

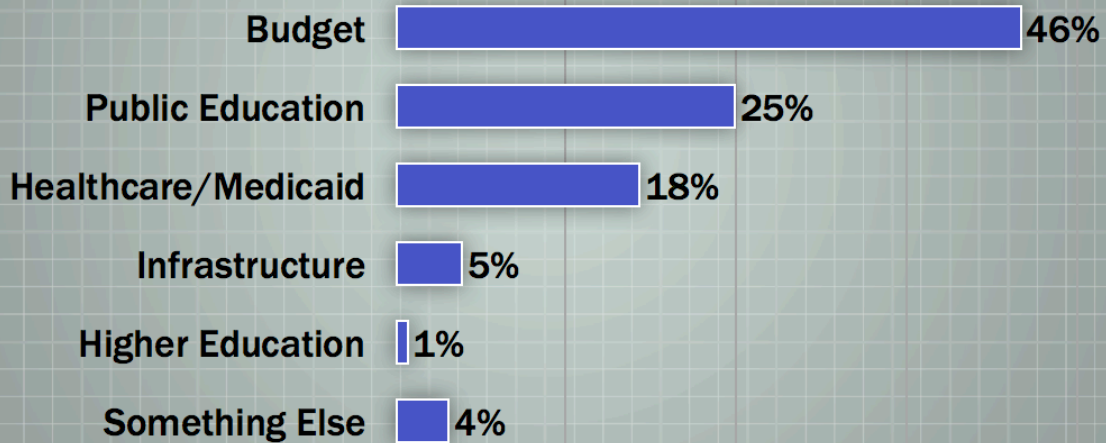
# “INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

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*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider poll  
for the week of August 20*

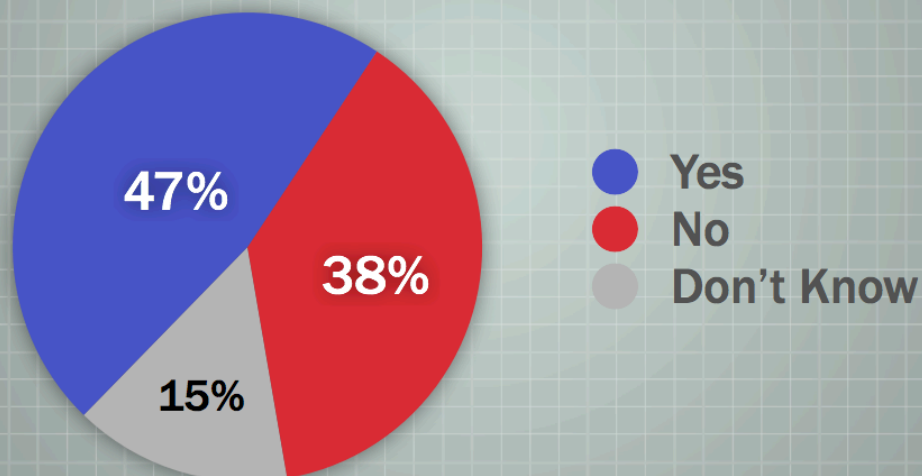
# INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

The signature issue of the next legislative session?



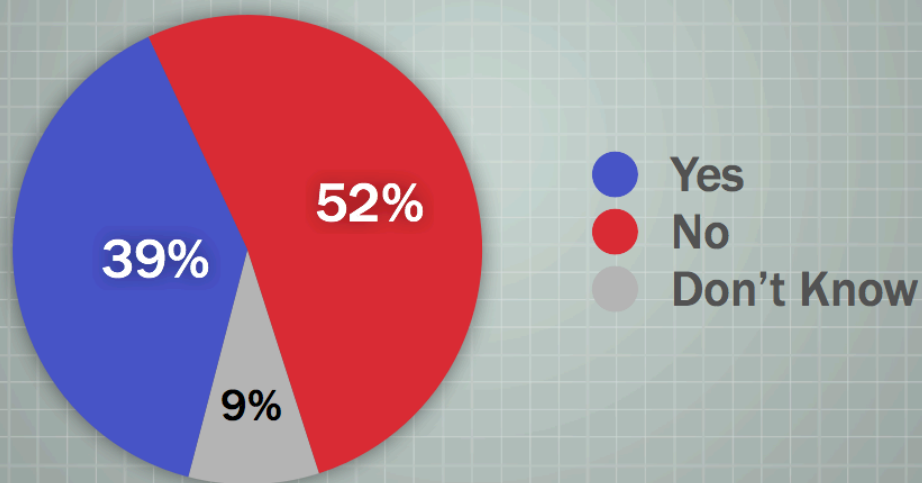
# INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Will Texas expand Medicaid under the federal health care law?



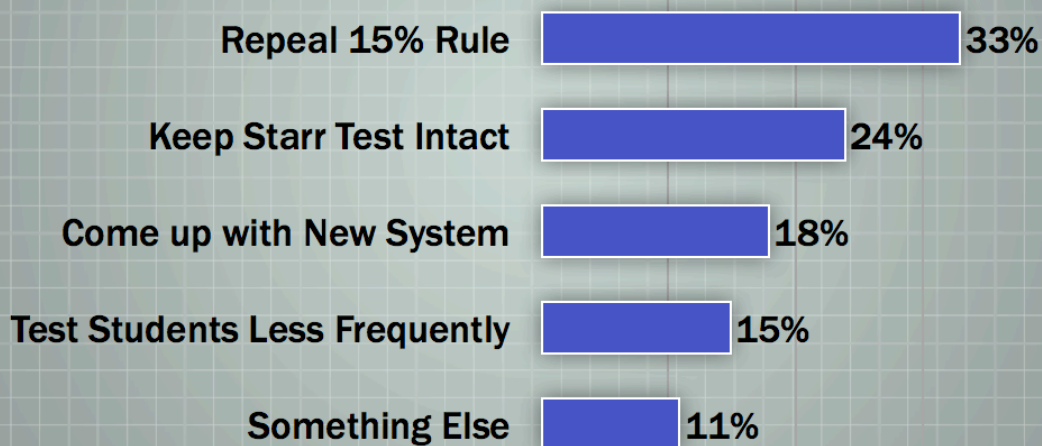
## INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Will Texas lawmakers approve school vouchers?



## INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

What will lawmakers do with school testing?



## *What will be the signature issue of next year's legislative session?*

- "It's always the budget."
- "There will be ongoing discussions on Healthcare in the wake of Obamacare."
- "If the Section 5 case in DC goes against the State and they don't order the Western District in SA to redraw them maps then it is possible redistricting could be back on the agenda for the session as well."
- "Education should be the biggest issue, but I think lawmakers will punt and wait for a court ruling to force legislative action on education."
- "Do not underestimate the power of pissed off moms who have lost confidence in their local schools and are looking for somebody to blame."
- "All of these issues are pressing matters that will need to be addressed."
- "It's gotta be the budget...for all the new house members who got elected on cutting the "waste, fraud, and abuse" out of the budget...and only to see their 3rd vote of their new career to spend money on emergency appropriations bill! Poetic justice..."
- "Each of these options comes back to funding, which makes the Budget king of the issues."
- "Its always the budget"
- "As long as it's not one of "my" issues . . ."
- "Stop the shell game budgeting. Give the people a true balanced budget."
- "All of the above - equally - since no progress will be made on any of them. Probably just a bunch of posturing about shrinking government."
- "Having spent all the rainy days funds to cover our existing budget hole and a legislature bound to cutting the size and scope of government, what can they do of substance other than some silly partisan issues."
- "It's all about the money. Public education, higher education, infrastructure, Medicaid--they're all just bit players in it."
- "Budget as always, instead of working on water and transportation which they should do. Because god knows the lege does not like to tackle anything too difficult."
- "It should be infrastructure but the tea party and MQS types will ultimately balk about paying for anything."
- "Outside of what hinges from the budget - look for a return of the "great school voucher debate" especially with a big focus on public ed accountability and the make up of the members."
- "Redistricting!"
- "All of the above answer--real question is if some titles pitted against others--Medicaid vs. public ed, highways, etc."

- "All of these other issues will be impacted by budget. The structural deficit created by the margins tax, increased school enrollment, oversupply of natural gas, all will create a challenging budget situation."

- "It is always the budget. Infrastructure, education, welfare are always dependent on money."

- "There's always the possibility of a parliamentary crisis that will overshadow any policy issues. But seriously, there is also the possibility that the Legislature will need to address the issue of cruel and unusual lack of air conditioning in Texas prisons, which could quickly become a budget crisis."

Signature Issue? What means?"

- "No matter what your ideological stripe, it's the spending, stupid."

- "How can you pick just one?"

- "Our session will be bogged down by irrelevant legislation to appease the right-of-the right constituents."

- "Sorry superintendents and teachers: Health Care and Medicaid come to the legislative party carrying a bigger price tag than education. More revenue may not necessarily mean more money in the schoolhouse."

- "With the most recent historical drought, I believe Perry will make an exception to his "No New Tax or Fee" pledge to fund the State Water Plan either through a tap or electric utility fee. With Armbrister as Perry's key water guy, the likelihood of it finally succeeding is imminent."

- "School finance to be more specific"

- "Public Ed is the singular issue that is tied into everything else. That is the battleground, across the board."

- "With the funding crisis, accountability fixes and hordes of unfunded mandates that need to be addressed I would be surprised if public ed isn't the signature issue next session. But then again if it isn't then it becomes official that the Lege does not make education a priority."

- "Any of these issues could be #1 (as well as groping by the TSA), but public education has the most at stake with the numerous lawsuits and no clear direction, other than vouchers, about how to solve."

- "And not in a good way. Vouchers, No restrictions on Charters run by for-profit companies, extended cuts to the regular program funding."

- "Like last time, the first decision is likely to be to live within the state's current fiscal means without raiding the rainy day fund, which effectively limits any discussions that members might wish to have on education, health care, infrastructure, and the rest."

- "All the issues listed are really budget issues."

- "How can you separate them? Aren't they all really infrastructure issues? And they all come down to \$"

- "Pension Systems"

- "Obama is sitting out there waiting to give Texas his money. Is Rick Perry

gonna take it? Is he man enough to take it?"

- "The lege and Governor will not do what it takes to address water and highway concerns...patchwork at best...will continue to kick the can down the road..."

- "Every one of those issues comes under the "budget" heading. Can't get past it."

- "Little will happen."

- "Everything else is just poetry"

### ***Will Texas ultimately accept the Medicaid expansion associated with the federal Affordable Care Act?***

- "Even the crazies will come around and accept the Billions of dollars when they are threatened with their mother-in-law moving in if the nursing home shuts down."

- "No way given the general political leanings of the State."

- "Health plans, counties, hospitals want the money."

- "Not this Session."

- "If Texas is going to pay for expanded coverage, why not go it alone instead of accepting federal funds with strings attached?"

- "The new Republican President and Congress will REPEAL Obamacare."

- "Eventually. If Romney/Ryan aren't elected. And Perry finally leaves the scene."

- "The feds will ultimately provide states flexibility for expansion in a grand deficit reduction trade-off. Think welfare reform in 1997"

- "If it costs a penny, Texas won't accept--at least, not this year."

- "It will be too expensive not to. And local hospital districts will go broke if the state continues to hold out for stupid political reasons."

- "Veto"

- "But not until Perry stops running for Pres"

- "Can't play chicken w/ sociopaths--they don't contemplate injury from this; however, cartel lobby represents the big losers, (hospitals, health plans) so 'block grant' maybe code for exit strategy of yet another waiver application; long term politics will be unkind to them--they accept state tax supplied health coverage while denying it to the unworthy poor and unwashed masses--sounds like a tea party problem coming from the left"

- "It's just way too much money. Posturing aside, I think they will come to the table with the Feds."

- "This is a qualified yes based on what Rick thinks is in his best interest."

- "We will, but won't acknowledge it."

- "C'mon, it's just a money thing. And the idea that the same Legislature that passed the 2006 school property tax "reduction" would seriously consider turning down a dollar today because there might not be another dollar on Tuesday? Laughable."
- "No, unless there is some negotiated alternative (in the form of a waiver) to the default provisions of the federal statute. And, by the way, Texas should and accept the expansion as currently provided since adding more passengers to the Titanic is inherently a bad idea."
- "We are ADDICTED to the Federal dollars, even though we HATE to admit it!"
- "Not if Rick Perry has anything to do with it. But, the Legislature will try to over-rule him and win - how can you not take the 90% match (100% up front)?"
- "Not this session by this Legislature."
- "Depends on the outcome of the presidential race."
- "Depending on outcome in November, will dictate how we will respond. I am not certain how we will be able to completely avoid the expansion."
- "I don't think this Lege will, but it's completely negligent for them not to."
- "The pragmatism of the budget writers will trump the grandstanding of the governor."
- "Of course it will. These anti-fed chicken hawks are like the kids in college that talk about being on their own while taking mommy's money."
- "Logic doesn't seem to rule on Medicaid, and despite the fact that the federal government picks up almost all the costs, it still shows up on the books of the Texas budget, creating the threat that spending is out of control."
- "Too much money on the table to turn down, though the state will bargain with the feds for more flexibility and may well win as the Obama administration will be loath to see big states with lots of uninsured opt out."
- "Perry can't allow Texas to accept the money, though it's nearly free. And refusing the money will work politically for him because those Texans who will be denied the coverage aren't getting coverage now, and may not know what they're missing when it doesn't arrive."
- "The legislature won't turn down Obamacare money. It's a better deal than CHIP."
- "Talk's cheap..."
- "Can't afford not to, politically. You can scream to your (largely Anglo) core constituency about "state's rights" and stuff like that if you want to close your own political window. Problem is, this is a real problem that we've not faced for too long..."
- "But perhaps in 2015."

## ***Do school vouchers stand a real chance with Texas lawmakers next session?***

- "For the first time, there may not be enough moderates to stop it."
- "But they should. Too many voters do not understand what they are or how they work and hopefully over time that will change. Right now it is easy to pitch vouchers as being against teachers and public schools when the reality is that they provide freedom of school choice to many not able to afford that choice."
- "Seriously, dude? ISD's won't allow this."
- "84th session more probable"
- "See comment above."
- "In the House, yes. In the Senate, no. Not as long as the 2/3rds Rule continues to operate."
- "Kinda depends upon the Senate."
- "More students failing than passing-that's unacceptable."
- "It's not a simple R vs D issue. Vouchers still do nothing for rural areas."
- "If Dr. Leininger's millions didn't make it happen, nothing will. What a shame."
- "With most of the education experts not returning who knows what lurks in the shadows."
- "Not as such, but voucher-lite strategies like local option tax exemptions for private school charitable contributions seem like they could draw a following."
- "A legal voucher program would require several billion new dollars for public ed and that money is not available."
- "As someone else said, 'If we can't afford public schools, how can we pay for private ones?'"
- "They should! The bureaucrats have gone too far in their ceaseless campaign for more money and less accountability. Choice may be the only option."
- "The Hispanic constituency is a growing group that favors vouchers. Hispanic legislators - the majority being Ds - will have to make some concede some of their opposition."
- "The further shift to the right makes this 'all talk-no action' issue of the past a real player this go round."
- "If they couldn't do it last session, they can't get it done. Taking more money out of public ed won't fly."
- "With leadership from both chambers pandering to the far right, this issue is a threat to pass each session despite its negative impact on public schools."
- "One can expect Sen. Patrick to carry a voucher bill and Lt. Gov. Dewhurst to support it to boost his conservative credentials for a future run for governor."



- "Vouchers stand a chance, but I wouldn't bet that way."
- "I wouldn't be surprised if this gang voted the Earth flat."
- "If not now, when? If not this Lege, which one? Prepare for the full-court press!"
- "They'll have a hell of a lot better shot with the new Senate than with the current one."
- "Nothing will happen until SC rules."

### *What will state lawmakers do about high-stakes testing in public schools?*

- "Not sure on this one."
- "Where's Pearson on this?"
- "With Eissler, Hochberg, Shapiro all gone, there's no leadership for a whole new system. The new group will nibble around the edges, make the testing regime temporarily worse than before, and try to learn enough to do something real in 2013."
- "I don't think these options are mutually exclusive. They'll likely enact a patchwork of fixes that touches on each of these options (and more)."
- "They will talk about testing and do nothing"
- "Both repeal the 15% rule and cut back on amount of testing. Whatever progress testing has brought to Texas, especially to those students who had historically been ignored, has burned itself out."
- "So a different group can make the money that should go to the education of the students"
- "Tell me this first: next spring how much credibility will parents have in their complaints? If they come across as whiners who want to make the test easier (instead of trying to get their children help to do better) then it is hard to see how TAB and other accountability advocates will lose this fight."
- "Whatever nets Pearson the most bling."
- "With certain fixes."
- "Corporations are making too much money on testing. They will gear up with big-gun lobbyists too make sure the status quo prevails."
- "There is test fatigue in Texas, and legislators will have to do something to boast they did something to help the kiddos back home."
- "Testing students on subjects they have learned in years prior seems to be an appropriate assessment of how well teachers are instructing our children. If students are not performing, it means our teachers are not strong. The state should look at the teacher qualifications and not the

recreation of another test. The results about public education in Texas spoke loudly. We do not need to simplify tests so students pass. Bring the quality of education up to a higher standard. When expectations are high, most will be motivated to achieve a higher standard of performance and succeed. Reward the individual teachers and students who did exceptionally well on the STARR!"

- "The lobby has too much money and is too influential to end STAAR."
- "The question ought to be 'what will Bill Hammond do to keep Sandy Kress' pet project alive?'"

- "Seems like this is usually the way the legislature addresses this issue."
- "After being able to testify on behalf of the Perry administration for years, testing lobbyist Sandy Kress is going to have a very long turn in the barrel."
- "Something else, like nothing."
- "Instruct TEA to amend the current STAAR test with new standards as lobbied by various interest groups."
- "A new system presents the opportunity for new bidders, and all of the attendant perks and privileges that entails."

***Our thanks to this week's participants:*** Gene Acuna, Cathie Adams, Brandon Aghamalian, Jenny Aghamalian, Victor Alcorta, Clyde Alexander, Jay Arnold, Charles Bailey, Tom Banning, Mike Barnett, Walt Baum, Dave Beckwith, Amy Beneski, Andrew Biar, Allen Blakemore, Tom Blanton, Hugh Brady, Chris Britton, Thure Cannon, Tris Castaneda, Corbin Casteel, William Chapman, Elna Christopher, Rick Cofer, John Colyandro, Harold Cook, Beth Cubriel, Randy Cubriel, Denise Davis, Hector De Leon, Eva De Luna-Castro, June Deadrick, Nora Del Bosque, Tom Duffy, David Dunn, Jeff Eller, Jack Erskine, John Esparza, Jon Fisher, Rebecca Flores, Wil Galloway, Neftali Garcia, Norman Garza, Bruce Gibson, Stephanie Gibson, Scott Gilmore, Daniel Gonzalez, John Greytok, Clint Hackney, Anthony Haley, Wayne Hamilton, Bill Hammond, Adam Haynes, Susan Hays, Jim Henson, Ken Hodges, Steve Holzheuser, Billy Howe, Laura Huffman, Shanna Igo, Deborah Ingersoll, Cal Jillson, Jason Johnson, Bill Jones, Mark Jones, Robert Jones, Lisa Kaufman, Robert Kepple, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Ramey Ko, Sandy Kress, Dale Laine, Pete Laney, Dick Lavine, James LeBas, Donald Lee, Luke Legate, Myra Leo, Elizabeth Lippincott, Ruben Longoria, Homero Lucero, Matt Mackowiak, Matt Matthews, Dan McClung, Parker McCollough, Scott McCown, Robert Miller, Bee Moorhead, Steve Murdock, Craig Murphy, Keir Murray, Keats Norfleet, Pat Nugent, Sylvia Nugent, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Bill Pewitt, Jerry Philips, Wayne Pierce, Royce Poinsett, Kraege Polan, Jay Pritchard, Jay Propes, Bill Ratliff, Karen Reagan, Tim Reeves, Kim Ross, Jeff Rotkoff, Mark Sanders, Andy Sansom, Jim Sartwelle, Stan Schlueter, Bruce Scott, Steve Scurlock, Bradford Shields, Ed Small, Larry Soward, Dennis Speight, Jason Stanford, Bill Stevens, Keith Strama, Bob Strauser, Colin Strother, Charles Stuart, Michael Quinn Sullivan, Sherry Sylvester, Jay Thompson, Russ Tidwell, Trent Townsend, Trey Trainor, Ware

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