

“INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider poll
for the week of February 27.*

Would you favor or oppose taking redistricting authority from the Legislature and governor, giving it instead to an independent, appointed commission?

- Hard decisions don't get less hard by having someone else make the decision. Should we have an independent, appointed 'Fiscal Board' cut the state budget? Should we have an independent, appointed board select our state judges? Should we have an independent, appointed board deal with Voter ID, sonogram laws, and TSA airport searches?"
- "Highly favor!"
- "There's no point and no fewer politics in an independent commission than the current redistricting process. It's not worth the cost."
- "Reforming the redistricting process represents the best hope we have of restoring civil and productive discourse to the state."
- "Taking politics out of redistricting is a farce. There's no such thing as an 'independent' commission. Give me a break."
- "Who will appoint the commission?"
- "Turn it over to someone else. Not even the BCS computers could screw things up as badly as the Legis."
- "I don't favor hiding the politics of redistricting, rather reform of the inputs. After equal population and protecting voting rights of historically disenfranchised voters, the consideration should be equally weighted between making districts competitive in general elections and maintaining communities of interest. Consideration of protecting incumbents should be prohibited."
- "There is no such thing as an independent commission when its members are appointed by an elected official. Even states with so-called independent commissions have headaches during the appointment process. The appointees will have a bias and will not be independent."
- "After the 2011 fiasco the legislature may feel the same!"
- "Appointed by whom.... no better, I expect"
- "If anyone needs more convincing than this and the last redistricting nightmares, they are beyond hope."
- "It would be a lot less entertaining, but a lot more fair."
- "No system is perfect . . . note the issues in California . . . but a commission approach would minimize the potential messes."
- "This is a dumb idea. The states that have independent commissions fair no better than Texas in terms of litigation. California has been in court

as long as we have. On the east coast, the powers that be buy the redistricting commissions. Legislators are elected to do redistricting so the public can hold them accountable."

- "Until we allow people who are not directly impacted by the process (those wishing to be elected) to draw the districts we will NEVER truly have districts which are 'compact, communities of interest', instead we will always have sprawling spider-like gerrymandered' districts."

- "This is one of the most important actions our government can do! Also need to focus on communities of interest and make illegal mid-decadal redistricting."

- "The legend has repeatedly proven that they cannot complete the job without years of turmoil and litigation."

- "Funny. No one every mentioned the concept of an independent commission years ago when the Democrats were in control and drawing the lines to their advantage."

- "And, we should look into an 'open' primary where all the candidates from each party run against each other. It allows the moderates to be moderates, instead of pandering to the right or left."

- "Have advocated for this for years.... the obvious is structuring the commission so that it can maintain its independence over time. Would be a fiasco to appoint a commission and have to revamp it often."

- "I've rarely seen appointed positions be truly independent. Especially

when appointed by partisans for a partisan purpose."

- "I have always been against a commission, figuring the backroom political deals would be as bad as the legislative process. But enough is enough."

- "The process needs some sanity, no matter which party has the majority. Jeff Wentworth seems to be the lone ranger who believes this."

- "I know it goes against the grain if you are involved in politics, but I've come to believe this would be the best way to do it. Just looking at this year's debacle points to a need to change the system."

- "Depends on who names the commission, how it is structured, how it manages to be non-partisan, and many other details."

- "The legislature should confirm or disconfirm on an up or down vote"

- "Who's gonna do the appointing? Did ya think about that?"

- "Redistricting is a true insider's game. As a lobbyist, I just don't care about how the lines are drawn; I only want to know what the final districts are so I can direct PAC money accordingly."

- "A commission would just be another political entity still making political decisions."

- "An appointed commission would produce the same debacle we're watching the courts produce."

- "I guess it cannot be any worse than what we currently have, but it is not guaranteed to be better. If members of the commission are appointed by the same people who appoint chairs and members of the legislative redistricting committees, how would it be different?"

- "Why would you do that? Our current system is working so well."

- "To the victor should go the spoils...that's the way it's always been, and should continue to be."

- "Should have been an independent commission from the beginning."

- "No effort is immune to this most partisan of exercises, but it provides some filtering and insulation; Denver Post was 'shocked' to find partisan back room dealing w/their Commission recently"

What is your opinion on gay marriage or civil unions?

- "I am sad for the politicians who will have to justify their bigotry to their grandchildren when they explain why they were on the wrong side of history on this issue."

- "Marriage in Texas will always be viewed as a contract between Man, Woman, and God."

- "No 'right' to either. But at least this issue has single-handedly revived the 'slippery-slope industry' by proving correct all of us who oppose civil unions as merely a preliminary step toward 'marriage' and are shouted down as ignorant scare-mongers. The proof is in the pudding. Next up: polygamy (the lawsuits have already begun in other states) and the mainstreaming of pedophilia/ephebophilia (shrinks are debating it now)."

- "Gays and lesbians have the right to marry. That right should be recognized. After all, why shouldn't they suffer as much as the rest of us?"

- "Many issues that historically have troubled the GLBT community can be

- handled via contract law and don't need the full force and recognition of marriage. Two decades of popular culture war/opinion cannot and should not overturn two millennia of Judeo-Christian beliefs and the foundation of Western Civilization, including this country and state."

- "It's 2012! Is this really a threat to hetero marriage? 50% of marriages already end in divorce."

- "There is no reason to not let them get married. Love is love."

- "Love is blind."

- "In 10 years it will be considered a basic human right."

- "Religious issues need to be left to the individual and God. If two people want to enter into a legal arrangement, then why should I care?"

- "This is one of the most ridiculous and hypocritical debates over the power of government of our generation."

- "Who cares."
- "If candidates are going to preach family values, how can they condemn a couple who is building a family, regardless of sexual orientation?"
- "Not allowing gay marriage is a silly issue conjured up by silly people. Gays should have the same rights as the rest of us."
- "What is marriage, really? It's an official recognition by government of a relationship. Churches wouldn't be required to marry gays and lesbians but the government would."

- "Seriously, people need to spend less time worrying about things that don't impact them."
- "I don't care"
- "'Don't know' of course is inapt. The proper response would be 'Don't care.'"
- "They have the same rights as everyone else has: person of the opposite sex marry."
- "Everyone deserves the chance to see how awful marriage can be."
- "To borrow from Kinky Friedman, 'why shouldn't they be allowed to be miserable with the rest of us'"

Do you think people who are less well off are envious of rich people?

- "In the sense that they have a desire for some of the things that rich people possess or able to do, but not in the sense that they think rich people shouldn't have those things or be allowed to enjoy their wealth."
- "I think everyone is resentful of people who have broken laws to get rich or who have cheated the middle class (or the government) to get rich. I think many people are scared of the unknown changes that are unavoidable in restructuring our federal programs. I think some people are angry when they see narrowing opportunities for prosperity for them and their children in a global, knowledge based economy. But, no, other than the hard core socialists in our midst, I don't think Americans are envious of people who are rich."

- "Elected officials seem more afflicted by the envy phenomenon than are the people who elected them."
- "Yes but seriously what kind of question is this? I also think people who work all the time are envious of people who are on vacation or who are retired--but what does that have to do with a hill of beans?"
- "Envy isn't the proper question; the focus should be on whether those gains were made honestly."
- "I know I am."
- "The people who are less well off, who work tirelessly everyday trying to make ends meet are ticked off at those who refuse to work and depend on government. They do not know

why the worker is being punished and the lazy are being rewarded."

- "Of course. It's human nature, or else there wouldn't be a commandment about it."

• "Angry rather than envious about our economy and politics being heavily weighted in favor of people with high wealth and high income."

- "Those who do not adhere to the 10th Commandment are envious of those who have more material possessions."

• "But there are also some well off people who are envious of more well off than they are people also."

• "In the sense that all people feel some amount of envy for someone else, whether they want to or not, then yes, of course people envy those with more money or resources. But in the sense that some people mean - that some kind of jealousy or petty desire for revenge is what drives support for policies aimed at reducing income inequality - then no, that is not true."

• "I wish I were rich, but I don't hate those who are. Regardless: they should pay their fair share of taxes."

• "'Some' are. Obama's working on increasing that sentiment, as the FLOTUS is in Aspen hanging with the other poor people."

• "Envious, but not resentful. Do I think I work harder to earn my paycheck than any of the Dallas Cowboys? Yes. Do I envy them their paycheck? Yes. Do I resent the fact that they make more money than I do? No."

• "A by-product of a generation where everyone got a ribbon or trophy on the soccer team. The Occupy message: 'Why do some people have a lot of money, but we don't?' Get over it! Life doesn't work that way."

• "I think resentment develops when average folks believe some rich folks have gotten that way by bending or breaking the rules."

• "I think their opinion is shaped more by how any rich people they know treat others.... Many people who are less well work for one of the supposed 'rich people' and understand the economic dynamics better than some give credit for."

• "Duh"

• "I don't think you can blanket this statement with a 'yes/no' response. I'm sure there are people who desire to have more financial means, but what is the cost/benefit? Is it worth it?"

• "Envy and wanting to get there themselves are reasons working class people vote against their own interests too much of the time. They will just be fooled again!"

• "My answer reflects how I believe poor people may feel about ostentatious wealth. A better would be offended."

• "In general, no. I think most of us aspire to be rich if we can see a pathway there."

• "Some are. Some aren't."

• "Envy is not the word."

- "I'm not a sociologist nor have I ever been commissioned to conduct such a study so I don't have an opinion."

- "If they were more envious, they might do something to change their circumstances."

- "Everyone wants to win the lotto."

- "A little but that is not bad thing."

- "Trick question?"

- "Obama's class warfare is alive and well in the tax system and he is hurriedly working to create more of it."

- "Claiming envy on the part of others is just an attempt to divert attention from one's own selfishness."

- "That's why they call it envy. That's not a political issue. It's a biblical one."

- "Not unless told to do so by the media, Hollywood, the education system, and politicians. It is not just liberals pushing the class warfare, politics of envy, populist BS, i.e. Rick Perry, Newt and Ron Paul did/are pushing it too."

- "Yes it is class warfare"

- "Of course they are and that is not a bad thing. Envy and greed, subject to appropriate social controls, are strong motivators to performance."

Generally speaking, do you think that rich people pay their fair share of taxes?

- "The definition of fair share is changing. It used to be solely measured by the 'rich' person's ability to pay. Now some people seem to also have the idea that it makes a difference what the tax money is going to, i.e., the 'rich' pay their fair share as compared to the legitimate and proper goals that the government can and should be pursuing. It would be unfair to ask the rich to pay more to support a federal government that is borrowing 43 cents of every dollar it spends."

- "Of course it comes down to your definition of fair. Under my definition the rich have benefited from our infrastructure and resources enormously and should pay more than they do now."

- "I think 99% of Americans pay their fair share of taxes."

- "Rich people pay more than their share by almost any objective measure. But politically, there's no limit to what 'fair' could mean."

- "Rich people pay their fair share, but that is not to say we don't have to do more to get us out of the very deep hole we are in. We all have to pay more and demand less or else future generations will have to deal with our bad decisions."

- "Warren Buffet has ably demonstrated that our tax policy is out of balance."

- "It depends on definition of rich. Under this president's definition of

- rich, there are a whole lot of 'rich' people that don't have money left over after expenses and taxes."

- "They do pay their fair of taxes, unfortunately circumstances dictate that they pay even more."

- "At this rate we will have tax breaks to electrify the wire around the gated communities by 2020."

- "As a Christian, I believe in the fundamental principle in tithing (10%). God set the same 10% standard for both the rich and poor. Yet, politicians seem to believe that one group should pay a higher/lower percentage than the other. We need to set a percentage everyone can live with."

- "Truth is, EVERYONE is going to have to pay more to dig out of this current hole. But compared to others, sure, what they pay is 'fair.'"

- "With our dependence on goods-based sales tax revenue, that is especially true in Texas."

- "They generally pay above and beyond. The top 1% pay over 36% of all federal taxes. The bottom 50% pay nothing."

- "Yes in general. Some do not and scam the system, but all in all, most pay their fair share. What many do not pay however, is what they should to charities to help those less fortunate. The only deductions I would keep would be a 100\$ charitable deduction to public charities and a lesser, but significant deduction fro gifts to non-public charities. And all charities would have

- strong transparency requirements on what they do and spend."

- "Especially not in Texas, which is the poster child for an unfair tax system."

- "You bet. I am part of the 53%. Everyone should pay something but almost half don't."

- "Lower income people pay cash for things most often and therefore pay a greater percentage of the sales tax!"

- "But then again, don't we all look for deductions and loopholes that will assure we all pay the least amount of taxes?"

- "At the state level, at least. They certainly pay more property tax and sales tax (spend more on taxable items). I'm not sure what a 'fair share' is for federal income tax."

- "The system is made for rich people."

- "Define 'rich'."

- "Some do, but many do not."

- "It depends on what the meaning of fair is, i.e., a 10% flat tax on all income is so in its application, but in its regressiveness, does that mean it is unfair?"

- "Wealthy Texans are pampered by the public sector. Perhaps some make up their under taxation through political contributions."

- "Are you kidding! They are carrying the load for everyone. The stats are -- the top 10% pay over 70%

of all taxes paid! (*National Taxpayers Union)"

- "Half the country doesn't pay any income taxes, while the top 10% of households pay 70% of all income taxes. On a state level, the rates are less unequal, but the rich still pay more because they pay sales tax on every dollar they spend; spend more, pay more."

- "I prefer a FLAT TAX for EVERYONE!"

- "I also don't think the poor pay their fair share either. Everyone should have to pay something into the system to appreciate the country in which they live."

- "Wait, not just yes, HELL yes. My wife and I are considered wealthy or rich or whatever the envious and jealous people call us. We sat down with our accountant to look at 2011 taxes. With our property, payroll (we own the business), income, and sales taxes we will be paying 50% or more of what we earn in taxes. That is sick!"

- "Never have, never will;"

- "I would move back toward the Clinton tax rates, move capital gains back to 20 percent, treat carried interest as income, and limit deductions."

Trent Townsend, Trey Trainor, Ware Wendell, Ken Whalen, Darren Whitehurst, Ellen Williams, Seth Winick, Alex Winslow, Peck Young, Angelo Zottarelli.

Our thanks to this week's participants: Gene Acuna, Cathie Adams, Brandon Aghamalian, Clyde Alexander, George Allen, Jay Arnold, Charles Bailey, Walt Baum, Dave Beckwith, Luke Bellsnyder, Rebecca Bernhardt, Andrew Bilar, Allen Blakemore, Tom Blanton, Hugh Brady, Steve Bresnen, Chris Britton, Andy Brown, Jay Brown, Lydia Camarillo, Kerry Cammack, Marc Campos, Snapper Carr, Corbin Casteel, William Chapman, Elizabeth Christian, Elna Christopher, George Cofer, Rick Cofer, Harold Cook, Randy Cubriel, Hector De Leon, June Deadrick, Tom Duffy, David Dunn, Richard Dyer, Jeff Eller, Jack Erskine, Alan Erwin, Jon Fisher, Norman Garza, Bruce Gibson, Scott Gilmore, Eric Glenn, John Greytok, Jack Gullahorn, Clint Hackney, Bill Hammond, Sandy Haverlah, Albert Hawkins, Ken Hodges, Billy Howe, Laura Huffman, Shanna Igo, Deborah Ingersoll, Cal Jillson, Mark Jones, Robert Kepple, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Ramey Ko, Sandy Kress, Nick Lampson, Pete Laney, Dick Lavine, James LeBas, Donald Lee, Luke Legate, Richard Levy, Ruben Longoria, Homero Lucero, Vilma Luna, Matt Mackowiak, Phillip Martin, Bryan Mayes, J. McCartt, Dan McClung, Parker McCollough, Mike McKinney, Robert Miller, Bee Moorhead, Steve Murdock, Craig Murphy, Keir Murray, Keats Norfleet, Pat Nugent, Lee Parsley, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Bill Pewitt, Jerry Philips, Tom Phillips, Wayne Pierce, Royce Poinsett, Kraege Polan, Jay Propes, Ted Melina Raab, Bill Ratliff, Karen Reagan, Tim Reeves, Kim Ross, Jeff Rotkoff, Jason Sabo, Mark Sanders, Andy Sansom, Jim Sartwelle, Stan Schlueter, Bruce Scott, Steve Scurlock, Bradford Shields, Dee Simpson, Ed Small, Martha Smiley, Todd Smith, Larry Soward, Dennis Speight, Jason Stanford, Keith Strama, Bob Strauser, Colin Strother, Michael Quinn Sullivan, Sherry Sylvester, Jay Thompson, Russ Tidwell,