

“INSIDE”

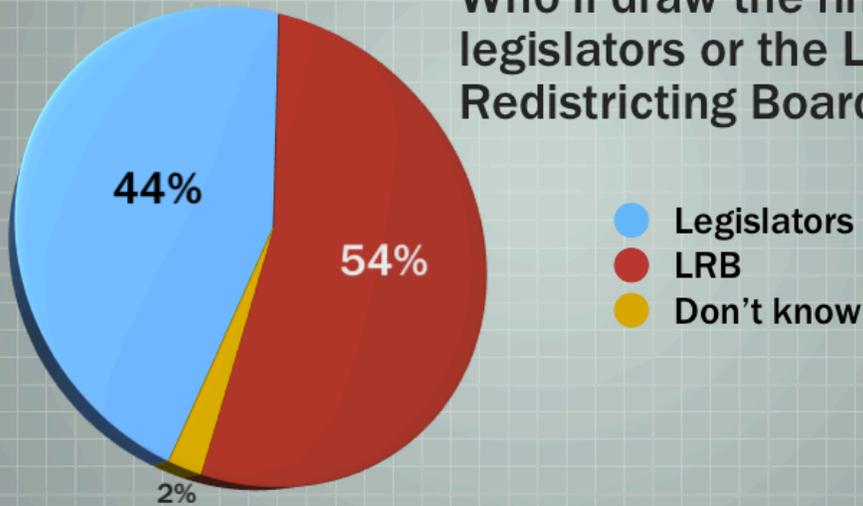
INTELLIGENCE

THE TEXAS TRIBUNE
TEXAS  WEEKLY

The insider's poll for the week of March 28.

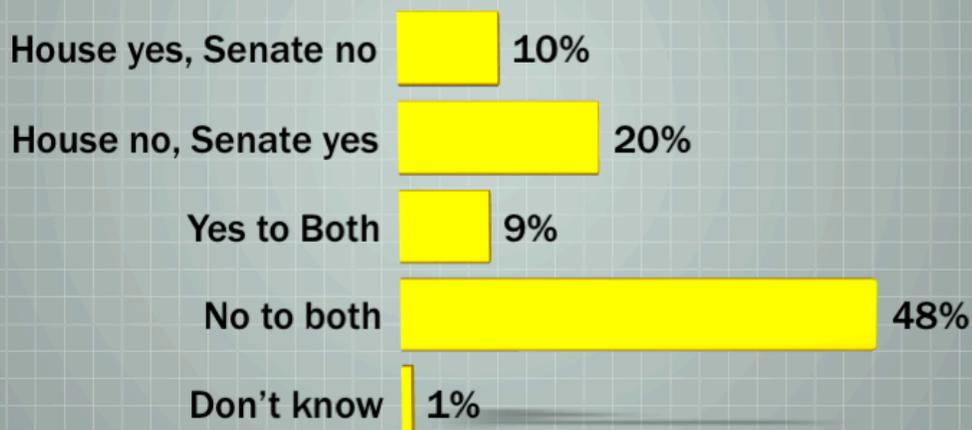
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Who'll draw the final maps - legislators or the Legislative Redistricting Board?



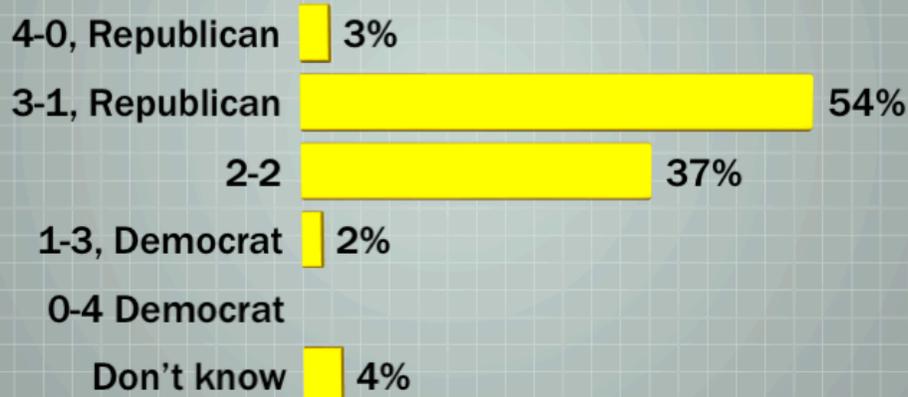
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Can Republicans ensure super-majorities in the House and the Senate?



INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

How will lawmakers split Texas' four new congressional seats?



Do you think the Legislature will adopt new Texas House and Senate maps, or that the Legislative Redistricting Board will have to do it for them?

- "Too much control wit in the Republican control not to. A great question is whether Jeff Wentworth's proposal for a less partisan commission will get traction and pass."
- "Everyone will play nice. They don't want the current statewide who are all jockeying for the next new office to be holding them hostage."
- "I expect the Senate to create its own map, which while not formally passed will be respected by the LRB."
- "They have too much on their plate."
- "The maps will never hold up and will be drawn by the courts anyway so it is a moot point."
- "Why would a House Republican vote for a map with 85 safe R seats? Go explain to your local Republican women's club why that was a good vote. We started with 101 and I voted to help return 85."
- "Legislators distrust the LRB process after the hatchet job a decade ago, including key Senate Republicans whom Dewhurst promised one thing, then voted for another."
- "This is a task the members can handle. It will be tough and some republican House members will not be back but for republicans the better outcome is to accomplish this task 'in house' so to speak."
- "Predictions by members on the new maps are just like Tea Party announcements on the budget: both are based on ignorance and wishful thinking, with a dash of 'principle' for flavoring. This is an all-or-nothing game because you either pass all 3 of the important maps (House, Senate, Congress) or you get none. I'm betting on none, with the LRB drawing both chambers of the state house and a federal 3-judge panel drawing Congress and the SBOE. Exception: if the budget is finished

in the regular session, then you would see special sessions on drawing Congressional maps. God save us if we have a special with two major subjects — the budget and Congressional maps."

- "The Legislature will adopt a House map — the Senate may not be able to adopt a Senate map."

- "There's too much politics of retribution left over from the Speaker's race for cooler heads to rule. The old saying comes to mind: They'll cut off their noses to spite their faces."

- "Although several freshman Republicans will be royally screwed."

- "Drawing districts for 101 Republicans when the most fevered dreams of Tom DeLay only resulted in the high 80s will be a problem, but the budget will probably eat up so much time and capital that the legislature will have to punt."

- "A super-majority should be able to draw fair maps."

- "The Senate will be able to draw a map to protect their incumbents, but the House won't. There are too many House Rs who were swept in with the anti-DC tide in 2010 that House mapmakers will not be able to keep all of them, leading to dissent within the party."

- "There is no way any Republican can vote for a map that will reduce the size of the 101-seat majority. But to ensure at least 90 solid seats, some Republicans are going to have to go."

Can Republicans draw maps that would ensure super-majorities of two-thirds or more in the House and Senate?

- "Reality of our financial crisis will set in soon and the next election will be different."

- "No to both die to the sheer volume of Hispanics they must contend with. The solution and splitting of communities of interest would never hold up."

- "The Senate has a better shot, because there are many fewer seats and no member(s) necessarily must be eliminated in contrast to the Texas House. Also the Senate can freely range across county lines, but a near majority of House member districts must be drawn within the urban box counties of Harris (24 Or 25), Dallas (14), Tarrant (11), Bexar (10), Travis (6) or El Paso (5), which greatly constrains the ability to protect vulnerable urban Republican House members. Bets to let the LDB decide who gets the black beans. Question is would the House approve a Senate plan without a reciprocal act by the other chamber — probably not."

- "Certain House members will lose their seats to redistricting, so do you think they'll vote themselves out of office?"

- "I think after jacking around with the budget, the members will be more than happy to tackle some self-preservation."

- "Punting is generally the most comfortable position."

- "I think that they'll be able to adopt a Senate map, not so sure about this House."

- "The task is always difficult enough in the Senate trying to get enough votes for recognition, and it will be extremely difficult drawing a map that will hold the gains that were made by Republicans in this last election; so, getting anything out of both chambers is a slim possibility."

- "The legislative body will have to work with the civil rights community in light of the state's population growth."

- "They did not draw a 2/3 majority in the house, the voters decided that!"

- "Difficult but not impossible. The real question is; if Republicans use their magic drawing skills and are able to draw a super-majority, for how long can they hold on to those seats? The party has not realized that it's a new Texas with a clear demographic shift."

- "The maps now were not drawn to ensure a supermajority, and yet here we are. As long as elections come down to the whims of voters who read at 7th-grade levels, then the political environment in which an election is held will have pre-eminent influence over what the results are."
- "The only way the Republicans could do that is if Texas wasn't subject to Voting Rights Act provisions. That's not the case and there are too many Hispanics for them to draw super majorities even if they only vote 65 percent Democratic."
- "Their big hurdle is Voting Rights pre-clearance."
- "Way too risky to try. Could lose 20 House seats as soon as 2012, and 3-4 Senate seats over a decade. Best strategy is to firm up viable GOP majorities for another 10 years — at least 17 safe senate seats, 80 or so House seats."
- "Sure, they can draw the maps to ensure super-majorities but will the DOJ accept it?"
- "I think they can get to 21 in the Senate with no problem. Straus is going to be under pressure when several rural Rs get thrown in with each other and some of the marginal suburban districts that went R-to-D in '06 and '08 and went back R in '10 go back to D. I think the best number the Rs can hope for (that pass DOJ) is 92-93 seats. And that's a bunch."
- "This re-districting is not just R's versus D's. Some decisions will be made that are favorable for some republicans and adverse to other republicans. Trying to maintain a super-majority would make too many seats marginal for republicans. That helped the resurgence of democrats in the last decade. Can end up easily with a significant majority with solid republican seats, but less than 101."
- "Only if Obama, Reid and Pelosi continue to endear themselves to the 'average' Texans."
- "The 76-74 differential in the House last session will haunt Straus. Get too greedy and the shifting sands of demography will quickly consume your castle."
- "They cannot draw sustainable supermajority seats. Republican density would be too thin. The question will be whether the desire for a sustainable Republican majority prevails over greed for the maximum number of seats in the first election cycle following redistricting. Separately, different voter blocks may be engaged in the 2012 elections based on state budget cuts to education and human services. They should go for depth."
- "That won't happen. The 2010 mid-term elections were an outlier. It would be borderline criminal for Republicans to assume that 101 (only 99 of them elected as R's) House Members is a proper bellwether for Texas' political proclivities."

How will the new congressional seats be split between Republicans and Democrats?

- "Three-quarters of population growth over the last ten years has been among Hispanics. Hispanics are expecting that growth to be recognized with more Hispanic majority seats and will be disappointed if that does not happen. Republicans will not want to look like they are actively trying to suppress the political impact of Hispanics. The two new majority Hispanic districts that will then likely go Democrat in 2012 will look a lot like Martin Frost's old district in the DFW area and an even more Hispanic version of Solomon Ortiz's district around Corpus."
- "It would've been easier if Republicans didn't pick up 3 seats in 2010."
- "The growth of Hispanics and their protested class status and their affinity for the democrats will insure two seats go to them."
- "They should go 4-0 Republican, but Republicans aren't showing much courage in Austin or Washington, which could cost them dearly in 2012."
- "May not hold up to DOJ or Court challenge"

- "Landing them in court with Voting Rights Act violations."
- "Either 2-2, or 3-1 Republican, depending on how aggressive the Republicans decide they can be."
- "I think 2-2 is the likely split, given Bill Flores and Quico Canseco sitting in formerly D seats. It will be hard, but not impossible, for the mappers to protect Blake Farenthold. Throw those 3 seats in with the 4 new ones, and I think all but the most fire-breathing fire-breathers would be thrilled with 4 or 5 pickups out of 7 seats total."
- "3-2... Shore up Farenthold — keeping him in office... 2-2 otherwise"
- "Repubs will try 3-1. Will be hard with growth patterns and demographics."
- "2 Republican... 1 Democrat... 1 Aaron Pena"
- "If the legislative body follows the Voting Rights Act, 3 or 4, out the 4 new congressional seats will be drawn as majority-Latino."

How will redistricting affect the Legislature's other business?

- "It won't"
- "Create strange bedfellows."
- "It will have no effect."
- "Jam it up, muck it up and generally eff it up!"
- "Budget trumps all other business, period/paragraph."
- "I think the House will come up with a plan, which will be challenged in the courts for the rest of the year."
- "Create contention but budget will be driver"
- "Eat up a lot of time that would otherwise go to other crappy legislation."
- "Tangentially. Budget will suck out all the air."
- "It's like a bad fungus that will start growing into everything very soon."
- "Given that the Legislature won't address redistricting themselves, not at all."
- "Wont"
- "It will make the budget harder to finish before the end of the regular session."
- "Once 15-18 House members comprehend that they are not coming back, the leverage is gone for a vote on the budget. This is why the prospect of special sessions is a real disaster for the Governor, Speaker, and Lt. Governor. All of them are astute enough to grasp that and I think the budget negotiations are about to be rocketed and on rails."
- "It won't affect the Senate much at all while its primary impact in the House will be to distract those Republican representatives who are worried about re-election. It may also cause these 'nervous' representatives to keep hard to the right with an eye towards their primary election."
- "Now it cuts like a knife. But it feels so right."
- "Could have great affect on individual members"
- "It is their jobs and nothing is as important to them as keeping their seats"
- "Not much"
- "I think the budget is more likely take time and attention away from redistricting than the other way around."

- "It will be a foil for budget issues under the look here, don't look there theory."

- "Redistricting issues will create some strange alliances as well as a LOT of stress for Republicans."

- "There will be a little less lovemaking."

- "If they pass anything at all it will be straight party lines, but there will be more raw and hurt feelings than normal, as Dems will still feel stung by the rest of the GOP agenda that will be rammed down their throats"

- "Increased unpredictability."

- "It is the most important focus for legislators over the next month. If you're focused on one thing, other things either slip by or fall off."

- "Not much."

- "Republicans will be more polite worrying that some offense they make will end up costing them their seat. Democrats will be free to be as obnoxious as ever."

- "Not sure"

- "Weaken rural interests"

- "It will be an unpleasant distraction resented by legislators trying to focus on other issues."

- "One great big stop sign"

- "GRIDLOCK!"

- "Logjam at the end will come sooner."

- "Man bites dog"

- "It will be a contributing factor to ill will and stress for both democrats and republicans. Friends and colleagues will revert to their primeval instinct to get reelected."

- "Not too much as I think the map will be pretty well agreed upon. There is a lot of

consensus already on both the House and Senate maps."

- "Bills will die, that is always good"

- "What's that giant sucking sound? Oh, it's redistricting sucking the life out of countless pieces of legislation."

- "Redistricting will kill a lot of other bills. Whether members can pass maps or not, they are going to spend a huge chunk of time trying to do so. That means less time for other bills in a session in which the budget has already sucked most of the air out of the room. I am glad to be playing mostly defense this session."

- "It will be a head-on collision amongst friends. Everything will come to a standstill."

- "Not as much as some would hope."

- "It will slow everything else down at the end."

- "Not significantly this time."

- "Reduces the urgency for other matters with the exception of the budget and any bills that increase revenue"

- "It will create problems between Republicans, as they fight among themselves over district lines. This can negatively impact the way other business gets done."

- "Unsure"

- "It's second fiddle to the Speaker's politics of retribution."

- "Less than most people think, since there are so many other huge issues this session."

- "Hard to predict but some GOP members are going to find out they can't be given safe seats things could get stranger fast"

- "Redistricting will force a special session(s)"

- "It will not."

- "What, no recognition that DOJ and the courts will be heavily influencing the lines? Suspect influence will be under the surface, a subtext to the other action."
- "Pushes big bills to a special session. Maybe even the budget."
- "Not much, they will punt it to LRB"
- "It will become very random because the stresses and strains of redistricting."
- "Impede"
- "Cause disruption and slow everything except budget down."
- "Eventually some Freshman Republicans will realize that they're not getting invited to the party after the prom, and they might not be as willing to compromise on what they consider their pure ideology."
- "Nil"
- "Slow down other business"
- "Lots of trading will go on around this—always does—exactly how that plays out is hard to know at this point."
- "Legislative redistricting will shorten attention spans and slow down the process. Congressional redistricting may bring us back this summer."
- "Cause more delays and produce lots of hostility"
- "It will be a non-event compared to the budget."
- "It is quickly surpassing budget talks as the number one issue among legislators and will dominate discussions for the remainder of the session causing other business to be put to the side."
- "Badly"
- "It won't."
- "All things are in second place to every one that is running for reelection"
- "It will be a factor behind the scenes but shouldn't be a public spectacle."
- "Always a problem. When you are protecting yourself or trying to design a district you want to run in your attention gets diverted"
- "How won't it?"
- "It always makes for bad feelings, so less compromise on other issues."
- "Not as much as the budget fight."
- "Redistricting is the only business in the legislature"
- "Moderate impact. Since their own plans are not likely to get very far, excepting Congress and the SBE."
- "Ordinarily, it would create increased friction between the two parties. This time, however, because of the Democrats' small numbers, and the demographic reality that will force Republicans to reduce their numbers in the House — minimally by 7 or 8 members — one could see infighting within the Republican caucus. Ultimately, I don't think the House can pass a map, and it will go to the LRB."
- "Unless a house or senate map is available prior to the legislature taking up the state budget, then I can see where redistricting will begin to stall other things in motion. Why risk supporting the major cuts in the budget if your district is being erased by redistricting?"
- "If agreement on a budget fails, the distraction of redistricting might be a gift to leaders, a cooling-off period providing time for conciliatory efforts on the budget, for which there is no LRB back-up team."
- "More weekends and scintillating late-night debate"
- "Poison the well — increase partisanship — likely lead to a special"

- "No direct or visible effect. Mostly personal tensions among members in the background."
- "Could make it more difficult to hold the caucuses — especially the Rs — together on tough votes."
- "So far has not been much impact. All they really have to do this session is Budget and Redistricting. That is all..."
- "Very little. I believe they can still walk and chew gum."
- "Redistricting reigns!"
- "Not as much as in the past"
- "Senator's will be less cordial with each other."
- "The Republicans can't draw a map that elects 101 house members. They probably can't draw a map that safely elects 90 Republicans. As the map drawing progresses it could insert a wedge between the 'in' Republicans and the 'out' Republicans."
- "More inclination to avoid votes that might come back to haunt them in a newly drawn district."
- "Not much"
- "It will add a little more rancor but it will not slow down the R tsunami."
- "Slow down a bit"
- "The budget has created the ultimate distraction. Watch the train wreck across the street instead of the circus right in front of you."
- "Legislators are already concerned about legislation dying because of running out of time. This will be a problem."
- "Hopefully it won't. But the potential for a logjam is acute"
- "It will be a major distraction"
- "It will cause a lot of gamesmanship. It will bog the system down further."
- "4 yrs"
- "It will help more bad bills die a quiet death."
- "BADLY"
- "Limit the number of bills that will be debated"
- "Unclear. I think that significant Republican majority makes it less divisive than the last redistricting cycle. I think that the budget will have a bigger impact on the Legislature's overall business."
- "Depending on the timing, it could require that some of the sunset items be punted to next session again."
- "Can you spell HOSTAGE? Everything from budget compromises to agency mergers will be on the line when it comes to redistricting. No interest like self interest when lines are at stake."
- "Apparently not much."
- "It will dominate. Will affect votes on other bills."
- "It already has. Redistricting is the most important bill out there."
- "It will slow everything down."
- "I don't think it will. This isn't like the mid-census redistricting that forced Democrats to flee the state because of radical map changes. This will be a much more mundane process."
- "It saps the energy out of the room for major initiatives."
- "It will take a lot of committee time."
- "As soon as maps are released, everything will come to a screeching halt. Getting a budget done will become difficult as it usually is in a redistricting year."

- "Once redistricting gets underway it will help fray tempers. However, with everything else that will help fray tempers, it may be hard to see exactly how redistricting will affect the members — most of the new ones naively think their elders will take care of them."
- "It could create discipline problems on other key issues within the GOP House Caucus."
- "The House leadership has a decision to make. Do they shoot for the moon and try and draw a 95 to 100-seat Repub map? Or do they try and draw themselves 82 to 85 seats they can hold? The answer to that question might tell you whether or not they can pass the budget conference report..."
- "It may be helpful. It gives leadership a chit when negotiating a difficult budget."
- "Dems will run away again."
- "It is the turd in the punch bowl; it pushes everything into the end game and closed-door deals"
- "The legislature will have to figure out how to deal with the issues arising from the redistricting process, budget cuts and the state's needs."
- "It won't affect important issues, like sunset bills and the budget...but it may interfere with unimportant bills, often of local interest."

Our thanks to this week's participants: Cathie Adams, Clyde Alexander, George Allen, Jay Arnold, Kip Averitt, Charles Bailey, Reggie Bashur, Allen Blakemore, Tom Blanton, Hugh Brady, Steve Bresnen, Andy Brown, Jose Camacho, Lydia Camarillo, Kerry Cammack, Marc Campos, Snapper Carr, Tris Castaneda, Corbin Casteel, William Chapman, George Cofer, Rick Cofer, Harold Cook, David Dunn, Jeff Eller, Alan Erwin, Gay Erwin, Jon Fisher, Wil Galloway, Norman Garza, Dominic Giarratani, Bruce Gibson, Scott Gilmore, Daniel Gonzalez, Jim Grace, Thomas Graham, John Greytok, Marta Greytok, Wayne Hamilton, Bill Hammond, Sandy Haverlah, Albert Hawkins, Adam Haynes, Jim Henson, Ken Hodges, Steve Holzheuser, Shanna Igo, Deborah Ingersoll, Cal Jillson, Jason Johnson, Mark Jones, Robert Kepple, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Tim Lambert, Nick Lampson, Pete Laney, James LeBas, Donald Lee, Luke Legate, Richard Levy, Ruben Longoria, Vilma Luna, Matt Mackowiak, Bryan Mayes, Richard McBride, Dan McClung, Robert Miller, Steve Murdock, Craig Murphy, Keir Murray, Richard Murray, Sylvia Nugent, Todd Olsen, Nef Partida, Gardner Pate, Bill Pewitt, Jerry Philips, Royce Poinsett, Kraege Polan, Jay Propes, Bill Ratliff, Karen Reagan, Tim Reeves, Carl Richie, Kim Ross, Jeff Rotkoff, Jason Sabo, Luis Saenz, Mark Sanders, Jim Sartwelle, Stan Schlueter, Steve Scurlock, Bradford Shields, Christopher Shields, Julie Shields, William Siebert, Ed Small, Martha Smiley, Terral Smith, Todd Smith, Larry Soward, Dennis Speight, Jason Stanford, Bob Stein, Bill Stevens, Keith Strama, Bob Strauser, Colin Strother, Michael Quinn Sullivan, Russ Tidwell, Trey Trainor, Ware Wendell, Ken Whalen, Darren Whitehurst, Woody Widrow, Chad Wilbanks, Michael Wilt, Alex Winslow, Peck Young, Angelo Zottarelli