

“INSIDE”

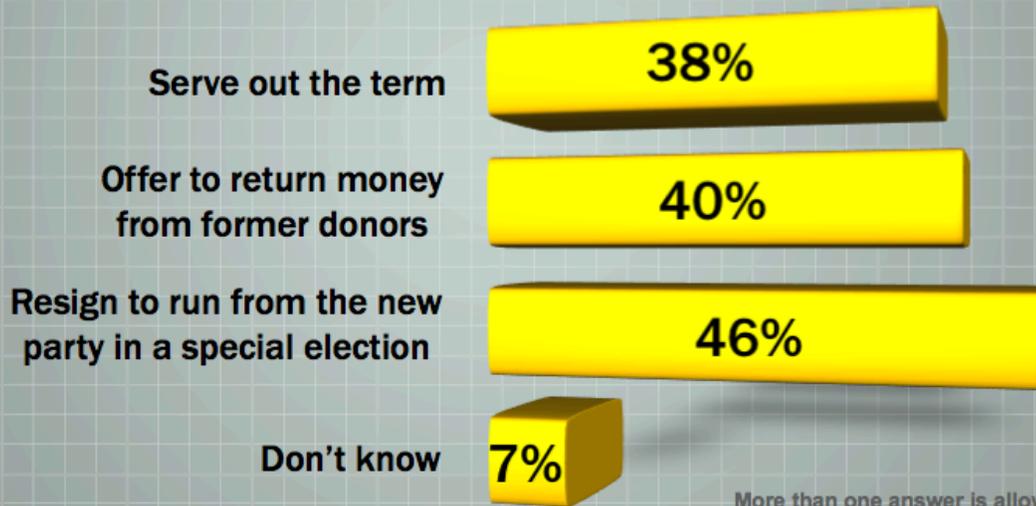
INTELLIGENCE

THE TEXAS TRIBUNE
TEXAS  WEEKLY

The insider's poll for the week of December 20.

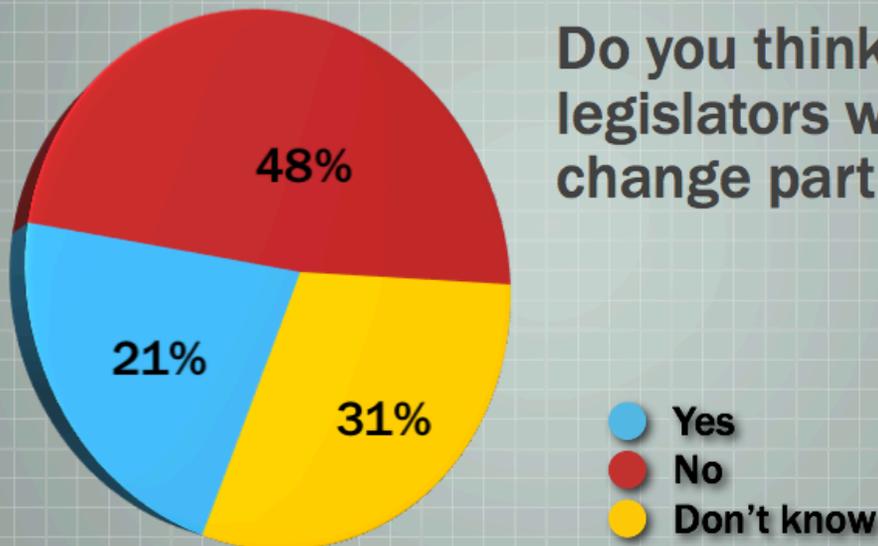
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

When a legislator switches parties, how should he or she handle it?



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Do you think other legislators will change parties?



There were two open-ended questions this week. One was a prompt for other things a lawmaker should do when switching parties. Only a few respondents rose to the bait:

- "Apologize to those partisans whom he's betraying."
- "Phil Gramm did it right."
- "Run for Ag Commissioner w/ an eye toward higher office"
- "Doesn't matter!!!!!!!"
- "It's like the pro-life / pro-choice movement: It's a personal decision."
- "Announce before the election that he will switch after."
- "Phil Gramm got it right. He's the standard bearer for how to do it."
- "Switch right after the election and before the session begins. This way they get to serve for two years before the next election."
- "Unique to the district and circumstances. A legislator represents his district and should take district demographics and voting patterns into account in addition to election circumstances (opposition, competitive race) into account."
- "Don't offer to return money - but give back to whomever asks. Otherwise, switch and lay in the bed that you made - its the elected officials prerogative and they are help accountable to the people that elected them - who are we to say that they were elected by a majority of members from their party."
- "Explain it in practical or philosophical terms, and make the distinction"
- "Assume that a switch is not done without community input, if electorate disapproves next election will tell."
- "I WOULD MAKE SURE I HAD TOUCHED BASE WITH MY BIGGEST AND LONG TIME SUPPORTERS AND EXPLAINED WHY I WAS SWITCHNG AND NOT SURPRISE THEM. I WOULD ALSO MAKE SURE THAT LEADERS IN THE NEW PARTY BOTH STATE AND LOCAL, WOULD ACCEPT AND WELCOME ME AND HELP ME IN THE NEXT PRIMARY. I DON'T THINK IT IS NECESSARY TO RESIGN AND CAUSE ANOTHER ELECTION. I WOULDN'T OFFER TO RETURN CAMPAIGN DONATIONS BUT WOULD RETURN THEM TO ANYONE WHO CALLED AN REQUESTED A REFUND."
- "All is fair in love, war and politics. No moral requirements here."
- "Should? "Should" as compared to what? Should in order to be reelected? Should in the face of redistricting? Should while looking over your shoulder at Chuck Hopson's primary fight? Or "should" in order to be seen by all as an upright and honest candidate (who coincidentally was just elected 4 weeks ago under another party's banner)?"

The second prompt went like this: Republicans are on their way to a 100-member supermajority in the House. Which Republicans are most likely to break from the herd and vote with Democrats?

- "Depends on the issue. Urban vs. rural is still a big deal, as is Dallas vs. Houston vs. the rest of the state."
- "Geren"
- "None, unless supporters of losing Speaker candidates try to play games with Straus."
- "counter to conventional wisdom, hard-core conservatives, similar to the dynamic in Washington where the lefties and hard right have come out against the tax cut extension, but for different reasons. Once Straus wins, the Craddick-King Cabal will try to undermine the speaker every step of the way, saying he is not conservative enough. There will be protest votes, self-inflating soliloquies on the floor, and all other forms of nonsense meant to score points rather than deal with substance."
- "Depending on the issue: Geren, Hardcastle, Hilderbran, Hunter, and elect-Gonzalez"

- "None"
- "None. Too much pressure now."
- "None. They'll be too terrified to do so."
- "Hopson, Ritter, and the Cardinals."
- "todd smith, bryan hughes"
- "Look first among the 12 Rs that voted with the Democrats for Straus in 2009."
- "Smith, T., Ritter"
- "Who knows?"
- "Smithee, Todd Smith"
- "Unlike D.C., Texas members, regardless of party affiliation, often vote on issues based upon what is best for their districts. It will be a sad day indeed if legislators become more concerned with what the party says rather than what their constituents want or need."
- "All the Sane ones."
- "None"
- "Hopson"
- "Charlie Geren, Vicki Truitt, Todd Smith, Jim Keffer, Jerry Madden, Jim Pitts, Susan King, Dwayne Bohac"
- "Cook, though at this point not even all the Democrats will be voting with the Democrats."
- "hmmm..."
- "The older more mature ones (both criteria)"
- "Todd Smith, Beverly Woolley, Pitts, Ritter, Pena, Keffer, Cook"
- "Geren, Solomons"
- "Impossible to guess! All could! Which issue?"
- "don't know."
- "One, I don't think we know enough about where the herd is headed to make such a presumption. Two, those breaking from the herd will likely be a changing bunch depending on the issue. Three, generally Republicans breaking from the herd will probably be giving more weight to how the issue at hand plays in their district rather than ideology."
- "Inappropriate question."
- "Todd Smith, Burt Solomons, John Smithee"
- "Ritter, Hopson, Geren, Hamilton, Gooden, White, Hardcastle. (Great deal depends on the issue at hand). This list changes for each issue!"
- "Those who put the best interests of their districts ahead of party politics."
- "I think it could be the other way around. Since the requirement for a constitutional amendment is an absolute 100 votes - not 2/3 of those present and voting - the question is which Ds will fill in for missing Rs, if necessary. To say nothing of the unlikelihood that the Senate Ds will hang together when the going gets touch."
- "Charlie Geren, Todd Smith, Burt Solomons"
- "None that I know of in this environment"
- "There are very few votes that are along party lines. Who determines what is a D vote and what is an R vote? I am not sure you can determine when that would happen."
- "GREAT question....."
- "I don't think it matters because of the left over Craddick D's who should more than make up for any switching R's."
- "dunno"

- "The trials and others occasionally...Elkins, Hughes, d miller, phillips, smithee, solomons"
- "craddick, king and kolkhorst"
- "Straus"
- "?"
- "John Garza, Angie Button, John Otto, Jim Pitts"
- "Those who coalesced with Democrats to remove Craddick."
- "Pitts, Hilderbran, Keffer, Solomons, Phillips"
- "None are likely to break. Most votes will still breakdown regionally and along urban v rural lines."
- "Chuck Hopson."
- "I think the question is irrelevant except as it applies to the redistricting bill. Although I suppose we can expect to see a bit more party-line voting this time because of the apparent militancy of the newly-elected GOP House members, I wouldn't expect it to be a daily issue."
- "Republican trial lawyers"
- "Urban moderates with substantial minority constituents"
- "I don't think Republicans in this political environment can break and vote with the Democrats. Instead, they have to position the conversation that Democrats are voting with (moderate and practical) Republicans."
- "It'll depend on the issue so I call it a jump ball."
- "Only those that don't plan on coming back"
- "Generally, probably those in urban areas with greatest opportunity to be swing districts."
- "Not many - they will be fearful of retribution except PERHAPS on certain issues important to their districts."
- "Damn if I know"
- "None."
- "None."
- "Allan Ritter, Aaron Pena"
- "None who want to keep their jobs."
- "With the Tommy Merritt and Delwin Jones defeats, the obvious votes against their District interests to poke Republicans in the eye are gone. Perhaps Sarah Davis and John Garza because of their district makeup. Although impending new districts may make them stick with the majority to show their chops in order to make a case for shoring up the R population in their new district."
- "Geren"
- "None. More likely a D to join the majority Rs for a back home district favor."
- "None of the new ones"
- "None"
- "Pena (should he switch) and Berman (out of spite)"
- "Rural members"
- "Not sure - it just depends on the issue."
- "None"
- "Depends on the issue."
- "What would the incentive be for that? Instead, we'll see how hard it is to manage a supermajority, especially when 40% of them are paranoid as a matter of political philosophy. Voting w/Ds won't the issue, it will be voting against each other."

- "That depends on the issue. I do not expect there to be any Republicans voting with Democrats on redistricting."
- "Every single one of them if they don't get their way in the Republican Caucus. These guys are not unified with each other!"
- "It will depend on the issue... Voter ID, repealing resident alien tuition, immigration issues, sanctuary cities, etc. Will depend on the community and personal philosophy for some of these members, I would hope."
- "The ones who don't care if they get reelected"
- "It depends on how strong and vocal the tea party caucus is. If that group runs the show, I could see them alienating moderates like any of the original Straus 11 (Eissler, Geren, Solomons, etc.). But some of those (McCall, Kuempel - R.I.P.) are no longer serving."
- "THE AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC REPUBLICANS WILL TEND TO BE MORE MODERATE AS WILL SOME OF THOSE ELECTED IN THE DALLAS SUBURBS. THEY WILL BE THE MOST QUESY ABOUT BUDGET CUTS THAT HURT THEIR SCHOOLS OR CONSTITUENTS."
- "Pitts"
- "Geren."
- "I believe that there are around 35 who are capable of doing it depending on the issue. When the tent gets that big, ideological purity is the first casualty."
- "Depends on the issue and IF they vote their district. Really not much difference for Democrats whether 51 or 49 they're on the sideline. Bigger challenge will be for Republicans to govern with such a large, fractured caucus."
- "None - no reason to unless they have decided to retire"
- "None"
- "Geren, Hopson, Todd Smith,"
- "Those capable of independent, rational thought."
- "In this politically polarized climate, why should any vote against the herd?"
- "Todd Smith"
- "Those remaining from the 'gang of 11.'"
- "Pena, Margo, Torres, Scott, Aliseda"
- "This will vary by issue but it raises a good point. Ritter and Pena won't vote that different as Rs than they did as Ds. Members vote their district as well as their party."
- "A lot of them after the first few votes"
- "None. Some may vote their districts on some issues that do not comport with what may be considered 'republican' agenda items. Rural Repubs will have many issues in common with urban and rural Dems."
- "Difficult to answer without looking at specific issues that will come up for a vote. Budget is most obvious, and with that I think you have to look at the proposed cuts and match them to districts whose populations are affected the most. It will be a challenge for those members to stay with the herd."
- "Don't know"
- "Almost all Republicans will break from either or both the party majority or the party leadership from time to time as the interests of their districts and other constituents demand. Having a large Republican majority actually makes this easier since there will be fewer votes requiring party discipline to pass a measure. It will be interesting to see the many ways -- some expected, such as rural versus suburban, and some that may surprise us -- that Republicans will split on significant votes. I look for strong veteran Republicans such as Charlie Geren, Mike Hamilton, Chuck Hopson, and Todd Hunter to continue to make decisions for themselves. I expect

Allan Ritter and Aaron Pena will act similarly. I hope that at least a few other Republican House members will demonstrate the courage and independence to represent their districts in tough votes."

- "It might depend on the issue. I see all Republicans voting for voter ID but a few of the moderates may not necessarily vote in favor of the Arizona-style anti-immigration bills - Am I being too hopeful???"

- "Dwayne Bohac; Sarah Davis;"

- "Pitts, Gooden, Geren, Kuempel, Ritter, Pena,"

- "Depends on the issue"

- "There will not be 100 Republican votes on the budget or redistricting."

- "Geren, Hamilton, T. Smith"

- "Pena"

- "Don't know."

- "One could see situations where Straus (assuming he survives as Speaker) and those Rs loyal to him join forces to defeat the hard right."

- "Susan king"

- "Issue dependent."

- "Well, that depends on the issue. And on the proposal. Different Republican House members will bolt for different reasons. If we are talking about last session's voter ID bill? Probably none would bolt. But not all issues are Republican primary fodder. And

even on those flash point issues, there is a limit. For example, if unnecessarily harsh anti-immigrant bills come to the floor, possibly even unconstitutional bills, then some Republicans will vote no. On the budget, different Republicans will hit their own personal 'choke point' at different levels of cuts, and so votes on budget amendments will be all over the map. And on redistricting, for any given plan, from 20 to 30 will vote no. Basically 100 is just a number and it is a mistake to assume that they will all cast a single, consistent block vote on every issue. [Anyone remember that under Craddick - who supposedly personally controlled every last detail - on property tax reform, the Democrat amendment to raise the mandatory homestead exemption had lots of Republican YES votes, more than enough to pass the amendment and bring down the reform bill? That was the party's signature bill of the session, and they had fewer Republicans to keep in line, and they still couldn't maintain military order in the ranks.]"

- "Todd Smith, Byron Cook, Chuck Hopson, Allen Ritter, Jerry Madden, Rob Orr"

- "Depending on the issue, it could be Todd Smith, Dr. Diane Patrick, Linda Harper Brown, John Carona, Will Hartnett, Dan Branch -- really, there are several."

- "The Straus Rs"

- "Any who had a propensity to break away before, if any remain. I don't see a lot of discipline opportunities on that side of the aisle; too many sides over there."

- "Shame on anybody that names someone. Why put a target on somebody's back who hasn't done anything (yet)?"

Our thanks to this week's participants: Adam Haynes, Bee Moorhead, Bill Hammond, Bradford Shields, Hugh Brady, Brandon Aghamalian, Bill Ratliff, Bryan Mayes, Bruce Scott, Carl Richie, Carol Sims, Cathie Adams, Chad Wilbanks, Charles Bailey, Cal Jillson, Clyde Alexander, Colin Strother, Craig Murphy, Chuck Rice, Christopher Shields, Darren Whitehurst, Deborah Ingersoll, Daniel Gonzalez, Donald Lee, Robert Kepple, Andy Brown, Eric Bearse, Ed Small, Eric Wright, Frank Sturzl, George Cofer, George Allen, Gardner Pate, Harold Cook, Hector DeLeon, Heidi Kirkpatrick, James LeBas, Jay Arnold, Jeff Rotkoff, Jeff Eller, Pete Laney, Jerry Philips, Jill Warren, Jim Grace, Janis Carter, John Esparza, John Greytok, John Pitts, John Weaver, Jon Fisher, Jose Camacho, Kim Ross, Kip Averitt, Keir Murray, Kraege Polan, Karen Reagan, Ken Whalen, Nick

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