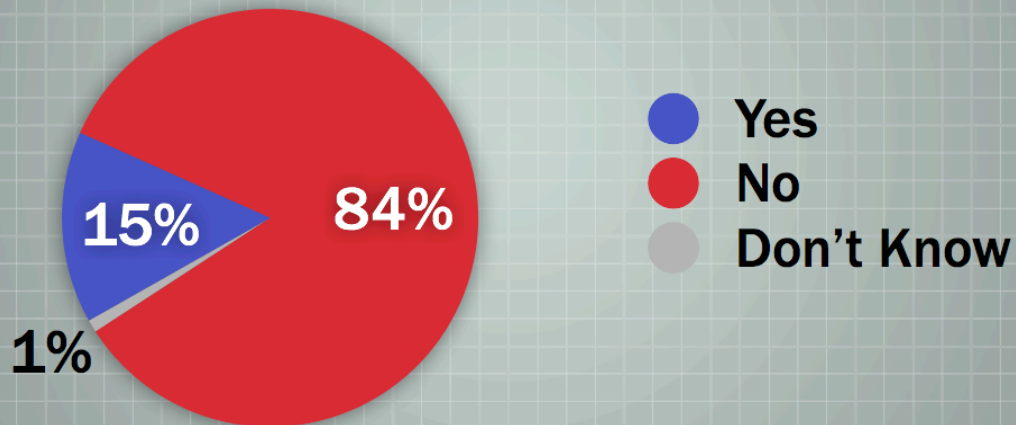


“INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider poll
for the week of 21 February 2014*

INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

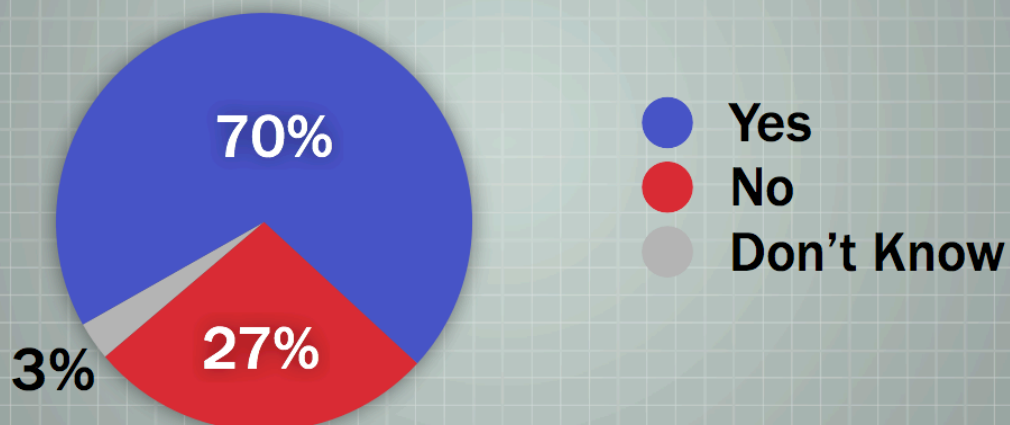
Are state political parties obsolete?



Inside Intelligence is an informal survey of political and government insiders in Texas and is not meant to measure public opinion.

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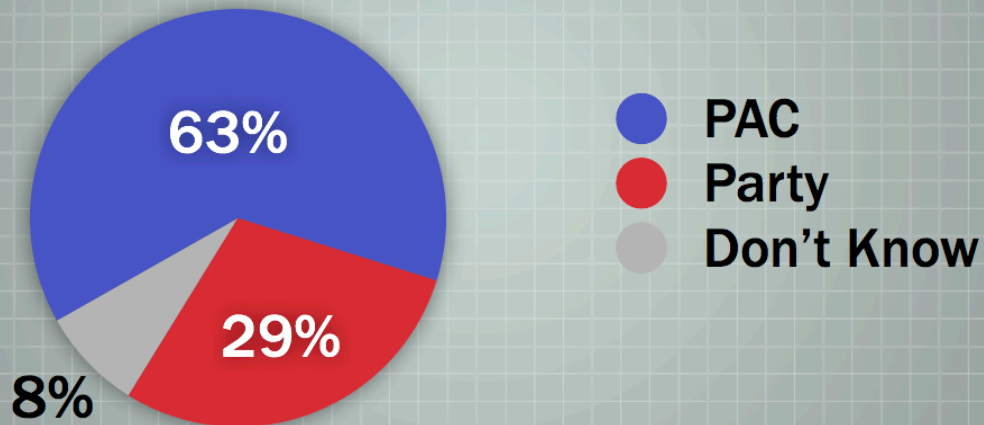
Do candidates benefit from state parties?



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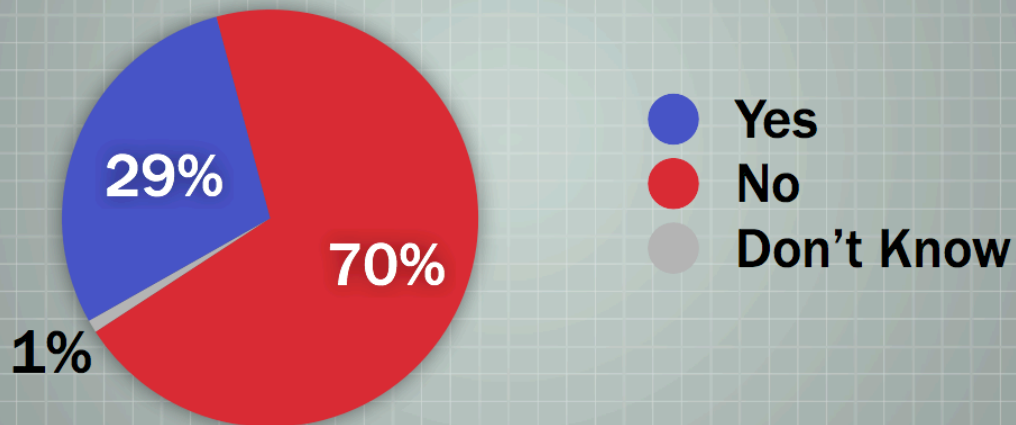
Which is more helpful to a candidate?



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Do state party platforms matter?



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Are state political parties obsolete?

- "Not yet. They are becoming less important with so many factions of liberalism and conservatism out there these days. It seems that a 'party' backed candidate is an establishment candidate and that is not good."
- "Dixiecrats, Shivercrats, Wallacites, Perot, Tea Party; the more things change, the more they stay the same."
- "Can't speak for the Ds, but new leadership and a renewed focus on the platform has made the state Republican Party more relevant than it's been in a long time."
- "In the area of Battleground Texas and Dr. Hotze's oh-so-helpful over-65 mailer, you tell me how the state parties are supposed to compete? They have little to offer in comparison besides platforms that folks ignore."
- "The Democrat Party is, because Obama Democrat donors are using 527's instead. The Republican Party of Texas has continued to provide candidate with the same services."
- "They have been replaced by a bunch of far leaning (both to the right and left) groups who push agendas for small ideology driven fringe groups."
- "HAH ... at least one is. lol"
- "Of course not. Dumb question."
- "If it were but true. Had they not established themselves so deeply in the law, they would be long gone today. The old comparison to a seed tick applies very well to these monsters."
- "Not as long as they can continue to divide voters. And win elections."
- "But they are in decline"
- "Though not obsolete, they have a new and very narrowly defined role in the process. We really now only need them to manage a state-of-the-art voter file, run the primary election and do generic hard contrast messaging against the other side."
- "The TDP is becoming more relevant while the RPT is becoming less relevant due to the rise of the so-called Tea Party."
- "Not yet."
- "They still determine who's on the ballot."
- "Someone has to do the grunt work."
- "No, but only because they won't allow themselves to be put out to pasture."
- "Rather than becoming obsolete, they are becoming absolutely essential for the low information voter."
- "No, the state parties are needed to run primaries and state conventions; RNC and DNC don't give a flip about those things. State parties could, however, do a better job at voter ID, registration, and GOTV."
- "Outlet for activists and opportunity for unified action (e.g., GOP outreach to Hispanics)"

- "Republicans WIN when they stand for their party's principles. Democrats LOSE when they stand for their party's principles."

- "Someone has to run the elections. State parties directly run the primary elections with funding from the sec of state. They run the conventions which are an integral part of the nominating process for the presidency."

- "Not obsolete...but both sides are working their way there. But unfortunately, no alternative is popping up. As a result, staying at home, not voting, but complaining about everything is what's left."

- "McCain Feingold had the opposite impact of what we were told. Instead of putting more power in the grassroots of local parties it created superpacs."

- "The concept and function of state political parties should still be relevant in the 21st century; however, their positions and mindset fluctuate between the FDR and Reagan years."

- "They are obsolete in their present structure. They need less fighting inside the tent and more work to reach voters outside the tent."

- "Don't confuse dysfunction with obsolete!"

- "Obsolete - no. Dysfunctional - yes!"

- "Tribal nature of politics guarantees their existence in some form"

- "I wish."

- "As long as there is straight party voting and we elect judges, it is hard

to make an argument they are irrelevant; 'obsolete' is a related but different question."

- "They are definitely outdated. The power they once wielded, has been lost to PACs and 501 C4s."

- "No state political party = no primary election, at least in Texas. No primary election, no candidates for November."

- "There has not been an actual state Democratic Party in Texas for over a decade. The state GOP is big and helpful as a standard bearer (and Munisteri is a good spokesman) but most of the money spent there is wasted."

- "Yes but they don't know it."

- "I guess they give you a basic idea of what someone believes and are no more obsolete than they were 50 years ago. Also, certain areas generally vote for one party or the other."

- "Is that a serious question?"

- "'Branding by party is still critical to one out of two voters"

- "Certainly the R is, and the Ds are being overtaken by the white house when its prez is in power."

- "Even if they do nothing, they still have a brand."

- "The democratic statewide apparatus is not dormant but hardly robust, and the republican structure is fractured beyond recognition. Who cares?"

- "They're not obsolete, because you need them to get on the ballot. But

they are largely irrelevant."

Other than the ideological identification with a particular political party, does a candidate get any benefit from the state parties?

- "\$\$"
 - "Candidates have to remember that the parties still run the primary elections. They do all the grunt work to allow those who are running to have the opportunity to have their names on ballots across the state."
- "Money"
 - "In Texas, party affiliation is everything. It's like joining the right mafia family- you can get made or you can get whacked."
- "Ask Congressman Pete Gallego."
 - "Resource allocation and infrastructure; recruiting/ promotion of down ballot candidates."
 - "If you are not the party's nominee, you don't get the base vote (see 2006 general election results for Carole Strayhorn, independent for Governor). Even if it is only 39%, the base vote seems like a benefit to me!"
 - "And your premise about 'ideological identification' of course is nothing more than their scripted scenario."
 - "They are still able to in-kind significant resources like micro-targeting and the voter file, staff support and tracking/ communications against the opposing side."
- "The lower you are the ballot the more party affiliation can help."
 - "Funding, when it happens, is the main benefit."
 - "How many third party candidates do you know who are now current or former elected state officials?"
 - "The money network."
 - "You mean aside from exposure to voters at party events and help with registering and GOTV efforts?"
 - "Get out the vote operation"
 - "Even voters who've not read the platforms know the difference between them."
 - "If the leadership likes and supports you, you can receive the benefit of organization and fund raising."
 - "Candidates benefit from the resources a political party provides, i.e. candidate training, compliance questions, voter files, etc."
 - "Some get help with ID others get hurt with ID Most of the time party id does more harm than good"
 - "Yes- donor lists and organization down to precinct chair level."
 - "If you're an R, party affiliation gives you a leg up in virtually all parts

of Texas except Austin and the border."

- "Yes if they are the nominee."
- "The affiliation brings forth money."
- "You're being too generous with voter intellectual curiosity"
- "The benefit comes in the general elections. Both parties accept outside funds to mail directly to the base."
- "It provides a defined block of voters, and an audience for them. Otherwise, it would be necessary for candidates to solicit votes from that broad population. This allows them to focus their efforts on a smaller group of individuals that are likely to vote for them."
- "Depends on which party. The Republican nominated candidates get access to a grassroots structure in almost every county in Texas and three times as many base voters as the Democrat candidates start with (1.4

million Republican primary voters compared to approx. 500K Dem primary voters)."

- "An example of a benefit might be that the Trial Lawyers tend to lean toward Ds and Lawsuit reformers lean toward Rs."
- "Money!"
- "Yes - if you're a Republican. No - if you're a Democrat."
- "With half the voter voting straight ticket Republican or Democratic the parties represent important 'brands' that certainly down ballot candidates need"
- "Many still vote straight ticket. While it may not matter much at the top of the ticket, it can make or break local elections like Sheriff, Judges and more."
- "Not unless you count the benefit of not needing to collect signatures to get on the ballot."

Is a candidate better off with the help of a well-financed third-party political action committee or the help of a well-financed political party?

- "PAC's employee better strategists and can do more than a traditional party. Also, the party folks do not get involved in primaries so having a pac on your side early means help in March and November, if you are so fortunate."
- "PACs come and go, and their interests are not always aligned with primary voters of any one party."
- "The Party, assuming you are acting within the law."
- "Depends upon how competitive the general election is."
- "This is an interesting question. For now, it's the parties, but I could see this changing in the VERY near future. We'll have so many Super PACs in the next cycle..."

- "This is a meaningless question. Is the 3rd party PAC Battleground Texas or TLR or someone else? Is the help cash or in-kind? If it is in-kind, is it specific to your campaign or is it generic (and probably ineffective) GOTV? Is it really help, or is it meddling? Oh, and I've yet to see a 'well financed' political party."
- "As usual, you ask the wrong questions."
- "Haven't seen a well-financed political party in Texas in at least a couple of decades so it's pretty hard to make a case one way or the other."
- "Political parties use more resources for voter turnout and administrative stuff which helps all of the party's candidates to some extent, but a PAC can target specific races and funnel all of its resources toward the benefit or destruction of individual candidates. A well-financed political party does not seem to be an adequate ally if you are in a fight against a well-financed PAC."
- "Depends on the candidate and district, but generally s/he is better off with a well-financed political party--a rising tide lifts all boats after all."
- "Parties are sometimes weakened when they have to 'stand by their man/woman.' PACs can stand with the candidates who agree with their principles only."
- "A candidate really needs both but the PAC (if well financed) has the ability to more strongly fire up its membership than a party generally does."
- "Individual candidates need money that a party cannot provide for each candidate so PACs are important. If it is an expensive race, i.e. governor, us senator then the dollars bought in by a PAC could make the difference in getting their message to the voters. A well-funded party is important to give a solid foundation to all its candidates, no matter where they are on the ballot."
- "The Party is only good at throwing a party, and even there they aren't that good."
- "It depends on how either spends their money."
- "If you want someone to do your dirty work, then let the PAC take care of it so the 'political party' can say, 'Harrumph! We don't condone such behavior!'"
- "Grassroots is still grass roots; it presumes well financed and well-organized"
- "Generally the party because of long standing local organization, but there will always be specific candidates in particular races where a PAC can make a big difference."
- "PACs currently dictate where the action is. They move faster and avoid the 'death by committee' sickness that plague large organizations."
- "The problem is that the party does not always advocate for the specific issues that a PAC would want. It removes the influence of the donation from its original source and waters it down into the 'greater good'."

- "A state party with equal resources as a third- party pac is better for the candidate since they can directly coordinate with the state parties but in many cases, cannot do so with the pac."
- "Political party money never makes it to actual candidates."
- "Mainly in the primary and only in swing districts otherwise."
- "Party leadership is always an unknown. Could help, could hinder."
- "Depends on the aims of the third-party. Having independent resources that bring with it no warts is generally best."
- "PACs spend on campaigns. Parties spend on BS."

Do state party platforms matter in Texas politics?

- "They may rally the base party voters but I think they are more like the governor's budget recommendations at the beginning of each session."
- "Not to most people, but sadly I read both parties platforms - mainly to remind myself of why I could NEVER be a republican! Heavens their platform is scary."
- "And only a slight yes on this one. There are extreme positions in the platforms that are cobbled together by rules-loving delegates that care only about one or two issues. Candidates cannot oppose a platform, but also do not have to agree with it 100%"
- "To the true believers."
- "Exhibit A as evidence that they do, is the courage Jerry Patterson showed in supporting reform of the GOP's immigration plank."
- "Other than Jerry Patterson talking about the immigration plank in the R platform, they don't matter at all."
- "See news coverage of Democrats attempting to remove 'God' from their platform."
- "They do what they want."
- "Platforms matter for energizing party regulars. Platforms don't matter much in campaigns, and usually platforms have only a slight, indirect effect on policy making."
- "Meaningless platform planks keep the extremists on board both parties."
- "Ok - I admit, all of my biases are reflected in the previous answers. I HOPE I am right. More than I know I am right."
- "Only as opposition research vehicles."
- "For the other party to attack."
- "Only as the punch lines for jokes."
- "Not in November."
- "Nobody pays attention to them except the relative few who wrote them"

- "They'd even matter more if the press would expose the extremes of the Democrat platform, rather than only being fixated on distorting the Republican platform."
- "Sure they matter, they reveal the beliefs of its most committed members. Although they are not binding, they provide a guide."
- "Not to the person running but to for the use of the other side"
- "Party platforms matter until the day after the elections."
- "Only to the activists and as fodder to throw the opposition off"
- "The only people who get worked up about party platforms are staunch party activists and the media - and the media only gets worked up over the GOP platform. Not sure they've ever bothered to read the D's platform (or get worked up over anything in it)."
- "Platforms are useful tools to use against your opponent."
- "For the folks on the edge, yes; for the folks who really get it done in Austin, not even close."
- "Just look at how often they are ignored."
- "But only for short list of hot button issues"
- "They matter in that you have to run consistent with them to satisfy the primary voters."
- "The Party platform is just another sound bite to feed the base and make them feel like they are the ones in control."
- "Not all candidates or even activists will agree 100% on a platform. But a significant platform change can attract press, giving a party an opportunity to get out its own message. Conversely, a goofy platform can attract negative press for a party and create headaches for candidates who need to navigate between maintaining personal integrity, winning the primary, and remaining palatable for general election voters."
- "The GOP platform is a liability. Do the Democrats have a platform?"
- "Does anybody read it?"
- "Most of the candidates have never read their own party platform. They would be frightened to learn what is written there."
- "They matter to those who wrote them and no one else cares!"
- "Unless you're talking where folks stand to give speeches, the answer is no."
- "But not much..."

Our thanks to this week's participants: Gene Acuna, Cathie Adams, Brandon Aghamalian, Jenny Aghamalian, Victor Alcorta, Brandon Alderete, Clyde Alexander, George Allen, Jay Arnold, Charles Bailey, Dave Beckwith, Amy Beneski, Andrew Biar, Allen Blakemore, Tom Blanton, Chris Britton, David Cabrales, Raif Calvert, Lydia Camarillo, Kerry Cammack, Thure Cannon,

Snapper Carr, Janis Carter, Corbin Casteel, William Chapman, Elizabeth Christian, Elna Christopher, Beth Cubriel, Randy Cubriel, Denise Davis, Hector De Leon, June Deadrick, Glenn Deshields, Holly DeShields, Tom Duffy, David Dunn, Richard Dyer, Jeff Eller, Jon Fisher, Wil Galloway, Norman Garza, Dominic Giarratani, Bruce Gibson, Stephanie Gibson, Kinnan Golemon, Jim Grace, John Greytok, Clint Hackney, Anthony Haley, Wayne Hamilton, Bill Hammond, Richard Hardy, John Heasley, Ken Hodges, Steve Holzheuser, Laura Huffman, Deborah Ingersoll, Mark Jones, Robert Jones, Lisa Kaufman, Robert Kepple, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Dale Laine, Nick Lampson, Pete Laney, Bill Lauderback, James LeBas, Luke Legate, Leslie Lemon, Richard Levy, Ruben Longoria, Vilma Luna, Matt Mackowiak, Luke Marchant, Bryan Mayes, Dan McClung, Mike McKinney, Robert Miller, Steve Minick, Bee Moorhead, Mike Moses, Steve Murdock, Nelson Nease, Keats Norfleet, Pat Nugent, Todd Olsen, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Robert Peeler, Jerry Philips, Tom Phillips, Wayne Pierce, Allen Place, Kraege Polan, Gary Polland, Jay Propes, Ted Melina Raab, Karen Reagan, Tim Reeves, Patrick Reinhart, David Reynolds, Carl Richie, Kim Ross, Grant Ruckel, Luis Saenz, Andy Sansom, Jim Sartwelle, Barbara Schlieff, Stan Schlueter, Bruce Scott, Robert Scott, Ben Sebree, Christopher Shields, Nancy Sims, Jason Skaggs, Ed Small, Todd Smith, Larry Soward, Dennis Speight, Jason Stanford, Bill Stevens, Bob Strauser, Colin Strother, Sherry Sylvester, Gerard Torres, Trey Trainor, Vicki Truitt, Ware Wendell, Ken Whalen, David White, Darren Whitehurst, Seth Winick, Alex Winslow, Peck Young, Angelo Zottarelli.