,918	12.7%	102,992	14.5%
Hensarling	5	389,030	87,089	9,662	11.1%	66,930	14.4%
Paul	14	441,835	92,574	11,899	12.9%	83,677	14.2%
Barton	6	426,403	86,200	11,860	13.8%	84,729	14.0%
Granger	12	409,853	89,487	10,200	11.4%	76,957	13.3%
Brady	8	461,808	98,782	12,351	12.5%	94,472	13.1%
Hall, R	4	455,612	93,399	10,651	11.4%	93,954	11.3%
Lampson	22	461,690	92,700	10,372	11.2%	95,999	10.8%
Johnson, S	3	407,731	72,510	8,398	11.6%	78,803	10.7%
Burgess	26	466,541	82,853	9,348	11.3%	89,513	10.4%
Marchant	24	402,760	68,634	8,373	12.2%	81,158	10.3%
McCaul	10	486,602	90,364	10,535	11.7%	109,076	9.7%
Poe	2	422,144	70,673	8,171	11.6%	88,450	9.2%
Doggett	25	414,778	52,547	10,755	20.5%	123,535	8.7%
Rodriguez	23	417,231	45,834	6,180	13.5%	89,967	6.9%
Ortiz	27	373,485	35,629	6,906	19.4%	101,749	6.8%
Reyes	16	364,236	32,674	6,362	19.5%	99,178	6.4%
Gonzalez	20	351,825	26,631	4,880	18.3%	84,852	5.8%
Cuellar	28	374,960	33,197	5,913	17.8%	110,478	5.4%
Hinojosa	15	354,677	22,820	5,156	22.6%	104,644	4.9%
Green	29	235,103	15,858	2,304	14.5%	53,651	4.3%
Green	9	297,516	19,226	3,195	16.6%	88,799	3.6%
Johnson, E	30	334,570	18,158	3,774	20.8%	108,698	3.5%
Jackson-Lee	18	332,883	19,613	3,314	16.9%	95,523	3.5%
	Total	12,753,857	2,246,271	301,662	13.4%	2,772,513	10.9%