

Letter from Texas: October 2025

Latinos in Texas: Long politically marginalized, but set to play a key role in state and national politics

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In his classic study *Southern Politics*, the political scientist V.O. Key Jr. noted his native Texas was different from other former Confederate states. “The Lone Star State is concerned about money and how to make it, about oil and sulfur and gas, about cattle and dust storms and irrigation, about cotton and banking and Mexicans.”¹

Seventy-five years later, Texas is different in many ways. Most Texans live in large metropolitan areas; dozens of Fortune 500 companies are headquartered in the state; many more residents are college graduates—the list is long. But in important respects things are the same. Texans are still focused on money and how to make it. The state remains one of the world’s largest producers of oil and sulfur and gas. Banking and storms and water were major issues in the most recent legislative session. And the descendants of Key’s “Mexicans” remain a central focus of state politics.

The October Letter from Texas focuses on the Hispanic population’s role in contemporary state politics. That role has been elevated by the return to office of President Donald J. Trump. The aggressive policies of his second administration on tariffs, immigration, and redrawing the state’s congressional map all disproportionately impact Latinos in Texas. Given that fact, the reaction of Hispanic voters in Texas will have major implications in the 2026 midterm elections and beyond in both state and national politics.

This Letter reviews the rapid growth of the Latino population in Texas since the 1970s and its shift from South Texas and the border counties to the large metropolitan areas that comprise the “Texas Triangle”. Despite being the largest racial/ethnic group in Texas, Hispanics lag behind Texas Anglos in overall economic status and far behind in political clout as measured by winning statewide offices and controlling congressional districts. The factors accounting for the lack of political success are discussed. Hispanic partisan voting patterns are reviewed, with the Trump surge in 2024 highlighted. Recent poll data indicate that wave has crested.

So ... where do we go from here? Stay tuned.

I: Things are changing in the Lone Star State

¹ V.O. Key Jr. 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Random House, p. 254.

A. (NOT) Breaking News: Hispanics now outnumber Anglos in Texas

In the summer of 2021, the US Census projected Hispanic Texans had surpassed non-Hispanic whites (“Anglos”) as the largest racial/ethnic population in the state. This was not exactly breaking news, although the milestone came earlier than some demographers had predicted.

Table 1 shows how rapidly this shift occurred. In 1970 of the 11.2 million people in Texas, 71% were Anglos while less than 18% identified as Hispanic – a four-to-one ratio. The 2020 Census showed that gap had closed, with each group accounting for a little less than 40% of the 29.2 million people in Texas. The drivers were international immigration and natural population increase. The majority of foreign-born persons moving to Texas after 1970 were Hispanics.

Meanwhile, birth rates among Anglo Texans started a long, steady decline while Latino births remained much higher. There was a surge of Anglos moving to Texas from other states in the oil booms of the 1970s and 1980s, but as inflation-adjusted hydrocarbon prices fell that counter-demographic flow ended.

Table 1: Santa Anna’s Revenge? Hispanic population surpasses Anglos in Texas in 2021

Year	TX Pop	Anglo	Hispanic	Black	Asian/Other	Hispanic Gain in Population	Share of TX Growth
1970	11,199	71.0%	17.7%	12.3%	1.0%	N/A	N/A
1980	14,338	65.7%	21.0%	11.7%	1.6%	1,003	32.0%
1990	17,045	60.6%	25.5%	11.6%	2.3%	1,354	50.0%
2000	20,945	57.6%	31.8%	11.3%	4.5%	2,329	59.7%
2010	25,242	45.3%	37.6%	11.5%	5.2%	2,791	64.9%
2020	29,240	39.7%	39.3%	11.8%	8.0%	1,981	49.5%
2024	31,290	39.5%	39.8%	12.0%	8.7%	1,011	49.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Data are in thousands.

Table 1 shows the big shift came after 1986, when a major immigration bill—supported by congressional Democrats and signed by Republican President Ronald Reagan—was enacted. The law created a pathway to legal status for an estimated three million undocumented people living in the United States, coupled with provisions designed to curb future illegal immigration.

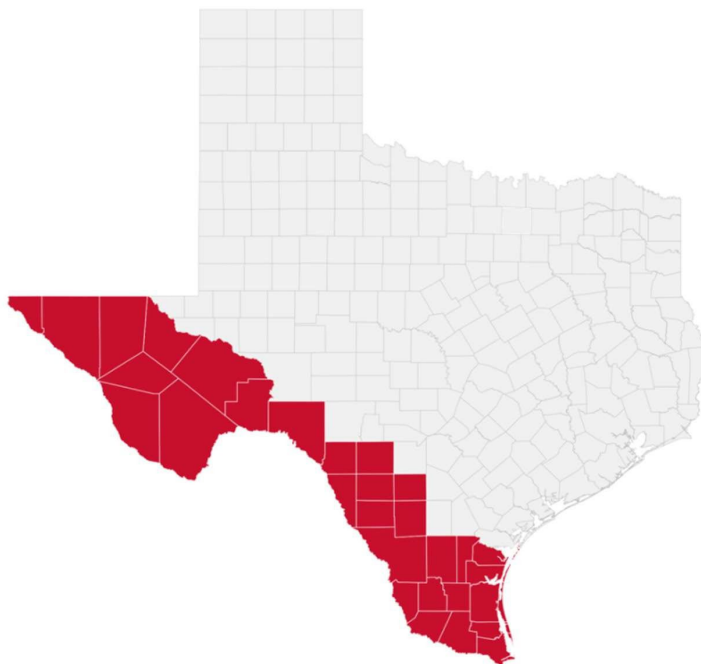
The first part worked; the second did not. By 2010, the estimated undocumented population had increased to more than ten million.

Meanwhile, the Texas economy transitioned into an era of growth no longer driven by oil and gas prices. This “economic miracle” created millions of jobs, many of them filled by Latinos emigrating to Texas and native-born Hispanics entering the workforce. Between 1990 and 2010, Texas gained eight million residents, with more than 60% of the growth accounted for by Hispanics. The Hispanic surge leveled off after 2010, but Latino population gains still accounted for roughly half of the state’s population increase from 2010-2020.

B. Hispanic growth has shifted from South Texas and the border to the major metro areas

The Rio Grande has marked the border between the United States and Mexico since 1848. For decades, the thinly populated border was porous, and Latinos moved back and forth with relative ease. Political instability in Mexico after 1900 triggered a surge into South Texas. This was partly reversed in the 1930s, when nativists falsely blamed Mexican immigrants for Depression-era job losses, prompting a major deportation program. That policy was abruptly reversed when mobilization for World War II created a huge demand for additional workers, many of whom came from the Republic of Mexico. The U.S. Census did not count “Hispanic” persons before 1970, but the majority of Latinos in Texas resided in the counties along the border and in South Texas, as shown in the map below.

South Texas/Border Counties with Hispanic Majorities



This changed after World War II. Job growth exploded in the big cities. Hispanics, both native Texans and newcomers, moved to Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth—and later to— Austin and San Antonio. Table 2 on page 4 shows the shift from South Texas and the border to the “Texas Triangle.” In 1980, about 38% of Texas Hispanics resided in the 30 South Texas/border counties, compared to 44% in the 30 counties of the Texas Triangle. By 2020, the Triangle counties accounted for 61% of the Latino population while less than 24% resided in the traditional area of Hispanic settlement.

Table 2: Tracking Hispanic Population Growth in Texas: 1980-2020

Year	Total	South Texas/Border		Texas Triangle Metros		Rest of Texas	
1980	2,988	1,138	38.1%	1,312	43.9%	535	17.9%
2000	6,670	1,998	30.0%	3,629	54.4%	1,043	15.6%
2010	9,461	2,519	26.6%	5,504	58.2%	1,438	15.2%
2020	11,442	2,714	23.7%	6,972	60.9%	1,756	15.4%

Source: U.S. Census. Population data are in thousands.

C. Despite a number of wealthy Hispanics in Texas and a sizeable middle class, the state’s Latino population lags behind Anglos on key socioeconomic measures and there is a huge gap in success at the ballot box

When V.O. Key Jr. was writing about Texans of Mexican origin in the 1940s, the overwhelming majority were poor, lagged far behind Anglos in formal education, and were politically marginalized. In the 21st century, some things are different. Texas now has very wealthy Hispanics, such as Tony Sanchez, a banker and energy executive whose family roots in Laredo go back to the 1700s. He spent more than \$60 million of his own money in a 2002 gubernatorial bid, securing the Democratic nomination but losing the general election to incumbent Rick Perry by 18 percentage points. A sizeable and growing Hispanic middle class has emerged, and Latino college enrollments have soared. The University of Texas at Austin reports 25.2% of its current students are Hispanic. Texas A&M is close behind at 23%.

Nevertheless, as an article in *The Texas Tribune* pointed out:

“Hispanics living in Texas are disproportionately poor. Hispanic Texans are twice as likely as white Texans to be living below the poverty level and less than half as likely to have graduated from college with BA degrees or higher. Recent estimates show 95% of white adults in Texas have at least a high school diploma, compared to

70% of Hispanic adults. Hispanics are far back on income: The median income in 2021 was \$81,384 for a white household, but just \$54,857 for a Hispanic household.”²

Hispanics are also disadvantaged in the political arena. While Hispanics account for 40% of Texas’ population, their political influence is reduced by a combination of factors.

- They are, on average, younger than other Texans, and a larger share of voting-age Latinos are not US citizens. As a result, the Hispanic citizen voting-age population (CVAP) is about 33% of the state’s total.
- A recent study by the Kinder Institute at Rice University found that only 63% of Hispanic adult citizens are registered to vote, compared with 79% of Anglo CVAP. Black and Asian American adults also register at higher rates. This results in Latinos accounting for only about 26% of the state’s 18.6 million registered voters.
- Registered Hispanic voters typically turn out at lower levels than Anglos and Black Texans. In the 2024 general election, for example, Hispanics accounted for just 18% of the total state vote.
- Hispanics cast less than 10% of Republican primary votes. This is of great importance because GOP nominees have won every statewide office since 1994.
- Finally, Hispanics have had little influence in the processes governing voter registration, election rules, and drawing the lines of congressional and state legislative districts.

The consequences of these factors are evident in the following examples.

There were six general elections in Texas from November 2014 to November 2024. By my count, 65 statewide offices were on the ballot in these elections. Sixty-one (94%) were won by Anglo candidates. Of the remaining four, three were won by Ted Cruz. Senator Cruz, the son of a Cuban refugee father and an Irish American mother from Baltimore, has never associated himself with the largely Mexican-American Hispanic population in Texas. Cruz lost the Latino vote to Beto O’Rourke in 2018 and Colin Allred in 2024 by large margins. The one Mexican-American successful statewide candidate in this decade was Eva Guzman, elected to the Texas Supreme Court in 2016. In 2022, Ms. Guzman left the court to run against Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton in the Republican primary. She finished fourth.

² Ura, Alexa, “Hispanics officially make up the biggest share of Texas’ population, new census numbers show,” *The Texas Tribune*, June 21, 2023.

There are 38 congressional districts in Texas. Federal courts require U.S. House districts to be exactly equal in population—not in citizens or registered voters, but in persons of all ages—which should be a boon to 11,441,707 Hispanics counted by the 2020 Census. However, under the current map drawn by the 2021 Texas Legislature, Anglos, with 40% of the population, dominate 66% of the districts, compared to 21% for Hispanics, 8% for Blacks, with 5% controlled by a coalition of minority voters.

The lack of political power of Texas Latinos was dramatically evident in July 2025. President Trump demanded that Texas Republicans produce five new GOP seats; a tall order. The 2021 congressional map had been carefully crafted to protect 25 GOP seats, conceding 13 to the Democrats. Governor Greg Abbott and the Republican-controlled legislature complied – and were sued by several plaintiffs.³ To reduce Democratic voter-controlled districts from 13 to eight required eviscerating minority-controlled districts in metropolitan Texas and radical surgery in the lower Rio Grande Valley.

Hispanics were the big losers. District 29, in Harris County, which had elected candidates supported by Latino voters for 32 years, was split, forcing Congressmember Sylvia Garcia to run either in a district where the Democratic primary would have a majority of Black voters, or follow the majority of her current voters and file in another district where conservative white voters gave Donald Trump a 20-point victory in 2024. District 35, which had combined Austin and San Antonio Latino voters in another effective district for Hispanic voters, had its Travis County voters removed and replaced by three Anglo-dominated counties. District 34 in South Texas swapped heavily Hispanic parts of Hidalgo County for Anglo-dominated parts of Nueces County.

This map, if confirmed by a federal panel hearing the case, will reduce Hispanic voter opportunity districts from eight to six, fewer than Latino voters controlled in 2000. Ironically, all nine congressional seats that Texas gained since the 2000 census have resulted from Latino population growth. Will Republicans pay a price for this? The 2026 elections will be the first test.

II. Hispanics and partisan voting in Texas: Trump makes large gains with Latinos in 2024, but a backlash appears to be building

A. South Texas and the border

³ I am an expert witness in this litigation, testifying on behalf of Black congressional members Al Green (9th District) and Jasmine Crockett (30th District).

Donald Trump is a consequential president. Over the last decade, he has shifted the Republican Party from a mostly white, middle- and upper-income base to more of a working-class party with increasing minority support. Republicans lost ground with college-educated voters but offset these losses with the remaining 60 percent of the electorate without college degrees.

Gains among Hispanic voters, nationally and in Texas, have been a key part of this realignment. The shift is most evident in the majority-Hispanic counties along the border and in South Texas. They are the poorest and lowest in formal education of the 3,100 counties in the United States. Table 3 tracks the two-party vote in these counties from 2000 to 2024 on page 8. While Texas had become a solidly “red” state by 2000, Democrats remained the majority party in this part of the state. However, the belief that South Texas and the border have been a solidly Democratic area in the 21st century is not true. George W. Bush came close to splitting the region’s vote in his 2004 reelection as did Governor Rick Perry in 2006.⁴ In 2008, however, Barack Obama ran far ahead of the 2000 and 2004 Democratic nominees. South Texas was also the only area in the country where Obama increased his vote share and margin of victory in 2012 compared to 2008.

Donald Trump’s candidacy in 2016 produced a further Democratic surge in this part of Texas. Hillary Clinton got 67% of the two-party vote, with a margin of almost 250,000 votes. This was matched by Beto O’Rourke in the 2018 midterm election. However, in 2020, President Trump increased his vote total by 143,341 and his share of the two-party vote by 8.5 percent. He did even better in 2024, gaining 70,000 votes compared to 2020, while Kamala Harris got 100,000 fewer votes than Joe Biden received four years earlier. Trump carried the South Texas/border counties, something no Republican candidate had done since Reconstruction.

⁴ It is important to keep in mind that there is a significant Anglo minority in these counties that usually accounts for about 25% of the region’s vote. These voters are much more supportive of Republican candidates than local Hispanics so estimates of the Democratic share of Latino vote must be adjusted accordingly. In 2016, for example, adjusting for very strong Anglo support for Donald Trump suggests Hillary Clinton got over 80% of the Hispanic vote. Even in 2024, when Trump narrowly carried the border and South Texas counties, he lost the Hispanic vote—probably by about a 56% to 44% margin.

Table 3: Two-Party Vote in Presidential and Other Elections in South Texas and Border Counties: 2000-2024

Year	Office	Two-Party Vote			
		Republican	Democrat	Dem %	Dem Margin
2000	President	230,438	303,189	56.8	+ 72,751
2002	Governor	137,020	263,733	65.8	+ 126,713
2004	President	289,806	317,562	52.3	+ 27,756
2006	Governor	109,311	125,041	53.4	+ 15,730
2008	President	234,527	411,786	63.6	+ 177,259
2010	Governor	138,025	216,388	61.1	+ 78,363
2012	President	220,500	413,820	65.2	+ 193,320
2014	Governor	138,938	196,935	58.6	+ 57,997
2016	President	241,622	489,151	66.9	+ 247,529
2018	Governor	226,092	446,969	66.4	+ 220,877
2020	President	384,963	540,081	58.4	+ 155,118
2022	Governor	260,843	342,818	56.8	+ 81,975
2024	President	454,817	441,012	49.2	- 13,805
	U.S. Senate	397,951	446,969	53.4	+ 49,018
	U.S. House	418,252	452,252	51.2	+ 34,000

Source: Office of Texas Secretary of State.

B. *The Texas Triangle*

Most Texas Hispanics now live in large metropolitan areas hundreds of miles from the border. Because Latinos are less concentrated in these areas, it is more difficult to track their partisan voting patterns since 2000. One way to measure this is by focusing on the most heavily Hispanic legislative district in Harris County. Table 4 summarizes the two-party vote in presidential and other major contests from 2000 to 2024 in Texas House District 140, which had a Hispanic voting-age population of 79.6% in 2020.

Table 4: Partisan Voting in Harris County’s 140th State Representative District: 2000-2004

Year	Office	Two-Party Vote			
		Republican	Democrat	Dem %	Dem Margin
2000	President	9,704	14,727	60.2	+ 5,023
2002	Governor	4,848	10,280	68.0	+ 5,432
2004	President	10,235	14,089	57.9	+ 3,854
2006	Governor	2,805	5,339	65.6	+ 2,534
2008	President	7,783	15,740	66.9	+ 7,957
2010	Governor	4,021	10,713	72.8	+ 6,692
2012	President	6,670	16,892	71.7	+ 10,222
2014	Governor	3,747	7,744	67.4	+ 3,997
2016	President	5,928	20,872	77.9	+ 14,944
2018	Governor	5,031	18,291	78.4	+ 13,260
2020	President	10,141	22,857	69.3	+ 12,716
2022	Governor	6,220	13,315	68.2	+ 7,095
2024	President	12,246	17,761	59.2	+ 5,515
	U.S. Senate	10,075	18,886	65.2	+ 8,811
	U.S. House	10,274	18,575	64.4	+ 8,301

Source: Archives, Harris Votes website, Office of Harris County Clerk

These data mirror what we saw in Table 3. District 140 consistently delivered Democratic majorities in presidential and other major elections, even as Republicans won all these contests statewide. As in South Texas, Donald Trump in 2016 was the weakest Republican candidate in decades, losing the two-party vote in District 140 to Hillary Clinton by 56 points. Beto O’Rourke led Ted Cruz by the same margin in the 2018 Senate race. However, President Trump improved his vote share by 10 points in 2020 compared with 2016 and added another nine points in 2024. The net Democratic presidential vote margin in District 140 was reduced from about 15,000 in 2016 to 5,500 in 2024.

C. Statewide, Trump’s gains with Latino voters accounted for moving Texas from being increasingly competitive in presidential elections to solidly red in 2024

After George W. Bush’s blowout presidential victories in his home state (+21.3% in 2000 and +22.9% in 2004), Democrats were heartened by their improved performance in subsequent

elections. Mitt Romney beat Barack Obama in Texas by 16 percentage points in 2012, but Hillary Clinton lost to Donald Trump by just 9 percentage points. Four years later, Joe Biden cut that to 5.6 percentage points in 2020. With Texas' minority populations surging, it seemed possible that Texas would follow Georgia and become a battleground state in 2024.

That did not happen. Donald Trump beat Vice President Harris by 13.7 percentage points in Texas. The biggest factor in Harris' loss was her poor performance with Hispanic Texans. She lost the border and South Texas counties where Democrats typically post solid margins and ran well behind previous Democratic nominees in Hispanic precincts in metropolitan areas. Joe Biden lost Texas in 2020 by about 630,000 votes, Harris lost by 1,560,000 votes, a difference of 928,000. Latinos accounted for about 60% of that swing.

D. Evidence points to a post-election backlash among Texas Hispanics

Nine months into the second term, there are signs Trump's newfound support among Texans generally—and Latinos specifically—is fraying. Despite his big Texas win in November 2024, early signs of buyers' remorse quickly surfaced. An April 2025 UT Austin poll report opened with the topline:

“After a brief post-election honeymoon in Texas, President Donald J. Trump's job approval ratings have fallen back to levels found during his first term in office as Texans' widespread economic concerns persist amidst the President's ongoing trade war, according to a new University of Texas / Texas Project Poll. With 47% of Texas voters approving of the job he is doing as President and 46% disapproving. Trump remains in net-positive territory, though only barely.”⁶

A LULAC poll conducted at the same time showed President Trump was viewed unfavorably by 66% of Texas registered Latino voters, and 8% of Latinos who had voted for Trump said they would change their vote if given the chance.⁷ Aggressive ICE raids have added to economic concerns, further eroding Latino support for the new administration. The Republican mayor of McAllen, a border city, told a reporter for *The New Yorker* magazine, “we're shooting ourselves in the foot.”⁸

⁶ Henson, James, and Joshua Blank. “New UT/Texas Project Poll: Economic Uncertainty Hurts Trump Ratings in Texas, Looms Over the Legislature.” *University of Texas/Texas Politics Project*, May 6, 2025, p. 1.

⁷ Karlis, Michael. “Recession, Immigration Fears Erode Latino Support for Trump in Texas, Poll Finds.” *San Antonio Current*, April 30, 2025.

⁸ Monroe, Rachel. “Is the Hispanic Red Wave for Donald Trump Starting to Crash?” *The New Yorker*, July 7, 2025.

The Hobby School of Public Affairs recently released a [statewide poll](#) on the Trump administration and immigration policies. The September 19 – October 1 survey found Trump had lost ground with his November 2024 voters in all 15 subgroups analyzed. In some cases (Republicans, Blacks, older voters), the declines were small, but the President lost 12% among Latinos, a decline exceeded only among Gen-Z and Independents. The poll found that while Texas voters were evenly divided on the Trump administration's approach to immigration (51% approved, 49% disapproved), only 42% of Latino voters approved, compared with 58% who disapproved. Additionally, 57% of Latinos thought the administration's immigration policies would make the economy weaker, versus 32% who thought they would strengthen it.

These polls, coupled with the election data since 2000, document the instability of the Latino vote in 21st-century Texas. Anglo and Black voters in Texas have been pretty consistent in their partisan choices, while Latinos are much less predictable. Hillary Clinton crushed Donald Trump with Hispanics in 2016. Kamala Harris managed a bare majority in 2024. Now, polls show the Democratic nominee would win Texas Latinos by a comfortable margin. Since the Hispanic vote share is both increasing and becoming more volatile from one election to another, it will be one of the most important keys in coming Texas elections, starting with the 2026 midterm.

E. Looking ahead to November 2026 in Texas

The midterm elections are a year away, but three developments in 2025 point to the most competitive General Election in Texas since 1998.

- First, the declining support for President Trump and his signature economic and immigration policies in the state. These are policies that majorities of Hispanic Texans increasingly oppose. Midterm elections usually go badly for the party of lame-duck incumbents; 2026 looks more and more like it will fit that pattern.
- Second, the demand by President Trump in July 2025 that Texas quickly adopt a new congressional map to produce five more Republican congressional seats on top of the existing 25-13 GOP advantage. The resulting map greatly reduces Hispanic voter opportunities in Texas, especially in the big metropolitan areas of Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, and Austin, where most Hispanic voters reside. The DC map-drawer who crafted this aggressive gerrymander assumed Republican strength with Hispanic voters in November 2024 can be relied on in 2026. That is a risky bet, especially given how poorly Latinos fared under the new map.
- Third, the 2026 midterm will feature a bitter GOP Senate primary. Four-term incumbent Senator John Cornyn, never a favorite of MAGA Republicans, has drawn two serious

opponents which will likely result in a drawn-out, expensive, and bitter runoff next year. If the Democrats can unite behind a candidate (not assured by any means), and match or exceed the campaign funds raised by Beto O'Rourke in 2018 against Senator Ted Cruz (likely, in my opinion), that candidate would give the minority party nominee the best opportunity to win a statewide office since 1994. For that to happen, in my opinion, the Democratic Party and its nominees for statewide office are going to have to both invest major resources in Latino communities and craft a message that resonates with voters disillusioned lately with both parties.

III. Why Texas Hispanics can assume a critical role in national elections

In the 1976 presidential election, about half the American states were competitive in the Ford-Carter contest. In the last three presidential elections, that number has shrunk to seven. Three of those seven are Rust Belt states—Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Kamala Harris lost all three of these supposed parts of the “Blue Wall”. Republican future prospects look good in these states given the partisan realignment of the Trump era. They have older populations, low percentages of college-educated adults, and most of their working-class voters are white. Democrats have remained nationally competitive by making Sunbelt gains in Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona, and Nevada but if the Blue Wall turns red, the Democrats face a structural deficit in the Electoral College. Even if they win a national popular vote majority ala Clinton in 2016, getting 270+ electoral votes will be much more difficult without these Upper Midwest states.

Of course, the national election map does shift. California, the buckle of the Reagan Sunbelt coalition in the 1980s, is now visited by presidential Republicans only to raise money. Virginia and Colorado were battleground states—now they lean blue. Ohio, Iowa, and Florida, previously swing states, have turned red.

In my opinion, Texas represents the Democrats’ best opportunity to counter their dimming prospects in the Upper Midwest. Why? V.O. Key’s “Mexicans.” An August 2025 memo circulated by Doug Sosnik, a former senior advisor to Bill and Hillary Clinton, stressed how much education polarization has reshaped American politics in the Age of Trump.⁹ Kamala Harris captured 14 of the 15 most college-educated states, losing only Utah. Trump carried 14 of the 15 least college-educated states. His only loss was New Mexico, the state with the highest percentage of Latino voters in the country. Of the other four southwestern states carved from Mexican territory ceded to the United States in the 1800s, only Texas remains deeply red in 2025. California is dark blue, while Arizona and Nevada are new members of the small swing-state club.

⁹ The memo is reviewed in “How Trump Is Fueling the Most Important Trend in American Politics,” by Calder McHugh, *Politico Magazine*, August 8, 2025.

Texas' exceptionalism among the southwestern states has several causes. It alone was founded by white slaveholders, whose leaders eagerly joined the Confederacy and remained a linchpin of the Jim Crow Solid South for a century after the Civil War. The oil and gas industry—arguably the most conservative sector of American business—continues to wield enormous influence in the Lone Star State. Texas also has the highest percentage of Evangelical Christians among the ten most populous states, a group that is a vital part of the Trump coalition. The state's minorities were also effectively marginalized by Anglo Democrats for most of the 20th century. Now MAGA Republicans rule Texas with little regard for minority political interests.

However, MAGA white voter dominance is threatened by demographics. Texas' Anglo population has fallen below 40 percent and will almost certainly continue to decline. The same is true, although at a slower pace, for the white share of the electorate, which is now about 55%. Additionally, Anglos moving to Texas from other states are disproportionately college-educated and less Trumpian than native whites. Black residents of other states are also moving to metropolitan Texas, and most remain overwhelmingly Democratic in partisanship. The fastest-growing demographic is Asian Americans, who are diverse culturally and politically, but much less Republican than their suburban neighbors in places like Collin and Fort Bend Counties.

Turning to Latinos—the subject of this letter—Hispanic voters lean Democratic, but as Texas' most economically vulnerable population, they swing back and forth with greater velocity than other groups. In 2016 and 2018 they rallied to Hillary Clinton and Beto O'Rourke, then moved toward Trump in 2020 and in 2024. Recent polls indicate growing dissatisfaction with President Trump and Texas Republicans. That does not mean Latinos will a) turn out in the 2026 midterm election or b) vote Democratic. That is contingent on many factors, most notably how the economy performs for lower middle- and working-class Texans, who make up the great majority of the state's Hispanic voters. Looking beyond 2026, there is a real opportunity for Democrats to change the Electoral College map by nominating presidential candidates in 2028 and thereafter who appeal to Latinos in Texas and the other southwestern states.

In closing, I stress a primary reason Democrats should pay more attention to Texas as opposed to trying to reverse their losses in states like Michigan and Ohio. In contrast to those Upper Midwest states, Texas has a relatively small white population that is not college-educated. The surge in Hispanic growth between 1986 and 2010 saw Latinos replace blue-collar whites in large segments of the Texas economy. When I arrived in Houston in 1966, about 100 of the 330 voting precincts in Harris County were dominated by white working-class voters. Today, there are 1,172 voting precincts in Harris County. Perhaps two dozen would have a majority of working-class Anglo voters.

This means making Texas a battleground state does not require regaining ground with white working-class voters, who are, in my opinion, likely to remain firmly MAGA after Donald Trump leaves office. It does, however, require Democrats to do a far better job earning the voters of Hispanics in Texas than they did in 2020 and 2024.

The November newsletter will review the off-year elections scheduled for November 4 and their implications for the next year. Important contests in Texas include an open state Senate race in Tarrant County and the long-delayed election in Harris County to replace Congressman Sylvester Turner.

We'd love to hear your thoughts, questions, or perspectives on these issues. Reach out to us at murraytx@cougarnet.uh.edu; your input helps inform our work and keeps the conversation going.

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