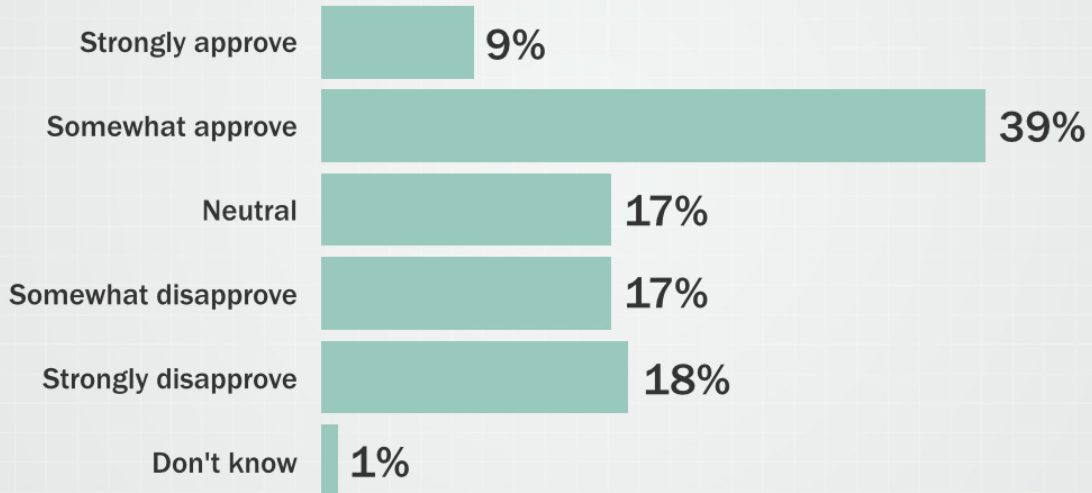


# “INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider poll  
for the week of 29 May 2015*

# INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

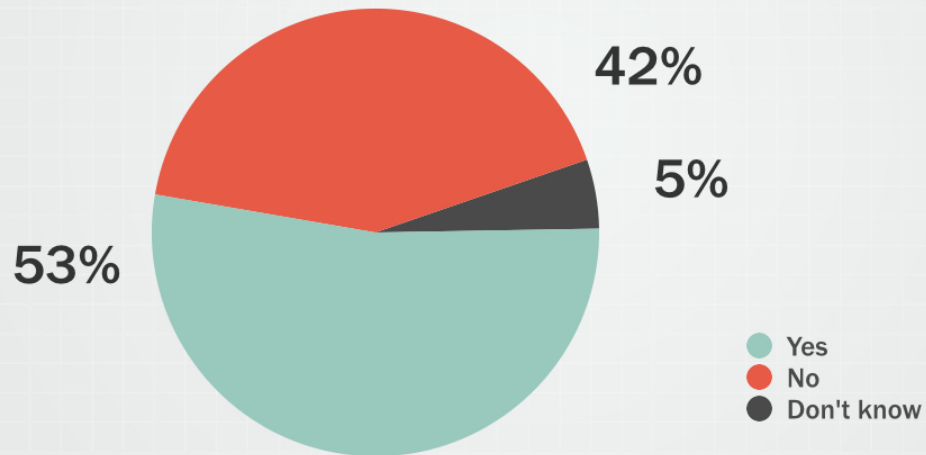
DO YOU APPROVE OF THE LEGISLATURE'S JOB?



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

# INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

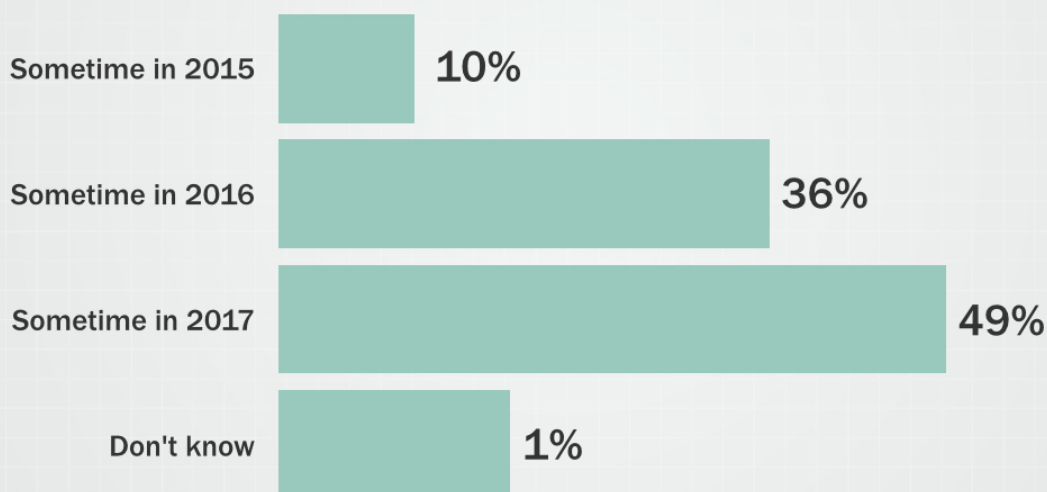
DID THE LEGISLATURE HAVE A SIGNATURE ACCOMPLISHMENT?



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# INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

## WHEN DO LAWMAKERS RETURN?



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### ***Do you approve of the Legislature's job this session?***

- "Speaker Straus - PHENOMENAL! Some house members have been good. Texas Senate — West, Watson — GREAT. All others in the Senate — D+."

- "Growing more and more divisive. Compromise used to be an art form, now more and more a relic of the past."

- "All due credit to the Lege, with two new statewide elected officials, elimination of the 2/3rds rule, the nuisance factor in the House and covert surveillance, big stuff was

accomplished, transportation funding, tax cuts, state budget, state and local government spending caps, open carry/campus carry, unreasonable local control thwarted (fracking issue), state contract/procurement reform ... am I leaving anything out?"

- "Got most of what needed to be done, done, without spending too much time and energy on things that won't go anywhere. Still too much focus on social issues for my taste, though."

- "If the job of the Legislature is measured in terms of actions about God, Guns, Gays, and the unborn then they did great. If they are measured in terms of governing, then they did less than great."
- "Took care of roads but left education and healthcare in the ditch and continued to make Texas look like a bigoted and homophobic state."
- "Too many people with no personal sex lives concerned with other people's sex lives. The Texas economy is receding due to the oil and gas recession, the school finance system is about to be ruled unconstitutional, and they cut \$3.8 billion in taxes. We will be back with a big deficit and have to raise taxes."
- "Budget? Check. Everything else is gravy."
- "DOA: ALAC, marriage, border compact, grid protection"
- "The focus on tax cuts from the start ruled out doing anything meaningful on school finance. Or highways, higher ed, etc. So it was essentially doomed from the start."
- "House got down to business; the Senate was more about showmanship."
- "Except for a few individual legislators, all the crazy anti-woman and pro-gun bills just contribute to the state's being the source of jokes for late-night comics and ridicule by other states."
- "No one is happy, so they must have done their job."
- "Many in the House tried to work on issues that are important to Texas but even that chamber spent an inordinate amount of time on divisive measures that don't contribute to maintaining and improving our state. The Senate hardly even tried. (This is NOT to disparage proposals such as naming official hats and the like. Texas would be a better state if legislators spent MORE time on those.)"
- "It's a new day!"
- "Erosion of local control will be the hallmark. Could have done so much to strengthen the state's infrastructure, state facilities, parks, schools and the ERS system. Gave partial fixes, lowered taxes and declared victory."
- "Not enough focus on public issues versus re-election issues? Water, highways, and education, took a back seat to guns, gay issues, abortion, etc. ... Homeowner rebate is a joke and the conservatives spent every penny they could find and were looking for more. ... It is really sad we have arrived at this point in history. ... We look like D.C."
- "I don't think we should give high marks to a group hell bent on rejecting the other chamber's work."
- "Some positive accomplishments, but too much hypocrisy — they continue to yell about local debt but have no problem approving \$3 billion in bonds for universities; everyone is for budget transparency, but Chair Nelson refuses to move the bill that would end the diversion of dedicated funds that will continue to inflate the revenue estimate and sit on taxpayer money."

- "Nothing important was addressed, just a bunch of stupid political promises that do not solve the state's pressing issues."
- "They did a great job, made easier by lots of available money and rising property appraisals. Many things become possible."
- "If they get the business done that must be done, I'm all in as a supporter."
- "House, yes for most part; Senate, no for most part."
- "With a two-to-one margin they only passed one pro-life bill. Wasted opportunity."
- "If it served corporate interests or gun interests, it passed. Nothing else really got decent attention."
- "Somewhat approve, if only because they didn't screw things up any worse than they could have."
- "The Legislature will leave town having passed the worse (by far) of competing tax plans, the minimum amount for schools, open carry, and maybe deregulation of people who want to remove excess eyebrow hair. Were I a member, I wouldn't brag on these things."

### ***Did the Legislature have a signature accomplishment this year?***

- "A few — open carry — even though it is a HORRIBLE item. And they managed to FURTHER erode my personal liberties as a woman — YEAH!"
- "Not anything to write home about."
- "Or lack thereof, media types (long form print) will play up open carry/campus carry and no real movement on public school finance."
- "Not unless it is an accomplishment to reject the Lt. Gov's proposal that Texas move to Enron accounting."
- "It's all about guns."
- "Tax breaks and open carry."
- "House killed SB 1628, TLR's insurance immunization bill. TLR is happy to 'own' the Senate but extremely disappointed it cannot buy Joe Straus. TLR went against its business donors for its new clients in the insurance industry."
- "They got a tax reform package together although citizens and businesses alike would have been better off with a sales tax reduction."
- "It's hard to put pre-K funding or open carry or something else on par with deregulating the electricity market or massive tort reform."
- "Abbott's pre-K, a BIG GOVERNMENT, BIG SPENDING boondoggle."
- "Open carry or raising the homestead exemption. What did you expect? A coherent reform of our 19th century tax code."
- "Someone is bound to crow about pre-K, but it restores only two-thirds of the

money cut in 2011. An accomplishment only compared to doing nothing at all."

- "Name one!"
- "They had the money to address the many areas of deferred maintenance and growing need in our fast growing state and made some important steps in the budget but squandered opportunities by passing an unneeded tax cut package. The Eltife critique is on target."
- "For the House: policy aside, not devolving to rancorous infighting between competing factions and generally maintaining its decorum is probably the House's most signature accomplishment given the political climate in Texas right now."
- "We'll see when the budget is final. That's really their only must-do."
- "Lower property taxes."
- "Seemed interested in making sure that the elderly, kids, teachers, roads and water got to struggle, but that guns had a good session."
- "Full dedication of State Park Funding"

### ***If so, what was it?***

- "The coordinated House response (& no Senate response) to creepy, covert surveillance ... Isn't this one of the reasons why the stalking statute was created?"
- "House Tax Reform"
- "Tax cuts"

- "It effectively responded to the egregious actions of Harris County in seeking billions of \$ in civil penalties from companies that had acted in good faith to perform remediation at historically contaminated site by establishing a 5-year statute of limitation and reasonable possible penalties (HB 1794). Abusive & out of control County Attorney Office was reined in effectively."
- "Their signature accomplishment is Open Carry. I didn't say it was a good signature."
- "Other than doing the one thing they had to do..."
- "It's more what they didn't do, thanks to cooler heads in the House"
- "Not repealing in-state tuition."
- "Continuing the conservative path to economic prosperity."
- "The jury is still out on this one. ... We won't know until June 1, 2015."

- "Not a lot of wasted energy."
- "Gun obsession"
- "Tax cuts and a timely budget"
- "Good budget/tax cuts."

- "Said no to TLR on its big insurance and education issues."
- "Road money"
- "Budget"
- "<crickets>"
- "Beginning to clean up years of malfeasance in the state budget by beginning to end diversions of dedicated funds, addressing transportation, parks, state buildings, pension funding and burgeoning state debt."
- "Franchise Tax cut"
- "Tax cuts for businesses and additional homestead exemptions."
- "Tax cuts"
- "tax relief-property/franchise"
- "A far more logical tax cut plan than the other chamber."
- "25% business tax cut. 2/3rds majority requirement for raising property tax rates above effective rate."
- "Fixed funding for congested roads and bridges."
- "Permanently reducing state revenue to benefit narrow interests while continuing to underfund health care, schools and other critical needs for our future. Quite a signature."
- "The House and Senate seem to have agreed on a budget! It's a miracle!"
- "Tax cuts"
- "Lower property taxes."
- "Nice budget; something for (most) everyone."
- "Infrastructure, education"
- "Tax cuts"
- "Tax cuts"
- "Passing bills just for the sake of passing bills"
- "The budget. Not its contents — just the fact that it was completed."
- "Yes. They existed."
- "HB 1794, see above."
- "Tax relief and sitting on billions more"
- "Environmental permit reform, drawing a needed line between state and local authority, beginning the needed changes to water resource management statutes to reflect new technologies."
- "Tax relief"
- "Their signature accomplishment is Open Carry. I didn't say it was a good signature."
- "Tax cut"
- "Apparently escaped a special session for the budget..."
- "The budget"



- "Their actions, as filmed by American Phoenix, will show the public that some of our elected officials are hypocrites."

- "Taking us back to the 1880s in gun laws."

- "Taking the state farther to the right and restricting civil liberties."

- "Tax reductions"

- "No past Legislature has accomplished as little as they did so publicly and with such great expectations."

- "Tax reform"

- "Franchise tax reduction"

***What's the biggest issue this Legislature should have addressed and didn't?***

- "REAL school finance and education overhaul"

- "Verdict is still out on that one."

- "I am obliged to respond: public school finance, public school finance, public school finance, public school finance, etc., etc."

- "School finance"

- "School finance"

- "Transportation"

- "TRS/ERS"

- "BRAC preparation"

- "Immigration"

- "School funding"

- "Education funding"

- "The school finance system. Or at least saving money to be ready for it."

- "Education"

- "School finance, but what's new!"

- "Public school finance"

- "Education reform as no consensus"

- "School finance. I can dream."

- "School finance"

- "Water"

- "A real ethics bill that squarely addresses the many conflicts of interest that plague the Legislature."

- "School choice"

- "Protecting the property rights of landowners"

- "Public school finance"

- "Just one?"

- "Education"

- "Education — economic development"

- "School finance"
- "Water"
- "Appraisal reform, school finance"
- "Uninsured health care"
- "Public school finance"
- "Public school finance"
- "School finance"
- "Transportation funding"
- "Public education"
- "Water"
- "Groundwater"
- "Education"
- "Dark money"
- "School finance. Hands down."
- "Education funding"
- "Education"
- "Not much work in public education. Not much work in healthcare. Not much work in reducing debt."
- "Transportation funding remains woefully inadequate for a growing state that has failing bridges, extensive wear and tear from population growth and substantial oil and gas related and manufactured goods production."
- "Education quality and finance"
- "Budget transparency, transportation (maybe), and productivity of public education system."
- "Medicaid, school finance, predatory lending practices"
- "Adequate and equitable school funding"
- "Business property tax relief."
- "Maybe road funding"
- "School finance"
- "A fresh popcorn machine in the rotunda."
- "Hold have gotten ahead of the funding for Public Ed"
- "Spending caps"
- "Tobacco prevention funding"
- "Transportation and infrastructure issues continue to be underfunded."
- "Road funding"
- "True and meaningful ethics reform"
- "Education finance at all levels"
- "School finance"
- "Immigration"
- "School finance"
- "Education"
- "Education"

- "Meaningful tax relief for regular Texans"
- "Paying down bond debt instead of miniscule tax relief."

- "Education funding"
- "Education funding"

### ***When do lawmakers return to Austin?***

- "Let's hope."
- "Despite any direction from the Supremes on public school finance, time value of money dictates keep it till you have to spend it, I predict no special. As an interesting side note, more and more the message of when is enough, enough is coming from both Ds and Rs."
- "Depends on school finance litigation."
- "Could come back early, as a result of court ruling on EPA regulations."
- "As soon as courts rule on school finance."
- "School finance"
- "Let's again monkey with funding our public schools."
- "What happens if/when the U.S. Supreme Court mandates homosexual 'marriage?' Texas could have prepared, but it wasn't a priority for the Governor, Lt. Governor or Speaker."
- "Why bother?"
- "School spending lawsuit will determine."
- "Merry Christmas to the new chair of House Education."
- "The darkness of school finance is creeping toward them."
- "Assuming they finish with some acceptable (to the Governor) solution for transportation funding."
- "But only if the Supreme Court requires it."
- "I'm guessing the Supremes will either rule for the state in school finance, or at least will give the Lege time to address it in regular session."
- "School finance."
- "More than likely ... in the Spring/Summer of 2016. But I could see the TxSC give the #Txlege until June 30, 2017 to fix school finance."
- "School finance isn't going away, people!"

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