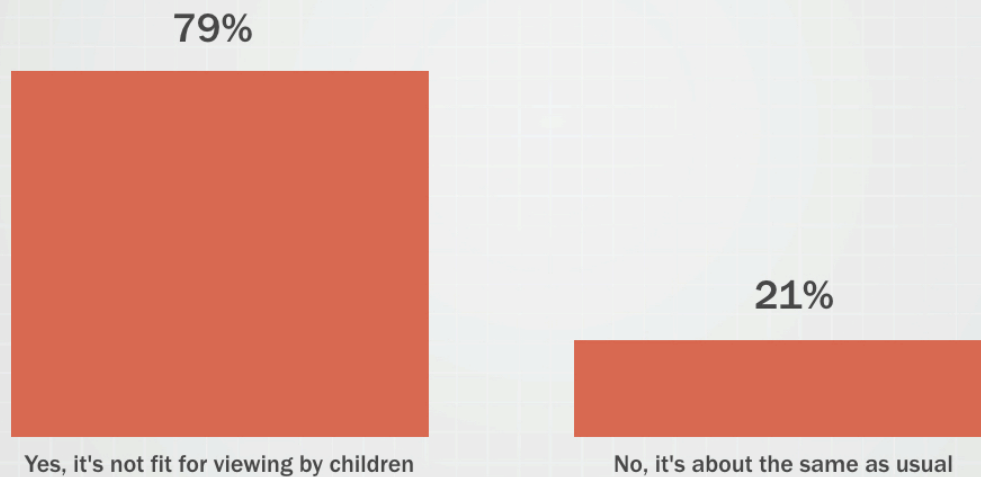


“INSIDE” INTELLIGENCE

*The Texas Weekly/Texas Tribune insider poll
for the week of 2 September 2016*

INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

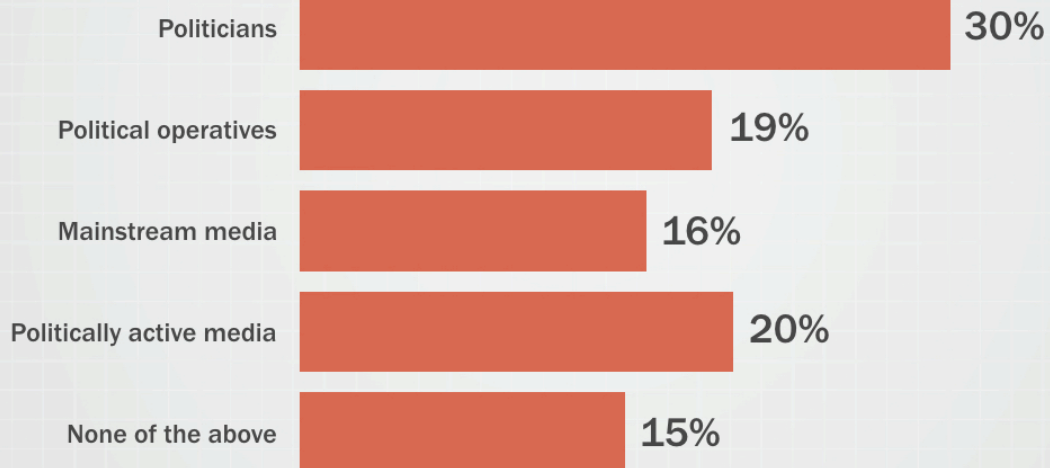
Politics may not be bean bag, but is the political climate worse than usual?



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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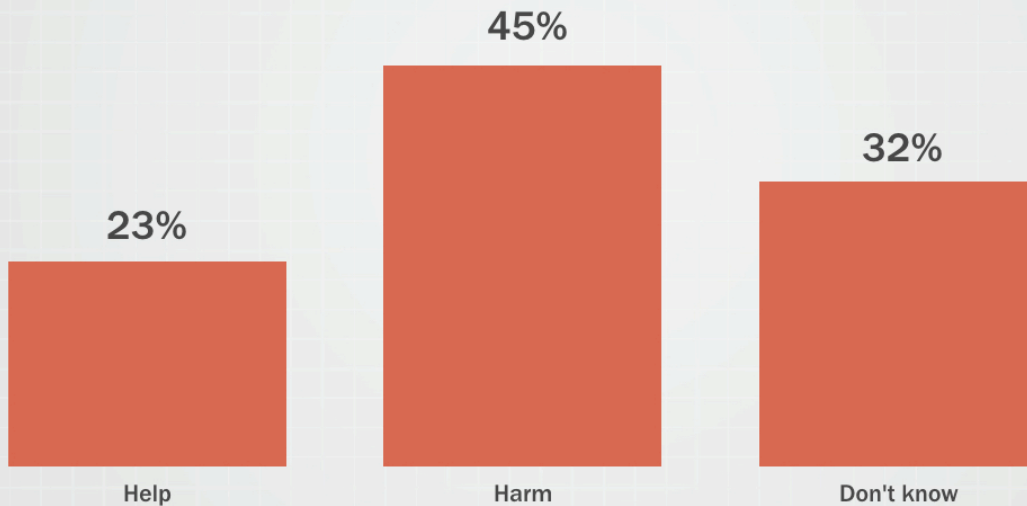
Who's played the biggest role in coarsening the discourse?



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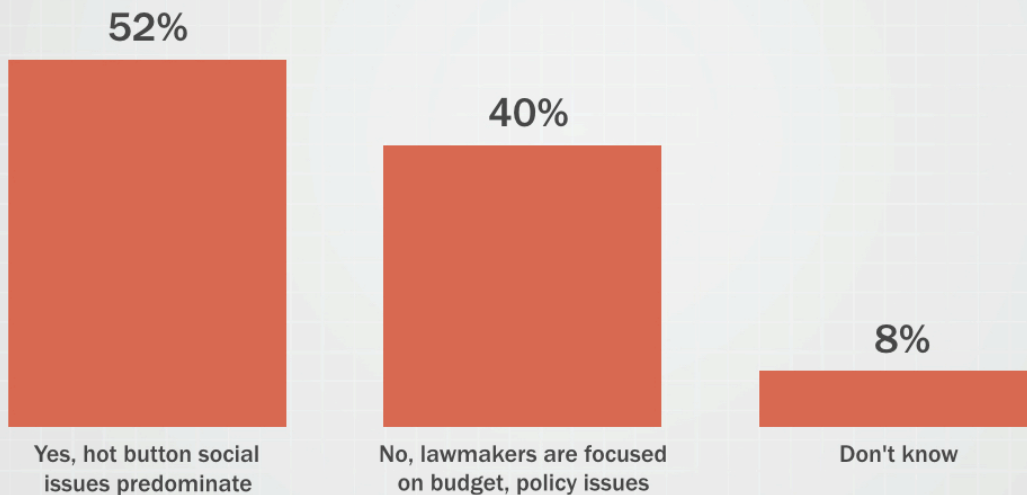
Does the outrageous nature of the UT campus carry protest help or harm the cause of the law's critics?



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Does the polarizing presidential election make a politically bruising legislative session more likely?



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Politics may not be beanbag, but is the political climate worse than usual?

- "We've come to demonize anyone with opposing points of view and we use all three branches of government to steamroll democracy. It's terrible."
- "The current climate may seem worse than usual only because it is playing out in the social media theater. In days of the past, the muckraking remained anonymous, and you never knew the real thoughts of your 'closest friends.' Our keyboard courage has changed our anonymity."
- "Voter suppression and slashing of school budgets are more vulgar than anything Trump can devise."
- "A POTUS candidate is encouraging violence at his events, continues to express racist and sexist sentiments, and wouldn't know the truth if it bit him on the backside — yeah, it's worse than usual."
- "The mainstream media is ignoring Hillary's record to advocate for her. Trump, according to the mainstream

media, cannot say or do anything they approve of. The mainstream media isn't pulling any punches."

- "Please don't say the 1800 election was this bad! The politics of contempt that began with the Clinton scandals and the MoveOn.org people has infected the politics of both sides."

- "Every cycle people complain about nasty politics. Sam Houston called his opponents thieves and murderers, John Q. Adams was called a pimp and Abraham Lincoln was called a baboon. There is nothing new under the political sun."

- "Let's see ... Republicans eating their young for their lack of conservative purity, Democrats eating their young for not being sufficiently socialist, or worse? Then trying to stay ahead of a 24-hour news cycle and social media? Yep ... worse than usual."

- "Politics hasn't been this coarse since the early days of the Republic."

- "In essence, the third parties have finally gotten their candidates. Libertarians have taken over the Republican Party and Socialists have taken over the Democratic Party. The extremes are driving the train."

- "It's full contact sport. And just like football, the players of today, they are bigger and stronger than ever. When they collide on the field — someone's going to get hurt."

- "The problem in the presidential race is not the tone or the tactics; it is having two of the absolute worst major party nominees in American history on the ballot at the same time."

- "Same as usual ... it's just we are now seeing what once happened in the background now live on social media and TV. Nothing has changed."

- "Not fit for children on the national level. On the state level, it's about the same as always."

- "Worse than usual but should be understood and seen by all, including children. The problem isn't mostly the nastiness. Rather, it's that we don't have real leaders running."

- "Look back at political cartoons over the last 200 years..."

- "Can't decide if (a) it's worse or (b) it's just business as usual but we can't get away from it anymore due to social media. Either way, it makes me want to throw up."

Who's played the biggest role in coarsening the discourse?

- "Politicians reflect the body politic; they no longer challenge and lead. The coarsened political discourse is a reflection of the culture. In many ways, while appearing more 'informed,' we are dumber and more crude. Stop and

listen. People curse regularly in public now, even around children. Society is not civil. The Internet, social media, and round-the-clock cable 'news' (read: infotainment) have exacerbated the decline. The reflex is outrage. The

worldview is Manichean, with people feeling there are more of 'them (the evil Other)' than 'us.' The attention span resembles that of a gnat. We are juiced and expertly fed by algorithm. It's all sensation and spectacle, sizzle with no appetite for steak. How many fresh graves has Killary dug today? Wait, Kimye is wearing what?!?"

- "Trump and Dan Patrick"
- "All of the above."
- "All of the above. "
- "Ad hominem attacks over substantive debate. And playing to the lowest common denominator."
- "Donald Trump"
- "Truth is no object. Vilifying and winning are all that matters. The lack of decency has been the Republican Party's undoing and may very well be all of our undoing. (For an added ick factor, this was driven by a Brit's media conglomerate messing with our national politics. After allowing that for three decades, the Russians' arrival comes as no surprise.)"
- "The voters. We love our Weiner."
- "Mainly one candidate."
- "His initials are BHO. He's pitting Americans against Americans."
- "Political operatives know that civil discourse does not motivate people to vote for or against their candidate. The overarching message of all political communications is that the opponent is

evil and will destroy our democracy and life as we know it."

- "Politicians have promised too much, and failed to deliver. They are apparently controlled by lobbyists, not the citizenry. That's the main problem in our political life today."
- "The angry mobs. Politicians are just saying what the engaged masses want to hear."
- "Redistricting helped create this mess! While districts have always been drawn in a partisan manner, politicians desire for 80-90 percent partisan leaning districts — for their own political survival — is not conducive to middle-of-the-road policies and politicians."
- "Trump"
- "As the cost of elections goes up, the win-at-any-cost mentality becomes pervasive."
- "The 24-hour news cycle combined with relentless axe-to-grind 'reporting' are killing all of us. People's reactions (on both sides) are reasonable in the context of what they are hearing from their media of choice. But all significant modern 'news' sources have devolved into the high tech equivalent of yellow journalism. I don't know what the path was from William Randolph Hearst to Ben Bradlee, but I hope we can find a similar path forward with the new media."
- "The comment sections on Breitbart and MSNBC."
- "I blame those that are so angry, they would vote for Donald Trump. They

have basically said they want to blow everything up — literally!"

- "All news, all the time 24/7 combined with the selfish, self-centered social media cesspool of Facebook & Twitter leaves no room for statesmen but only room for limelight seeking, shallow zeros shouting their empty phrases inside the tiny spaces between their hash tags!"

- "Donald Trump."

- "Especially Donald Trump, but it was already bad. He just made it worse."

- "Politicians are to blame for this discourse among the electorate."

- "...fueled by ultra-right and left population in gerrymandered districts"

- "Of course, wall-to-wall news coverage intensifies the efforts to find

In the case of the UT student sex toy protest against campus carry, does the outrageous nature of the protest help or harm the cause of campus carry critics?

- "Disgusting and offensive!"

- "The sex toy protest is the silliest thing I've seen in a long time. It won't make any difference."

- "It didn't bring a single dildo sympathizer to their side but it likely alienated scores of people who would otherwise have had sympathy for their arguments. Like many, I'm certain, I'm not sure what the point of the sex toys was but it 'turned me off' from diving deeper to understand the core of their complaint."

and report outrageous conduct. But it's really just Mr. Trump who has abused and benefited from this new landscape. Almost everyone else acted more or less like an adult."

- "Social Media, without a doubt."

- "News consumers who fail to demand higher standards."

- "Facebook"

- "All of the above was not an option ... it should be. They are all culpable."

- "ALL OF THE ABOVE! Where's that choice?"

- "'None of the above?' Try ALL of the above. It takes a village to run a country's electoral system into the ground."

- "It was a shit-show ... period. Earned media focused more on the number and color of dildos used than the actual nature of the protest."

- "It sure makes the protesters look ridiculous. Like most college/university protestors."

- "For those who get irony or Freud, it helps. For the irony-free zone non-thinkers, it harms."

- "This protest form indicates that the protesters couldn't present a coherent

public policy argument so they resort to a silly stunt. Sad."

- "Incredibly stupid"
- "Although I noticed that none of the mainstream media repeated the slogan 'Cocks, Not Glocks.'"
- "Neither. The NRA will soon market a dildo-shaped gun."
- "No impact."
- "Campus carry supporters have to have phallic symbols. Sex toy protesters use the real thing. Is this a great state or what?"
- "Two wrongs don't make a right."
- "Offending sensibilities isn't winsome."
- "Regardless of your position on guns, this protest is juvenile and stupid. Shame on the media for giving it so much coverage."
- "Won't change anything."
- "It creates significant entertainment value ... but will make absolutely no difference in the end. Sorry ... couldn't resist."
- "Sophomoric, puerile, changes no minds whatsoever."
- "I am sure the parents of these fine young men and women are proud of them. It appears to be just an excuse for students to buy sex toys which they will probable use on themselves later this

evening. Buy them books, send them to school, and all they do is chew the covers off of them."

- "As foolish as they looked, they drew attention to their cause. (Not that it's going to have any impact on the Texas Legislature.)"
- "Both. It helps gain attention, but it simultaneously undercuts all credibility by making it a sex joke instead of a serious policy protest. Proof? The coverage is 65-75 percent about cocks, not Glocks."
- "It's a wash depending on the audience: yes, no and ambivalence."
- "Cocks instead of Glocks? I can see the rationale for grabbing headlines but it's just a one-day story."
- "At least they got a lot of attention. Better than the students/profs writing prolifically on the subject."
- "Too early to tell"
- "No net effect"
- "As Trump says, all press, good or bad, is good for business."
- "It's UT; probably doesn't matter."
- "Irrelevant"

Does the polarizing presidential election make a politically bruising legislative session more likely?

- "Hillary will have won the election two months before the session convenes, so it won't be much of a factor."
- "As if the crazies on both sides needed any more material."
- "Urban Republicans (URs) are now at the same crossroads that East/West Texas Democrats were in the 90s. Can they remain part of a party that has lost touch with the values of their district? If the URs happen to survive the general, they will be in a predicament on whether or not to support hot button social issues."
- "It is up to the Lieutenant Governor."
- "The session will be polarized for the same reason the election is — coarsened discourse."
- "The presidential election won't have much to do with the tone of the session. Most members won't be focused on budget issues ... just social 'policy' issues."
- "If Trump wins, state legislators have to compete with his extremism; if Clinton wins, they still have to compete with Trump's extremism."
- "The Straus House will likely kill every conservative bill coming out of the Senate — again."
- "One can only hope that the focus will be on budget and policy issues. There will no doubt be plenty of distractions."
- "As former Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby stated, 'the legislative process is 90 percent about the budget and the 10 percent is poetry.' The budget will be the big issue but, with the lack of money, social issues will be good political fodder because the members will not have a lot of opportunities to do things that are meaningful. Last session, the state had an abundance of money and the leadership had a difficult time getting on the same page. Imagine how it will work with no money to fund the leadership's priorities. Special Session!!!!"
- "Hard to find much relationship between Trump/Clinton and forthcoming legislative session."
- "Not in Texas. The Houston delegation will bipartisanly fight the Dallas delegation for money just like they always do ... and so on and so on."
- "There are so few really contested legislative races in November, the answer is simply No — and it doesn't have anything to do with budget and policy issues."
- "Neither. The Donald is a rare and odd occurrence that won't have much lasting impact on Texas state politics. But the election of Hillary will recharge the batteries of the 'Washington is evil' agenda. Get ready for four more years of vigorous Texas federalism."
- "Up until mid-April budget & policy, then it's all social issues all the time."

- "Some will still try to be the legislative equivalent of Robert Morrow. Legislators need to respect the office they were elected to instead of being part of a group of anarchists."
- "Straus keeps his body's eye on the ball and keeps Senate in check. Patrick plays in the mud and solves bathroom problems."
- "This may finally have been enough for them to realize how much responsibility Texas' politicians have for the current climate. Not!! "
- "Yes! It is more important to know who is peeing next to you and to protect the 'ladies' than caring for abused kids, building highways, and out of control property taxes..."
- "There is not any money! The budget will be the focus next session and will take up a lot of time."
- "By supporting Mr. Trump, social conservatives demonstrated that they don't really have any litmus tests after all. Republican candidates just as well appeal to the donor base."
- "All choices are false today. The lawmakers won't focus on much of importance. But that has nothing to do with the poor presidential race."
- "...But the social issues get their day in the sun too!"

Our thanks to this week's participants: Gene Acuna, Cathie Adams, Clyde Alexander, Jay Arnold, Charles Bailey, Dave Beckwith, Allen Blakemore, Tom Blanton, Chris Britton, Raif Calvert, Lydia Camarillo, Kerry Cammack, Marc Campos, Janis Carter, Harold Cook, Beth Cubriel, Curtis Culwell, Denise Davis, Tom Duffy, David Dunn, Richard Dyer, Jon Fisher, Tom Forbes, Dominic Giarratani, Bruce Gibson, Stephanie Gibson, Kinnan Golemon, Daniel Gonzalez, John Greytok, Clint Hackney, Wayne Hamilton, Bill Hammond, Susan Hays, Deborah Ingersoll, Mark Jones, Lisa Kaufman, Robert Kepple, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Sandy Kress, Dale Laine, Pete Laney, Dick Lavine, James LeBas, Luke Legate, Myra Leo, Ruben Longoria, Matt Mackowiak, Jason McElvaney, Bee Moorhead, Mike Moses, Nelson Nease, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Robert Peeler, Jerry Philips, Tom Phillips, Wayne Pierce, Allen Place, Gary Polland, Jay Pritchard, Jay Propes, Ted Melina Raab, Patrick Reinhart, David Reynolds, Carl Richie, A.J. Rodriguez, Grant Ruckel, Jason Sabo, Andy Sansom, Barbara Schlieff, Stan Schlueter, Robert Scott, Steve Scurlock, Ben Seabee, Nancy Sims, Jason Skaggs, Ed Small, Mark Smith, Larry Soward, Leonard Spearman, Dennis Speight, Tom Spilman, Sherry Sylvester, Trey Trainor, Ware Wendell, David White, Darren Whitehurst, Michael Williams, Peck Young, Angelo Zottarelli.