

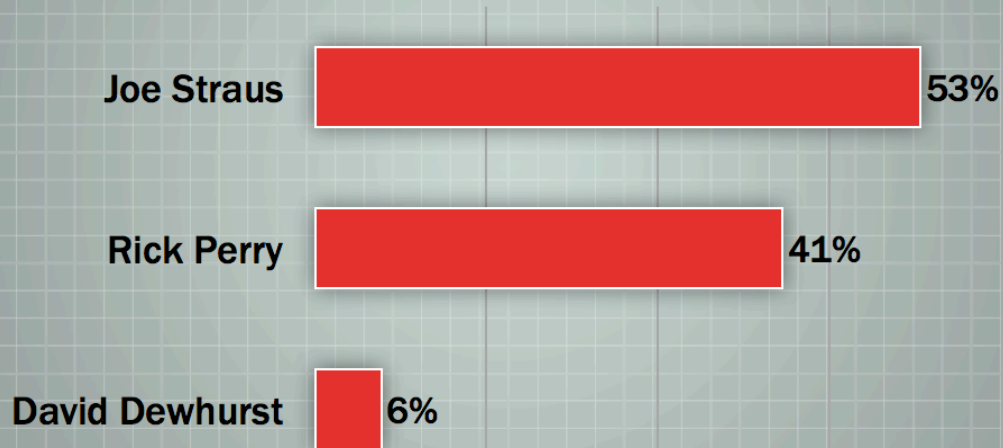
“INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

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*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider poll
for the week of December 10*

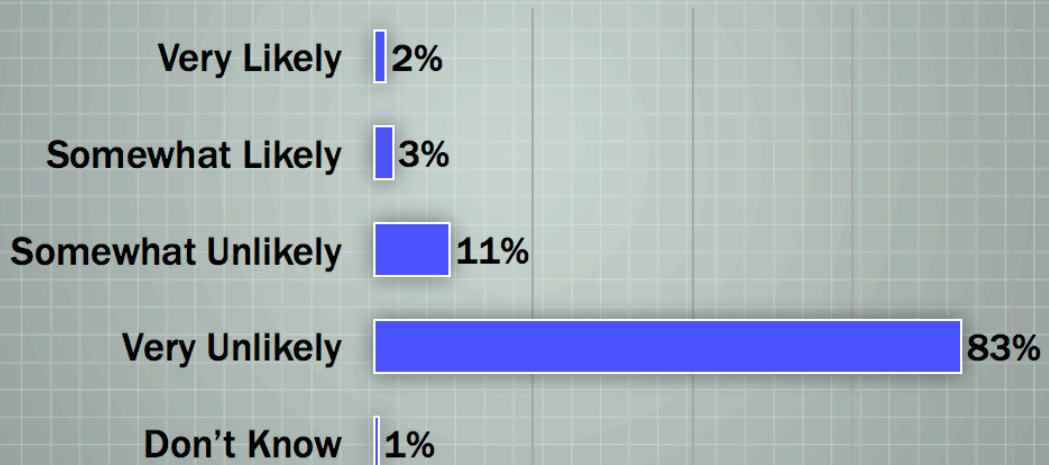
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Who is in the strongest position?



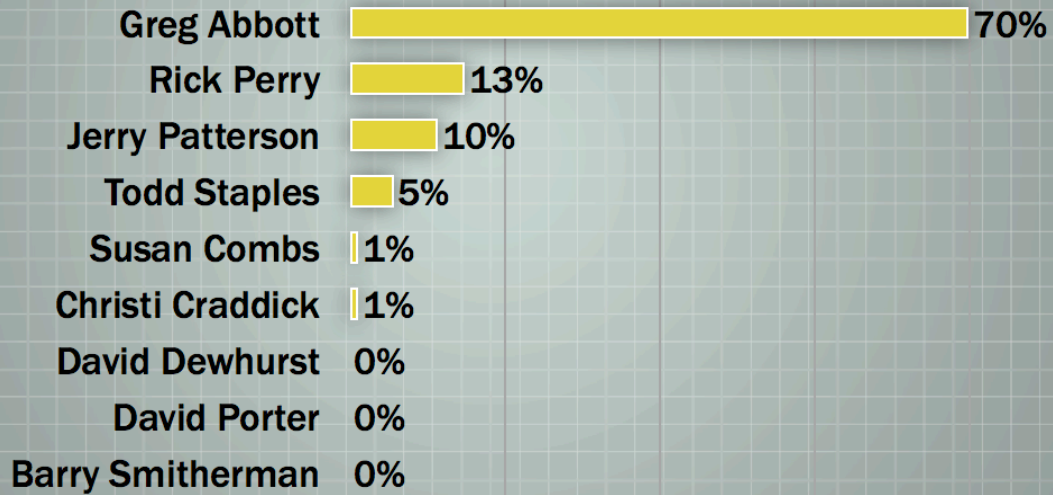
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Will the House replace Joe Straus as speaker?



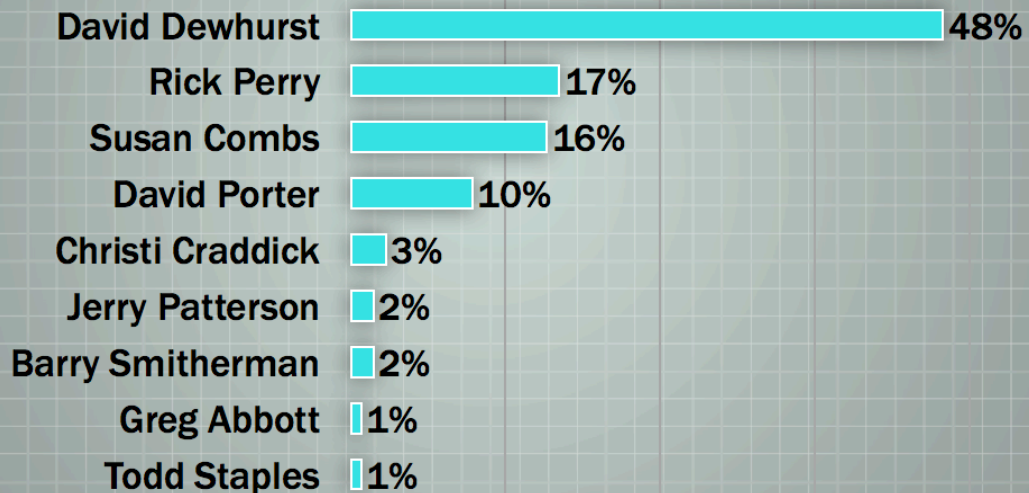
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What statewide officeholder is most formidable?



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What statewide officeholder is most vulnerable?



Going into the 2013 legislative session, which of the top three leaders is in the strongest position?

- "Only one of these guys avoided a shameful defeat despite tons of money."
- "Perry typically sets the agenda and he's the most conservative of the 3."
- "None - all are in very precarious positions"
- "Potentially. But only if he chooses to engage in legislative life"
- "Never underestimate this man."
- "The Dew can't get no respect and has made all the wrong moves (i.e. you do not give those against you power). The Speaker has to deal with ideologues that do not understand how to find middle ground. So, by process of elimination, the Guv has been dealt a good hand."
- "Unquestionably, Speaker Straus. Dewhurst is wounded from the election and there's too much uncertainty surrounding Perry's future."
- "Regarding who is in the strongest position, is there a fourth choice?!"
- "Perry by the process of elimination. Based on Dewhurst's lackluster Senate race, he's not likely to strike much fear in the Senate. Assuming he wins, Straus will still have a divided House pulling him in several directions. That leaves Perry."
- "The Gov came back limping after the presidential contest, but he's in far better shape than Straus and especially Dewhurst after the Cruz loss."
- "Without question, Straus is the grown up in the room."
- "This is simply based on the inherent power of the Lt Gov's office historically and because he is a one man's calendar committee."
- "In a one-party controlled state, Perry has the advantage of being able to channel the GOP base, without having to actually do any heavy lifting during session. He declares his emergency priorities, stirs the pot, and takes off to plow the fields of Iowa. Meanwhile, Straus and Dewhurst are left to deal with the budget shortfall, cuts to education, etc."
- "Separation of and consolidation therein of his authority not that he can part the very red sea in the lege"
- "Not even close, Perry is strongest -- question is, how will he use it? He faces a conundrum on whether to list Sanctuary Cities and TSA Groping as emergency items, thus removing them from clogging up the floor later in the session but adding controversy into the first few weeks"
- "He has the power if he decides to exercise it and if he intends to seek reelection he'd better"
- "Perry has been AWOL for the last two years.... members are tired of the same old crap!"
- "Straus won't pander to the crazies the way Perry and the Dew do. He's

well positioned, been talking to Members, and he's focused on serious issues - education, water, transportation and manufacturing."

- "Straus hasn't had an 'oops' moment in a loooonnnnnngggg time."

- "I'd like to answer 'none of the above.'"

- "Gov. Perry's future aspirations will require him to shut down any solution to any problem. There should be a constitutional amendment that says there can only be one presidential attempt by a governor in any one decade. Texas is a strong state and can probably survive one per decade."

- "Probably the Speaker, by a nose, but Strauss has never shown a strong desire to leverage his position. Maybe this time he will exert some influence (on water?) since this will be the last of his promised 3 sessions as Speaker."

- "Straus is the only office holder who hasn't been rebuked by the voters this year."

- "This isn't much of a choice - Perry and Dewhurst have been weakened by electoral rebuffs, and Straus is under assault from his party's jihadist wing."

- "Straus by default right now. Check back after his re-election."

- "One's a failed presidential candidate who didn't even sniff securing his party's nomination; another's a failed U.S. Senate candidate who was out-worked and thorough whipped in the primary, and the last is relatively unscathed

and poised to be reelected as Speaker."

- "Governor. Dewhurst is the. Most Likely and perhaps the only one who is knowledgeable and willing to engage"

- "Joe Straus is best positioned going into the session with his 'we have to get serious on the serious issues' theme, but Perry is better positioned politically as he can continue hewing to his simplistic small government, low taxes, line."

- "Tough call, none are in nearly as strong a position as they would like to be. Perry is probably in the strongest position in 2013 among the three, but nevertheless in a much weaker position than in 2011."

- "Straus has had everything possible thrown at him. In the end the best anyone could come up with as an opponent was a personal injury trial lawyer. If Hughes stays in, Straus will thrash him in a floor vote. That will make Straus the only of the big 3 that has not suffered a defeat since the last session. Like it or not."

- "The strongest Democratic position is in the Senate while the Dew worries about a primary challenge. The Speaker has to worry about his right flank while Democrats now have enough votes to bother him. Only Perry enjoys his positioned unchallenged."

- "Conventional wisdom suggests the Gov and Lt Gov as a result of each having recently experienced a loss of practical political capital; though each is working to re-ingratiate themselves to the primary voters."

- "Perry is likely a lame duck, and Dewhurst is simply lame, so that leaves Straus by default. Assuming he survives the challenge for Speaker, he'll be the only one of the three with a recent win."
- "Perry by default."
- "The Speaker is the only one not coming off of an embarrassing defeat."
- "Sad as it is to say."
- "He is the only one that didn't just lose an election."
- "Straus has not lost a primary election in his own party in the last 12 months."
- "Doesn't really have to do anything!"
- "Question should really be 'who is the least weak?' Answer: Straus - He has a strong leadership team. Neither Dewhurst or Perry has much loyalty in the Leg."
- "The other two have damage their goods. 'Oops' and 'I got beat by a guy that's never so much as ran for dog catcher' don't spell strength."
- "Dewhurst has been bashed at the knees. Perry is struggling to avoid solidifying his stance as Donald Trump without the compassion or brains. Straus is the last adult standing if for no other reason than default. Too bad his talents and vision are limited by the self-interests of Dewhurst and Perry. A giant's true height can get lost if he forever stands among midgets."
- "He's the only one who won his last race."
- "When he moved to the right, especially with committee chairmanships, he strengthened his hand."
- "He's untouchable, even though a growing minority see his leadership as entirely self-serving and destructive to the long-term interests of Texas"

How likely are House members to replace Joe Straus as speaker in January?

- "Democrats will pick the next speaker, make no mistake. Hughes may be a closet TTLA guy, but his record is to wacky to pry Dems away from Straus."
- "Simpson could do it if he puts his name in the hat."
- "Dick Arney would have made it difficult for the Speaker, but he is no longer at Freedom Works. And, at the end of the day, Trey Martinez-Fisher and the rest of the Democrats will back Straus. Game over."
- "Straus has the Speaker's race sewn up. Anyone saying something different is either on the outs with the Speaker or is seriously delusional."
- "Straus will continue to be Speaker as long as the Ds want him there."

- "Straus has the votes and has counted them twice"
- "There are now a half dozen or so more Democrats than there were in 2011. Where else can they go?"
- "Why would they burn the village in order to save it?"
- "I just don't see a candidate who can build the coalition needed to beat Straus."
- "And go where? Crazy or wannabe crazy?"
- "Ds are still hitched, and the rest of the Rs ain't riding up behind a trial lawyer."
- "Simpson provides some intriguing possibilities, especially with yet another huge turnover in the House."
- "At this point Bryan Hughes is a token candidate and therefore there is no real speaker's race."
- "Hughes isn't even close to having the votes, from what I hear. Add in a possible Simpson candidacy and they'll just feast on the same small group of folks. Meanwhile, Straus has the votes and will cruise to victory, much to the chagrin of MQS and TM-F."
- "Anyone voting against Straus is rowing back to the Titanic hollering don't go down without me"
- "Democrats have nowhere to go and the Speaker's patronage should hold well more than enough Republicans to assure his continuance in office."
- "Despite logic, game theory, past results and rising partisanship, Democrats will back Straus for Speaker, ensuring his re-election. Pity."
- "The Speaker's race is a farce; some perpetuate this notion for their own purposes. The net political effective, which is a brilliant, is to co-op the proposed rule changes by "discussing" them."
- "I don't see the math to replace him."
- "Not at all likely should be an option."
- "If not Straus, where do D's go?"
- "76 is an easy number for Joe"
- "The people of Alamo Heights have spoken. A Speaker who can't be primaried - thank heaven for small miracles."
- "Really, the 40 plus freshmen and sophomores can barely find the bathrooms in the place tell me how they figure out how to coalesce around one candidate to defeat Straus. Rule number one as a newbie in a legislative body is sit down, listen, observe, be deliberative about choices and oh yes, shut up."
- "There is no real Speaker's race."
- "What is so bad with Straus? Is it really all about TSA Groping?"
- "Straus has the votes."

Of the current crop of statewide officeholders, who is the most formidable politically?

- "Abbot=Clean image, great story of overcoming adversity, gets press when it counts on substantive issues, huge fundraiser, prosecutorial power. Wow."
- "Abbott is respected across the board and as AG hasn't made as many political enemies as others."
- "The General is the one to watch. He has played the game correctly and is in a great position both politically and financially to take on Perry."
- "Greg Abbott can presently beat anyone in the state for any office he might choose."
- "Smitherman has the definitive catalog of pitch perfect talking points; however Patterson is a man of the people AND he's picked the correct opponent."
- "Abbott because of money but don't count out Perry."
- "Perry's still the king in Texas. He was damaged here by his presidential run, but none of these other folks are battle-tested enough to beat him. Dewhurst was badly weakened by his primary showing vs. Cruz."
- "Because he can't be intimidated"
- "Not even close. Abbot has \$15M in the bank, a great record, hard worker, loved by the grassroots and the base and a personal story of overcoming adversity."
- "He has a state wide brand and needs to use it now or never"
- "Most money and money buys"
- "The General...and I know 15 million different reasons to fear him."
- "Perry is still at the top of the food chain."
- "It probably should be the A.G. but Patterson knows how to exercise political power better than Abbott."
- "Abbott has how much in the bank? And a track record of fighting the Feds--and winning every now and then. The others pay lip service while Abbott follows through."
- "Perry is still the most formidable, but Greg Abbott is well-positioned to challenge him if he stumbles or to step into his place if he should implausibly decide to make another run for president."
- "The party base loves him, and he is well-financed."
- "I hope Abbott grabs his junk and goes after PERRY:)"
- "Smart, nasty, aggressive, funny. Gun nuts love him."
- "Perry may be damaged goods in some peoples eyes but to think he is weak would be a mistake. He can survive on residual strength alone."
- "Now? Perry. Abbott's strength is mostly potential. He is Steve Young to Perry's Joe Montana. Might be a Hall of Famer, but right now he's on the bench."

- "Well liked by most (if not all), war chest, charisma, self-deprecation, taking the fight to the Feds on numerous fronts...what more do you want?"
- "Most money raised + less voter fatigue = Greg Abbott."
- "Abbott's campaign account is overflowing, and he has the support of the conservative base that Combs and Dewhurst snuggled up to but the feelings were never mutual."
- "Abbott, although Staples definitely has an advantage to close the gender gap."
- "Abbott, but with this caveat: He has never been tested. He's got the war chest and the press clippings, but can he take a punch? That remains to be seen."
- "Money is power and abbots got it."
- "Abbott has money, grassroots support, and is a great speaker"
- "Outside of Abbott, her name, fundraising ability make her a force for anything she will pursue in the future."
- "Imagine a cash register with loads of cash and then think Cha Ching! Oh, and he did not damage himself on the national stage. Furthermore, he has meticulously managed relationships with the base and the Hispanic community in the Republican party."
- "He works hard. End of story. Only Patterson is a significant challenger."
- "George P could beat any of them however."

Of the current crop of statewide officeholders, who is the most vulnerable politically?

- "If Strayhorn was 'Grandma', Combs is 'Can't Get Right'. She blew the 2012-2013 revenue estimate by a country mile, which cost local schools a mint. Don't forget the data security failures. No discernable victories."
- "She's the newest and her opposition wasn't strong."
- "Perry but Combs and Dewhurst are clawing for the top spot."
- "There used to be a time when people feared Dewhurst's war-chest, but those days are long gone. His political obituary was written when he chose to give power to the Brutus' of the ledge. This will be the Lite Guv's last session and it will not look pretty."
- "Abbott doesn't yet see George P in his rear view mirror, nor has he figured out that his is a race to see who will face a Castro brother. Plus, his stump speech will need to keep up with his fundraising if he is going to get to the finish line."
- "Too many flubs."
- "Who is David Porter?"

- "Already proven unpopular with primary voters"
- "This was a close call because Lt Gov. has not developed deep grass roots in either personal contacts or an organization that showed itself in the run-off election. Rick Perry was chosen based on his performance as a presidential candidate. Other than Greg Abbot, the others are not well known enough that causes some inherent vulnerability in the political arena."
- "Walking dead."
- "For all the obvious reasons"
- "Dewhurst in 2014 if Abbott challenges him. Porter is vulnerable in 2016."
- "Close with Perry but failures in office and out of touch with the GOP base means not up but out in 2014"
- "I fear time's run out for The Dew."
- "Perry is vulnerable if Abbott will assert himself. In the meanwhile, the governor is a useful idiot for industry."
- "Dewhurst is making the mistake of assuming he will be acceptable to the far right if he adopts that ideology. He won't be, and he is hurting himself among moderate conservatives who realize they have to govern."
- "Perry is the most vulnerable to a defeat at the polls because his political operation is like a college football team that won the championship last year and then graduated 20 seniors, i.e., he had a winning team in 2010 but they have scattered. Will they get back together? Will he recruit a new team? Whether the plan is reunite or rebuild, will they be as good? It's harder to put a team together than it looks, and at this moment he appears to be a sitting duck."
- "Probably should be a tie with Dewhurst and Combs. The operative question is: who might well fall--in a re-election campaign-- to a candidate to their right in the R. primary?"
- "Seems like most of these are safe because they were recently elected or are passionate in their conservatism about moving up the ladder. Combs might still be vulnerable because of the data breach SNAFU that occurred on her watch and because of her history on the Right's sacred cow-- abortion. Dewhurst, on the other hand, was just embarrassed in a primary. Folks were already second-guessing his commitment to solving issues in the Texas Senate, this electoral set-back won't do anything to quiet those rumblings."
- "Dewhurst might be challenged effectively in a Republican primary for lieutenant governor, but Susan Combs would be perhaps the most vulnerable of those thinking about moving up. She has modest campaign skills and some baggage from her current office."
- "Ted Cruz has drawn the road map of how to win. If you can get the incumbent into a run-off where there is low voter turn-out."
- "For positions that more than a handful of people care about: Dewhurst. For all statewide positions: Porter."

- "Dead meat."
- "The Dew is a church marm who lost her virtue publicly. His scold has lost its sting."
- "Hard to choose between Dewhurst and Combs...each has significant vulnerabilities; both share a self-created impediment, suspicious primary voters."
- "I've never heard of David Porter. Who is he?"
- "Todd Staples is the most vulnerable if he jumps into a primary for Lt. Gov. against Jerry Patterson, Susan Combs, or Greg Abbott--or maybe even David Dewhurst."
- "Perry's primary losses were in lands far away. The Dewhurst defeat was in his backyard."
- "Looking at primary challenge from several opponents. Should fare better in March election than the fiasco this past year."
- "Combs should move back to marathon, play with the cows"
- "Dewhurst because the red meat wing disowned him. Combs close second because of F1 cronyism and privacy violations"
- "Perry is a sitting duck if the D's can get their act together for just a few short months."
- "No home base anymore. A bank account without a bank."
- "She's plenty of money, but no real base and a growing history of questionable decisions"
- "All hat, no cattle."

Our thanks to this week's participants: Cathie Adams, Brandon Aghamalian, Jenny Aghamalian, Victor Alcorta, Clyde Alexander, George Allen, David Anthony, Jay Arnold, Louis Bacarisse, Charles Bailey, Tom Banning, Dave Beckwith, Amy Beneski, Rebecca Bernhardt, Andrew Biar, Allen Blakemore, Tom Blanton, Chris Britton, David Cabrales, Lydia Camarillo, Kerry Cammack, Marc Campos, Snapper Carr, Janis Carter, Corbin Casteel, William Chapman, Elizabeth Christian, Elna Christopher, Harold Cook, Beth Cubriel, Randy Cubriel, Denise Davis, Hector De Leon, Nora Del Bosque, Tom Duffy, Richard Dyer, Jeff Eller, Jack Erskine, John Esparza, Jon Fisher, Tom Forbes, Neftali Garcia, Norman Garza, Dominic Giarratani, Bruce Gibson, Stephanie Gibson, Kinnan Golemon, Daniel Gonzalez, John Greytok, Jack Gullahorn, Clint Hackney, Wayne Hamilton, Bill Hammond, Ken Hodges, Billy Howe, Shanna Igo, Deborah Ingersoll, Richie Jackson, Cal Jillson, Jason Johnson, Bill Jones, Mark Jones, Robert Jones, Lisa Kaufman, Robert Kepple, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Pete Laney, James LeBas, Luke Legate, Leslie Lemon, Myra Leo, Ruben Longoria, Homero Lucero, Vilma Luna, Matt Mackowiak, Luke Marchant, Matt Matthews, Dan McClung, Parker McCollough, Scott McCown, Robert Miller, Bee Moorhead, Mike Moses, Steve Murdock, Craig Murphy, Keir Murray, Pat Nugent, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Bill Pewitt, Jerry Philips, Tom Phillips, Wayne Pierce, Richard Pineda, Allen Place, Gary Polland, Jay Pritchard, Ted Melina Raab, Bill Ratliff, Karen Reagan, Patrick Reinhart, Kim Ross, Jason Sabo,

Mark Sanders, Andy Sansom, Jim Sartwelle, Stan Schlueter, Bruce Scott, Robert Scott, Steve Scurlock, Dan Shelley, Bradford Shields, Christopher Shields, Jason Skaggs, Brian Sledge, Ed Small, Martha Smiley, Todd Smith, Larry Soward, Dennis Speight, Jason Stanford, Bill Stevens, Bill Stotesbery, Keith Strama, Bob Strauser, Colin Strother, Charles Stuart, Michael Quinn Sullivan, Sherry Sylvester, Jay Thompson, Russ Tidwell, Trent Townsend, Trey Trainor, Lisa Turner, Joe Valenzuela, Ware Wendell, Darren Whitehurst, Woody Widrow, Seth Winick, Alex Winslow, Lee Woods, Peck Young, Angelo Zottarelli.