



**GOVERNING**

# TEXAS



CHAMPAGNE  
HARPHAM  
CASELLAS





# Governing Texas







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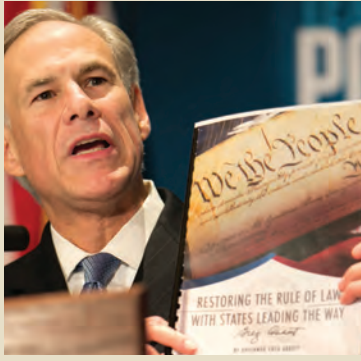
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# Preface



**O**UR GOAL in this text is to offer readers a broad understanding of the factors that are reshaping political processes and institutions in the Lone Star State in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. We are particularly concerned with explaining how the principles underlying constitutional government in Texas are being reworked in the face of new political, economic, and demographic changes. By supplementing our institutional analysis with concrete examples from everyday political life in Texas, we hope to show the reader that politics and government in Texas are not only important to their lives but endlessly fascinating as well.

## Features of the Fourth Edition

Another, related goal of the book is to provide students with extensive pedagogical support throughout each chapter. In every chapter, several features engage students' interest and help them master the learning objectives for the topic.

- **NEW Chapter 14: Building the Future: Public Policies for a Changing Texas** presents more coverage of critical policies: immigration, transportation, higher education, and water supply. As Texas continues to grow, these issues will no doubt take center stage. The authors unpack the controversies around these policies and ask students to think critically about what Texas will look like in the future.
- **NEW “What Do Texans Think?” features in every chapter** highlight fascinating public opinion data in Texas. The features allow students to compare their opinions on major issues to people across the state and the nation. Accompanying PowerPoint slides make it easy for instructors to poll their own classrooms on hot button topics in Texas government and politics.
- **Updated “What Government Does and Why It Matters” chapter introductions** draw students into the chapter by showing them why they should care about the chapter's topic.
- **Chapter Goals** appear at the start of the chapter and then recur at the start of the relevant sections throughout the chapter to create a more focused, active reading experience.
- **Core Objectives are woven into every chapter**, helping students gain proficiency with critical thinking, effective communication, personal and social responsibility, and quantitative reasoning.
- **Updated “Who Are Texans?” infographics** engage visually oriented students with a “statistical snapshot” of the state related to each chapter's topic. Through accompanying quantitative reasoning questions, these features help students grasp the political implications of demographic, political, economic, and regional diversity in Texas. Related exercises in the online coursepacks and slides in the instructor PowerPoints make it easy for instructors to bring these graphics into their online or face-to-face classrooms.

- **Updated “Texas and the Nation” infographics** enable students to compare Texas’s government and politics to other states’. Critical thinking questions accompany each “Texas and the Nation” graphic and encourage students to engage deeply with the graphics and draw their own conclusions. Related exercises in the online coursepacks and slides in the PowerPoints make it easy for instructors to bring these graphics into their online or face-to-face classrooms.
- **Revised “You Decide: Voices of Texas” boxes in every chapter** address controversial issues in Texas politics that students care about. These boxes encourage students to think beyond their knee-jerk reactions, consider all sides of the debate, and think about communicating their own effective arguments.
- **“Future of Texas” sections at the end of every chapter** examine how Texas government and politics are likely to change in light of Texas’s shifting demographics and economy.
- **Extensive end-of-chapter review sections organized around Chapter Goals** include section outlines, practice quiz questions, and key terms. Students have everything they need to master the material in each section of the chapter.

## Revisions to the Fourth Edition

In the fourth edition of *Governing Texas*, we have tried to provide students with the most up-to-date account of Texas government and politics. Every chapter was scrutinized with help from dozens of outside reviewers, and we have tried to provide the most current examples and data throughout the text. Highlights of the new edition include:

- Chapter 1 (The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas) has been fully updated with the most recent available economic and demographic data. Material has also been added to help students understand the complexity of political culture in Texas and the impact of changing demographics in the state.
- Chapter 2 (The Texas Constitution) has been updated and refined to include more material on the Texas Founding and the transformation of the Texas Constitution.
- Chapter 3 (Texas in the Federal System) has been rewritten to discuss how federalism in Texas has evolved over time, including recent decisions in the Texas legislature.
- Chapter 4 (Political Parties) has been updated throughout with particular attention to the influence of the Tea Party in state Republican Party politics. The chapter also highlights the role of the Latino community in changing Texas and Democratic Party competition.
- Chapter 5 (Campaigns and Elections) includes a new opener highlighting the gubernatorial and senatorial races in 2018, emphasizing why students should care about what happens in elections. This chapter also includes a revamped and updated section on recent changes to electoral practices, including redistricting, voter ID litigation, and straight-ticket voting.
- Chapter 6 (Interest Groups and Lobbying) includes many updated examples and stories to highlight the changing role of interest groups in state politics, and devotes considerable attention to recent attempts at ethics reform.

- Chapter 7 (The Legislature) begins with a new opener highlighting the escalating tension among legislators during the recent session of the Texas legislature. It includes updated data to reflect the changed composition of the legislature and Joe Straus’s speakership.
- Chapter 8 (The Executive Branch) has been significantly rewritten to take into account all the officials in the Executive Branch and recent executive actions during the 2017 legislative session. Comparisons are also made between the actions of current officials and those of previous ones—for example, between Governor Perry and Governor Abbott.
- Chapter 9 (The Judiciary) has been updated throughout, with new content added regarding judicial ethics and misconduct. It also discusses specialty courts, county courts, and how straight-ticket voting affects judicial elections.
- Chapter 10 (Local Government) has been significantly updated to account for changes in local governments and local officials. A new discussion of home-rule cities and preemption is now included.
- Chapter 11 (Public Finance) has been fully updated with the data made available to political leaders for the 2017 legislative session. An enhanced discussion of the challenges of both budgetary surpluses and deficits is also included.
- Chapter 12 (Public Policy) has been fully updated. New discussions of the problems facing policy makers in education and health care have been added focusing on the importance of recent court decisions. Explicit linkages have also been made between theories of the policy-making process and the substantive policy areas. A new graphic has been added investigating de facto segregation at the local level in the state.
- Chapter 13 (Crime, Corrections, and Public Safety) has been extensively revised to include more on policing in Texas—including controversies around alleged racial profiling and police brutality—and open carry laws. The chapter opens with the story of the tragic Dallas police shooting.
- NEW Chapter 14 (Building the Future: Public Policies for a Changing Texas) includes new content on policy areas like transportation, higher education, immigration, and water resources in Texas.

We believe that these changes will assist professors in teaching students the nuts and bolts of Texas government and politics, as well as the broad themes and issues that will shape the Lone Star State in the coming decades.

## A Cohesive, Flexible Set of Teaching and Learning Resources

Norton’s study tools, featuring InQuizitive, help students understand the reading, master key concepts from each chapter, and apply what they’ve learned. This ensures they arrive better prepared for lecture. Assessing students on the Texas Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) is easy with the Texas SLO test bank, InQuizitive (with questions tagged to SLOs), and variety of activities built specifically to complement the book. And creating dynamic classroom and online presentations is easy with the variety of instructor resources written by instructors who teach this course.

- InQuizitive is Norton’s award-winning, easy-to-use adaptive learning tool that personalizes the learning experience for students and helps them master—and

retain—key learning objectives. It helps students think critically about recent political events and controversies.

- InQuizitive is proven to increase students' scores on exams. Norton recently conducted a within-subjects efficacy study (designed by Dustin Tingley, *Harvard University*) of InQuizitive for American government, and among the students who did not earn a perfect score on the pre-test, we saw an average InQuizitive Effect of +17 points on the post-test.
- InQuizitive personalizes student learning paths based on their success in answering questions linked to learning objectives.
- Answer-specific feedback and the opportunity for students to keep working until they reach their desired mastery level makes InQuizitive a fun, efficient, low-stakes learning environment.
- Each question in InQuizitive is tied to one of the Texas SLOs, and instructors can run a report that measures class performance on the SLOs.
- The InQuizitive course for *Governing Texas*, Fourth Edition, expands upon the Third Edition's by offering more questions that focus on the following:
  - Concepts and term comprehension
  - Concept application
  - Critical thinking (linked to text features)
- The convenience of Learning Management System (LMS) integration saves you time by allowing InQuizitive scores to report right to your LMS gradebook. (LMS integration with InQuizitive is provided by a Norton specialist for qualified adoptions.)
- After students complete a chapter's **InQuizitive** assignment (Cory Colby, *Lone Star College*), instructors can further assess and enhance their learning by assigning fully editable, **book-specific activities right from their LMS**. Each activity is aligned with at least one Texas SLO and Core Objective. A chart of these alignments is provided for instructors. Activities include:
  - NEW simulations, with related assessments, explore the perspectives of political actors and participants in Texas politics.
  - Animated “Who Are Texans?” and “Texas and the Nation” infographics—with related assessments—examine Texas demographics and how Texas politics compare with the politics of other states.
  - NEW “What Do Texans Think?” features allow students to answer polling questions via Learning Management System survey tools.
  - News video exercises and quizzes provide current, real-world examples of concepts and issues in Texas politics.
- The **test bank** (Rachel Bzostek, *University of Texas, Tyler*), available within a Learning Management System in addition to traditional formats, is sorted by Texas SLOs and Bloom's taxonomy. It was thoroughly revised for the Fourth Edition and includes more conceptual questions.
- To round out students' experience in lecture, Norton provides high-quality teaching resources for instructors. A new **Interactive Instructor's Guide** (Emily Erdmann, *Blinn College*) offers a wealth of teaching materials, including discussion questions, suggested multimedia lecture launchers, and tips for teaching with InQuizitive or other student assessment tools. **Lecture PowerPoints** ease lecture prep by providing all of the photos, graphs, tables, and infographics from the text, as well as new “What Do Texans Think?” clicker questions.

## About the Authors

Over the past 25 years, we have worked together on a number of books that have studied various aspects of government and political life in Texas. We come to the study of Texas politics and government from very different backgrounds.

Anthony Champagne was born in Louisiana as the French surname suggests. His mother's family, however, were pioneer farmers and ranchers in Hopkins County, Texas. It was growing up with Louisiana and Texas connections that gave him a life-long interest in politics. When he moved to the University of Texas at Dallas in 1979, he immediately visited the Sam Rayburn Library in Bonham. Sam Rayburn was one of the Texas's most influential political figures. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1912 and served until his death in 1961. During that time, he was chairman of one of the most influential committees of the House, was Majority Leader, Speaker, and Minority Leader of the House. He is responsible for much of the major legislation in the New Deal and for his key role in the politics of the Truman, Eisenhower, and early Kennedy Administrations. A chance meeting at the Sam Rayburn Library with H. G. Dulaney, Sam Rayburn's secretary for 10 years, led to the opportunity to do over 130 oral histories with persons associated with Sam Rayburn. As a result, Champagne was completely hooked on studying Texas politics. He was particularly interested in the transformation of the state from an overwhelmingly Democratic state to a Republican bulwark. And, he was interested in how Texas changed from being a key partner with the national government in the cooperative federalism of the New Deal period to a state whose leaders are frequent critics of national power today. Political change in the state from the Sam Rayburn era to today is a key research focus of his.

Edward Harpham, in contrast, was born in Montreal to second generation Canadian parents who immigrated to the United States soon after his birth. His family's migration over the last 100 years from Sheffield to Toronto (1919) to Delaware (1952) to Texas (1978) and the industries that employed the family (auto service industry, chemical industry, and academia) mirror the demographic changes that have reshaped much of the population movement in the United States and Texas throughout the twentieth century. Trained as a political theorist with a deep interest in political economy, Harpham's move to Texas sparked an interest in how economic changes in the late twentieth century were changing the contours of the state's traditional political life in new and unexpected ways. At the heart of his work lies an abiding interest on the role that ideas play in shaping the growth and development of political institutions and public policies in the modern information age.

Jason Casellas was born in New Orleans and has always had an interest in state and local politics. His grandfather was a professor of Spanish literature at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio. He inspired him to pursue a career as a professor. After graduating from Loyola University in New Orleans, he attended graduate school at Princeton University where he earned a Ph.D. in Politics. His dissertation and book examined Latino representation in state legislatures and Congress, with Texas as one of the key states in his study. Even though he was not born in Texas, he got there as fast as he could. He moved to Texas in 2005 to take an assistant professorship at the University of Texas at Austin, where he continued his immersion in all things Texas. In 2013, he moved not very far to the University of Houston, where he is now an associate professor. Most of his extended family fortuitously reside in all parts of the Houston area. He has continued to teach, research, and comment on Texas politics with a specific expertise in the growing Latino population, and how it might transform the state in the future.



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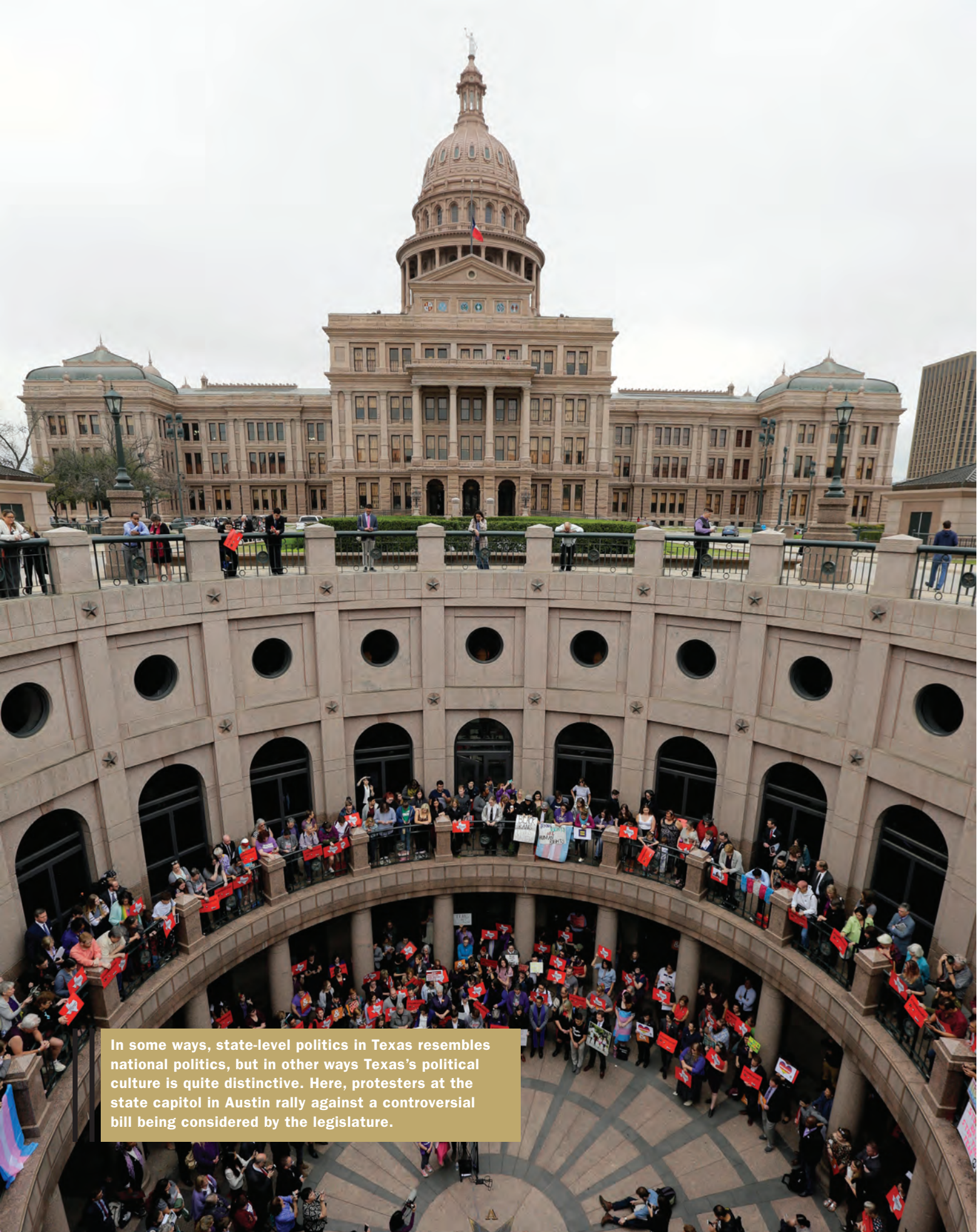






# Governing Texas





In some ways, state-level politics in Texas resembles national politics, but in other ways Texas's political culture is quite distinctive. Here, protesters at the state capitol in Austin rally against a controversial bill being considered by the legislature.



# The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas

**W**HY TEXAS'S POLITICAL CULTURE MATTERS In his *Travels with Charley*, John Steinbeck once described Texas as “a state of mind . . . a mystique closely approximating a religion.” Steinbeck believed that Texas, despite its vast space, its varying topography, its many cultures and ways of life, had a cohesiveness that may be stronger than in any other part of America. He wrote, “Rich, poor, Panhandle, Gulf, city, country, Texas is the obsession, the proper study and the passionate possession of all Texans.”

Certain myths define the obsession that is Texas—and Texans—in the popular imagination. The cowboy who challenges both Native American resistance and Mexican rule, the rancher who exerts an almost feudal sway over a vast domain, the wildcatter who risks everything to drill just one more oil well in a desperate quest for wealth and fortune, the independent entrepreneur who fiercely opposes the intrusion of government into his life—such are the myths about Texans from the past. Other more recent myths are equally powerful. The poor Latino peasant who slips across the border in search of economic opportunity and builds a thriving business, the smooth-talking preacher who promotes a gospel of prosperity to all who will listen, the poor woman who helps establish the right to abortion in the United States and then changes her position on the issue—such are the stories about Texans today that will generate their own myths.

These myths surround various politicians who have led the state since its founding: the visionary Stephen F. Austin, who was locked in a Mexican jail after presenting Texans' grievances to the authorities; the heroic Sam Houston, who won the key Battle of San Jacinto in the Texas Revolution against Mexican rule but was thrown out of office when he rejected the state's secession from the Union; the irrepressible Pa and Ma Ferguson, who served as back-to-back husband-and-wife governors; and the larger-than-life Lyndon Baines Johnson, who began his career as a schoolteacher in Cotulla, Texas, and completed it as a president championing civil rights and the poor.

The underlying reality of Texas today is much more complicated than these popular myths about its people and leaders. Yes, Texas is big. The second-largest state in the Union, comprising more than 261,000 square miles, it is also the second most populous. But Texas is much more diverse than commonly thought. In 2017, Texas was estimated to have a population of over 28 million people, and that population is rapidly growing and becoming composed more and more of ethnic minorities. Non-Hispanic whites, often



called Anglos, constitute 42 percent of the population, while Latinos constitute more than 39.4 percent. Approximately 12.7 percent of the population are African American, and 5 percent are Asian. Eighty-five percent of Texans live in urban areas, with many involved in an economy driven by high-tech industry and globalization. More than 28 percent of the population have a bachelor's degree. On the whole, Texans are young, with 26 percent under the age of 18 and 12.3 percent over the age of 65.

Throughout this text, we will examine how Texas is undergoing rapid economic, demographic, and political change. In the process, new myths are being created about the people, politics, and politicians found in the state. As in the past, however, the reality of Texas—its people and its politics—is much more complex than the myths we spin about it. Conservative Republicans may control today's political agenda, but their long-term dominance is not certain. Increasing racial and ethnic diversity points to a new Texas, one that looks sharply different from the one in the history books and one that appears to favor Democrats (the party preferred today by most Latinos, African Americans, and recent immigrants). The future of the state will be determined in large part by the struggle between an assertive Republican majority and a Democratic minority trying to regain power as both parties try to address the various political, economic, and demographic challenges facing its people. Moving our understanding of governance and politics beyond the myths about Texas is the goal of this chapter and the book.

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## CHAPTER GOALS



- Describe the defining characteristics of political culture in Texas (pp. 5–7)
- Explain how Texas's geography has influenced its political culture (pp. 7–10)
- Trace the evolution of Texas's economy (pp. 11–22)
- Explain how the population of Texas has changed over time (pp. 22–31)
- Describe Texas's shift from a rural society to an urban one (pp. 31–39)



# Texas Political Culture



Describe the defining characteristics of political culture in Texas

Political scientists have long recognized the importance of **political culture**, that is, the broadly shared values, beliefs, and attitudes about how the government should function and politics should operate. American political culture is traditionally viewed as emphasizing the values of liberty, equality, and democracy. These terms have meant a variety of things to Americans in different times and places.

States often exhibit a distinctive political culture that is the “product of their entire history.”<sup>1</sup> Presumably the political culture of a state has an effect on how people participate in politics and how individuals and institutions interact.<sup>2</sup> Often, Texas is categorized as having a “**traditionalistic individualistic**” **political culture** in which deference is shown to political elites by the masses and hard work and self-interest are valued as core virtues in the economic life of the state.<sup>3</sup> Taxes are kept low, and social services are minimized. Political elites, such as business leaders, have a major voice in how the state is run. In spite of the difficulty in measuring this concept of “traditionalistic individualistic” political culture in any empirical way, it is widely regarded as useful in explaining fundamental beliefs about the state and the role of state government.

When considering the political culture of Texas, one must recognize that it can change over time. It is also difficult to classify the political culture of a state as large and as diverse as Texas in any one category. The liberal cultural norms of urban areas such as Houston, Dallas, and Austin often stand in sharp contrast to those found in the conservative suburban (places outside a city) and exurban (prosperous places beyond the suburbs) areas of these cities. These, too, differ from the political cultures found in south Texas along the border or in the rural Panhandle of west Texas. In fact, Texas has many different political cultures or subcultures within its borders.<sup>4</sup>

To understand the complexity of political culture in Texas today, it is useful to consider three long-lasting patterns in Texas politics and the changes that they are undergoing: the one-party state, the idea of provincialism, and business dominance.

## The One-Party State Persists

For over 100 years, Texas was dominated by the Democratic Party. Winning the Democratic primary was tantamount to winning the general election. The pattern was broken in 1978 when Republican William Clements first won the governorship to the surprise of many, and again in 1986 when he won his second term. During the 1990s, substantial competition also emerged between the parties for control of the state legislature. Following redistricting in 2002 the Republicans secured a 7-vote majority in the state senate and a 24-vote majority in the state House. They continued to expand these majorities for the next 15 years. Between 2002 and 2016 all major statewide elected offices were controlled by Republicans. (One Court of Criminal Appeals justice switched to the Democratic Party in December 2013 after being elected as a Republican, but was defeated in

**political culture** broadly shared values, beliefs, and attitudes about how the government should function and politics should operate; American political culture emphasizes the values of liberty, equality, and democracy

“**traditionalistic individualistic**” **political culture** the belief that government should be dominated by political elites and guided by tradition, influenced by the culture of the South, combined with the belief that government should limit its role in providing order in society so that citizens can pursue their economic self-interest, influenced by the culture of the mid-Atlantic states



*The seal of Texas reflects the state's individualistic political culture.*

**provincialism** a narrow, limited, and self-interested view of the world often associated with rural values and notions of limited government

the November 2016 general elections.) Few observers doubt that Republicans and conservative values will continue to dominate state politics in the near future. But changes are in the wind. A powerful Republican Party controls most suburban, exurban, and rural areas and has grown increasingly conservative and divided. Moderate pro-business Republicans have begun to clash with a strident group of cultural conservatives championing such issues as traditional marriage, border security, and school choice. The Democratic Party that controls Texas cities has become a party of liberal whites and minorities seeking to promote a progressive agenda emphasizing pro-choice, LGBT rights, and public education. Democrats see in the expanding young Latino population a route back into political prominence. It may be difficult to predict the full impact of these changes on the “traditionalistic individualistic” political culture in Texas. But impact it they will.

## Provincialism

A second pattern that once defined Texas political culture is **provincialism**, a narrow view of the world that is often associated with rural values and belief in limited government. The result often was an intolerance of diversity and a concept of the public interest that dismissed social services and expenditures for education. Some of the more popular politicians in Texas in the past have espoused such attitudes, along with corn pone—a rural rejection of the cosmopolitanism found in large urban areas. Racism and intolerance of other cultures played important roles in defining provincialism in the traditional Texas political culture. Increasing urbanization, the growing influence of minorities, women, and LGBT people in politics, and the state's rising importance in the global economy has undercut some of Texas's traditional provincialism. But recent episodes of intolerance toward transsexuals, minority religious groups, and new immigrants from Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America show a resurgence in some of the values associated with provincialism in Texas, at least in important parts of the population.

### PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY: WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- Do you agree with the popular myth that Texas is overly provincial—that is, intolerant, narrow minded, and overly critical of government? Do you think that there has been a resurgence of provincialism in recent years?
- What are the economic and political consequences of provincialism in modern America? What do you think government and the people should do to foster more open-mindedness in Texas?

## Business Dominance

A third, continuing pattern that has helped define Texas's political culture is its longtime dominance by business. Labor unions are rare in Texas except in the oil-refinery areas around Beaumont–Port Arthur. Other groups that might offer an alternative to a business perspective, such as consumer interest groups, are poorly organized and poorly funded. Business groups are the major players in Texas politics, in terms of campaign contributions, organized interest groups, and lobbyists. The concerns and values of business groups continue to shape political culture in Texas today. But this business influence is being challenged by a powerful social conservative wing in the



*Ties between business and politics have always been close in Texas. Here, Governor Greg Abbott signs a bill prohibiting local government attempts to ban fracking as a way to continue to get oil and natural gas out of the ground.*

Republican Party that is less concerned with business interests than bathroom regulation, border control, and traditional marriage.

This chapter will investigate the economic, social, and demographic changes that transformed Texas's political culture during the twentieth century and have continued to shape it in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

## The Land



**Explain how Texas's geography has influenced its political culture**

Much of Texas's history and political life has been shaped by the relationship forged between its people and the land. When Texas became a republic in 1836, it claimed 216,000,000 acres (approximately 350,000 square miles) of unappropriated land as its own. At its founding, Texas was land rich but money poor, having only \$55.68 in its treasury. Texas was the only state other than the original 13 colonies to keep control of its public lands when it entered the Union, in 1845. Privatizing these public lands was probably the most important ongoing public policy pursued by the state in the nineteenth century. Although Texas turned a large portion of its public lands over to private ownership, it retained ownership of the minerals under some of this land, including land containing oil and natural gas. **Privatization of public property** established the property rules and regulations under which economic development would take place in the state. It also gave the state an ownership of mineral rights that would provide funding for elementary and secondary education as well as higher education for the next 160 years.

**privatization of public property** the act(s) by which Texas gave public land owned by the state over to private individuals for cultivation and development



Privatization was not the only political issue surrounding land in Texas in the nineteenth century. The exact boundaries of Texas were contentious throughout the 1840s and 1850s. Following the Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 established the Rio Grande as the southern border of the state. After Texas threatened to use military force to reassert its land claims in the west, the Compromise of 1850 established Texas's current western borders. In exchange for \$10 million in federal bonds, Texas gave up claims to 67,000,000 acres of land in what are now New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, and Oklahoma. The Compromise of 1850 enabled Texas to pay off the public debts incurred during the Republic and to retain 98,000,000 acres in public lands.<sup>5</sup>

Today, Texas is the second-largest state, next to Alaska, and its size is perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of its geography. To understand the dynamics of political life and governance in Texas demands an appreciation of the vast spaces and topography that define the state. The longest straight-line distance across the state from north to south is 801 miles; the longest east–west distance is 773 miles. To put this into perspective, the north–south distance between New York City and Charleston, South Carolina, is 763 miles, cutting across seven different states. The east–west distance between New York City and Chicago is 821 miles, cutting across six different states.

Distances alone, though, do not tell the whole story of the state's diverse geography. There are four distinct physical regions in Texas (Figure 1.1)<sup>6</sup> whose distinctive features have shaped its politics in a number of important ways.

## The Gulf Coastal Plains

The Gulf Coastal Plains extend from the Louisiana border and the Gulf of Mexico, along the Rio Grande up to Del Rio, and northward to the line of the Balcones Fault and Escarpment. As one moves westward, the climate becomes increasingly dry. Forests become less frequent as post oak trees dominate the landscape until they too are replaced by the prairies and brushlands of central Texas.

The eastern portion of the Gulf Coastal Plains—so-called east Texas—is hilly and covered by forests of pine and hardwoods. Almost all of Texas's timber production takes place here, which is also the home of some of the state's most famous oilfields. To the west is the Blackland Belt. Rolling prairie soil made the Blackland Belt a prime farming area, especially for cotton, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today, it is the most densely populated area of the state and has a diversified manufacturing base.

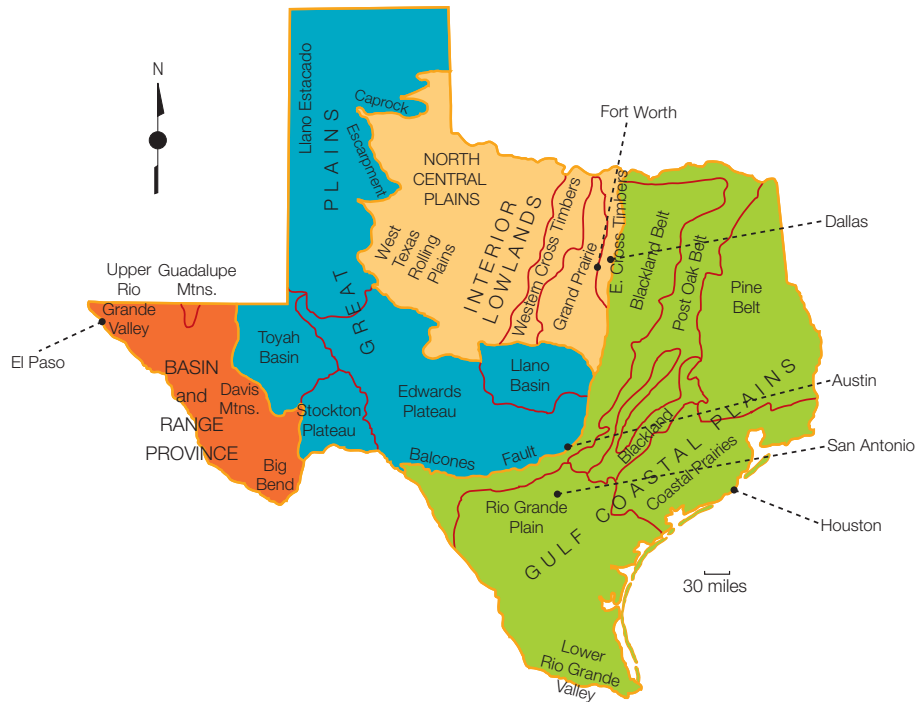
The Coastal Prairies around Houston and Beaumont were the center for the state's post–World War II industrial boom, particularly in the petrochemical industry. Winter vegetable and fruit production plays a major role in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, while livestock is important in the Rio Grande Plain, an area that receives less than 24 inches of rainfall on average every year and loses much of that to evaporation during its very hot summers.

Texas's political life grew out of the Gulf Coastal Plains. The land grants offered to Americans willing to come to Texas in the first half of the nineteenth century were located in this region, which was the birthplace of plantation slavery and, after the Civil War and Reconstruction, of Jim Crow segregation in the state. East Texas also saw the first oil booms in Texas in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Dallas–Fort

**FIGURE 1.1**

## The Physical Regions of Texas

SOURCE: Dallas Morning News, *Texas Almanac 2000–2001* (Dallas: Dallas Morning News, 1999), p. 55.



Worth area in the northwestern part of this region was once a bastion of a small Republican Party. A union movement grew out of the industrialized areas along the coast, providing support to a liberal wing of the Democratic Party. For the most part, though, the Gulf Coastal Plains were dominated by rural conservative values, whether in the Democratic Party (from the end of Reconstruction in 1876 to the early 1990s) or the Republican Party (from the 1990s to today). Urbanization and suburbanization in Houston and Dallas–Fort Worth have added new dimensions to the political life of this region. In the twenty-first century, urban areas have become increasingly Democratic, while suburban areas have become more Republican.

## The Interior Lowlands

The Interior Lowlands are an extension of the lowlands that run south from Canada through the Midwest. They are bordered by the Balcones Escarpment (the surface expression of the Balcones Fault) on the east and south and the Caprock Escarpment on the west. Extending west from Fort Worth, the Interior Lowlands have a predominantly agricultural economy and rural population. In the western portion, which rises from 750