7.3: Political Parties

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe political parties and what they do
- Differentiate political parties from interest groups
- Differentiate between the party in the electorate and the party organization
- Discuss the importance of voting in a political party organization
- Describe party organization at the county, state, and national levels
- Compare the perspectives of the party in government and the party in the electorate
- Understand the cultural background of Texas’ political parties
- Understand the historical dominance of the Democratic Party in Texas
- Understand the rise of the Republican Party in Texas
- Understand the current dominance of the Republican Party in Texas
- Think about what the future holds for party politics in Texas

At some point, most of us have found ourselves part of a group trying to solve a problem, like picking a restaurant or movie to attend, or completing a big project at school or work. Members of the group probably had various opinions about what should be done. Some may have even refused to help make the decision or to follow it once it had been made. Still others may have been willing to follow along but were less interested in contributing to a workable solution. Because of this disagreement, at some point, someone in the group had to find a way to make a decision, negotiate a compromise, and ultimately do the work needed for the group to accomplish its goals.
This kind of collective action problem is very common in societies, as groups and entire societies try to solve problems or distribute scarce resources. In modern U.S. politics, such problems are usually solved by two important types of organizations: interest groups and political parties. There are many interest groups, all with opinions about what should be done and a desire to influence policy. Because they are usually not officially affiliated with any political party, they generally have no trouble working with either of the major parties. But at some point, a society must find a way of taking all these opinions and turning them into solutions to real problems. That is where political parties come in. Essentially, political parties are groups of people with similar interests who work together to create and implement policies. They do this by gaining control over the government by winning elections. Party platforms guide members of Congress in drafting legislation. Parties guide proposed laws through Congress and inform party members how they should vote on important issues. Political parties also nominate candidates to run for state government, Congress, and the presidency. Finally, they coordinate political campaigns and mobilize voters.

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**Political Parties as Unique Organizations**

The party platform adopted at the first national convention of the Progressive Party in 1912. Among other items, this platform called for disclosure requirements for campaign contributions, an eight-hour workday, a federal income tax, and women's suffrage.

In *Federalist* No. 10, written in the late eighteenth century, James Madison noted that the formation of self-interested
groups, which he called factions, was inevitable in any society, as individuals started to work together to protect themselves from the government. Interest groups and political parties are two of the most easily identified forms of factions in the United States. These groups are similar in that they are both mediating institutions responsible for communicating public preferences to the government. They are not themselves government institutions in a formal sense. Neither is directly mentioned in the U.S. Constitution nor do they have any real, legal authority to influence policy. But whereas interest groups often work indirectly to influence our leaders, political parties are organizations that try to directly influence public policy through its members who seek to win and hold public office. Parties accomplish this by identifying and aligning sets of issues that are important to voters in the hopes of gaining support during elections; their positions on these critical issues are often presented in documents known as a party platform, which is adopted at each party’s presidential nominating convention every four years. If successful, a party can create a large enough electoral coalition to gain control of the government. Once in power, the party is then able to deliver, to its voters and elites, the policy preferences they choose by electing its partisans to the government. In this respect, parties provide choices to the electorate, something they are doing that is in such sharp contrast to their opposition.

Winning elections and implementing policy would be hard enough in simple political systems, but in a country as complex as the United States, political parties must take on great responsibilities to win elections and coordinate behavior across the many local, state, and national governing bodies. Indeed, political differences between states and local areas can contribute much complexity. If a party stakes out issue positions on which few people agree and therefore builds too narrow a coalition of voter support, that party may find itself marginalized. But if the party takes too broad a position on issues, it might find itself in a situation where the members of the party disagree with one another, making it difficult to pass legislation, even if the party can secure victory.

It should come as no surprise that the story of U.S. political parties largely mirrors the story of the United States itself. The United States has seen sweeping changes to its size, its relative power, and its social and demographic composition. These changes have been mirrored by the political parties as they have sought to shift their coalitions to establish and maintain power across the nation and as party leadership has changed. As you will learn later, this also means that the structure and behavior of modern parties largely parallel the social, demographic, and geographic divisions within the United States today. To understand how this has happened, we look at the origins of the U.S. party system.

The Party-in-the-Electorate

A key fact about the U.S. political party system is that it’s all about the votes. If voters do not show up to vote for a party’s candidates on Election Day, the party has no chance of gaining office and implementing its preferred policies. As we have seen, for much of their history, the two parties have been adapting to changes in the size, composition, and preferences of the U.S. electorate. It only makes sense, then, that parties have found it in their interest to build a permanent and stable presence among the voters. By fostering a sense of loyalty, a party can insulate itself from changes in the system and improve its odds of winning elections. The party-in-the-electorate are those members of the voting public who consider themselves to be part of a political party and/or who consistently prefer the candidates of one party over the other.

What it means to be part of a party depends on where a voter lives and how much he or she chooses to participate in politics. At its most basic level, being a member of the party-in-the-electorate simply means a voter is more likely to
voice support for a party. These voters are often called party identifiers, since they usually represent themselves in public as being members of a party, and they may attend some party events or functions. Party identifiers are also more likely to provide financial support for the candidates of their party during election season. This does not mean self-identified Democrats will support all the party’s positions or candidates, but it does mean that, on the whole, they feel their wants or needs are more likely to be met if the Democratic Party is successful.

Party identifiers make up the majority of the voting public. Gallup, the polling agency, has been collecting data on voter preferences for the past several decades. Its research suggests that historically, over half of American adults have called themselves “Republican” or “Democrat” when asked how they identify themselves politically. Even among self-proclaimed independents, the overwhelming majority claim to lean in the direction of one party or the other, suggesting they behave as if they identified with a party during elections even if they preferred not to publicly pick a side. Partisan support is so strong that, in a poll conducted from August 5 to August 9, 2015, about 88 percent of respondents said they either identified with or, if they were independents, at least leaned toward one of the major political parties.\[16\]

Thus, in a poll conducted in January 2016, even though about 42 percent of respondents said they were independent, this does not mean that they are not, in fact, more likely to favor one party over the other.\[17\]

As the chart reveals, generation affects party identification. Millennials (ages 18–34) are more likely to identify as or lean towards the Democratic Party and less likely to favor Republicans than are their baby boomer parents and grandparents (born between 1946 and 1964).

Strictly speaking, party identification is not quite the same thing as party membership. People may call themselves Republicans or Democrats without being registered as a member of the party, and the Republican and Democratic parties do not require individuals to join their formal organization in the same way that parties in some other countries do. Many states require voters to declare a party affiliation before participating in primaries, but primary participation is
irregular and infrequent, and a voter may change his or her identity long before changing party registration. For most voters, party identification is informal at best and often matters only in the weeks before an election. It does matter, however, because party identification guides some voters, who may know little about a particular issue or candidate, in casting their ballots. If, for example, someone thinks of him- or herself as a Republican and always votes Republican, he or she will not be confused when faced with a candidate, perhaps in a local or county election, whose name is unfamiliar. If the candidate is a Republican, the voter will likely cast a ballot for him or her.

Party ties can manifest in other ways as well. The actual act of registering to vote and selecting a party reinforces party loyalty. Moreover, while pundits and scholars often deride voters who blindly vote their party, the selection of a party in the first place can be based on issue positions and ideology. In that regard, voting your party on Election Day is not a blind act—it is a shortcut based on issue positions.

The Party Organization

A significant subset of American voters views their party identification as something far beyond simply a shortcut to voting. These individuals get more energized by the political process and have chosen to become more active in the life of political parties. They are part of what is known as the party organization. The party organization is the formal structure of the political party, and its active members are responsible for coordinating party behavior and supporting party candidates. It is a vital component of any successful party because it bears most of the responsibility for building and maintaining the party “brand.” It also plays a key role in helping select, and elect, candidates for public office.

Local Organizations

Since winning elections is the first goal of the political party, it makes sense that the formal party organization mirrors the local-state-federal structure of the U.S. political system. While the lowest level of party organization is technically the precinct, many of the operational responsibilities for local elections fall upon the county-level organization. The county-level organization is in many ways the workhorse of the party system, especially around election time. This level of organization frequently takes on many of the most basic responsibilities of a democratic system, including identifying and mobilizing potential voters and donors, identifying and training potential candidates for public office, and recruiting new members for the party. County organizations are also often responsible for finding rank and file members to serve as volunteers on Election Day, either as officials responsible for operating the polls or as monitors responsible for ensuring that elections are conducted honestly and fairly. They may also hold regular meetings to provide members the opportunity to meet potential candidates and coordinate strategy. Of course, all this is voluntary and relies on dedicated party members being willing to pitch in to run the party.
Political parties are bottom-up structures, with lower levels often responsible for selecting delegates to higher-level offices or conventions.

**State Organizations**

Most of the county organizations’ formal efforts are devoted to supporting party candidates running for county and city offices. But a fair amount of political power is held by individuals in statewide office or in state-level legislative or judicial bodies. While the county-level offices may be active in these local competitions, most of the coordination for them will take place in the state-level organizations. Like their more local counterparts, state-level organizations are responsible for key party functions, such as statewide candidate recruitment and campaign mobilization. Most of their efforts focus on electing high-ranking officials such as the governor or occupants of other statewide offices (e.g., the state’s treasurer or attorney general) as well as candidates to represent the state and its residents in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. The greater value of state- and national-level offices requires state organizations to take on several key responsibilities in the life of the party.

First, state-level organizations usually accept greater fundraising responsibilities than do their local counterparts. Statewide races and races for national office have become increasingly expensive in recent years. The average cost of a successful House campaign was $1.2 million in 2014; for Senate races, it was $8.6 million. While individual candidates are responsible for funding and running their own races, it is typically up to the state-level organization to coordinate giving across multiple races and to develop the staffing expertise that these candidates will draw upon at election time.
State organizations are also responsible for creating a sense of unity among members of the state party. Building unity can be very important as the party transitions from sometimes-contentious nomination battles to the all-important general election. The state organization uses several key tools to get its members working together towards a common goal. First, it helps the party’s candidates prepare for state primary elections or caucuses that allow voters to choose a nominee to run for public office at either the state or national level. Caucuses are a form of town hall meeting at which voters in a precinct get together to voice their preferences, rather than voting individually throughout the day.

Caucus-goers gather at a Democratic precinct caucus on January 3, 2008, in Iowa City, Iowa. Caucuses are held every two years in more than 1650 Iowa precincts.

Second, the state organization is also responsible for drafting a state platform that serves as a policy guide for partisans who are eventually selected to public office. These platforms are usually the result of a negotiation between the various coalitions within the party and are designed to ensure that everyone in the party will receive some benefits if their candidates win the election. Finally, state organizations hold a statewide convention at which delegates from the various county organizations come together to discuss the needs of their areas. The state conventions are also responsible for selecting delegates to the national convention.

**National Party Organization**

The local and state-level party organizations are the workhorses of the political process. They take on most of the responsibility for party activities and are easily the most active participants in the party formation and electoral processes. They are also largely invisible to most voters. The average citizen knows very little of the local party’s behavior unless there is a phone call or a knock on the door in the days or weeks before an election. The same is largely true of the activities of the state-level party. Typically, the only people who notice are those who are already actively engaged in politics or are being targeted for donations.

But most people are aware of the presence and activity of the national party organizations for several reasons. First, many Americans, especially young people, are more interested in the topics discussed at the national level than at the state or local level. According to John Green of the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics, “Local elections tend to be about things like sewers, and roads and police protection—which are not as dramatic an issue as same-sex marriage or global warming or international affairs.”[19]

Presidential elections and the behavior of the U.S. Congress are also far more likely to make the news broadcasts than the activities of county commissioners, and the national-level party organization is mostly responsible for coordinating the activities of participants at this level. The national party is a fundraising army for presidential candidates and also...
serves a key role in trying to coordinate and direct the efforts of the House and Senate. For this reason, its leadership is far more likely to become visible to media consumers, whether they intend to vote or not.

A second reason for the prominence of the national organization is that it usually coordinates the grandest spectacles in the life of a political party. Most voters are never aware of the numerous county-level meetings or coordinating activities. Primary elections, one of the most important events to take place at the state level, have a much lower turnout than the nationwide general election. In 2012, for example, only one-third of the eligible voters in New Hampshire voted in the state’s primary, one of the earliest and thus most important in the nation; however, 70 percent of eligible voters in the state voted in the general election in November 2012.

People may see or read an occasional story about the meetings of the state committees or convention but pay little attention. But the national conventions, organized and sponsored by the national-level party, can dominate the national discussion for several weeks in late summer, a time when the major media outlets are often searching for news. These conventions are the definition of a media circus at which high-ranking politicians, party elites, and sometimes celebrities, such as actor/director Clint Eastwood, along with individuals many consider to be the future leaders of the party are brought before the public so the party can make its best case for being the one to direct the future of the country.

National party conventions culminate in the formal nomination of the party nominees for the offices of president and vice president, and they mark the official beginning of the presidential competition between the two parties.

In August 2012, Clint Eastwood—actor, director, and former mayor of Carmel-by-the-Sea, California—spoke at the Republican National Convention accompanied by an empty chair representing the Democratic incumbent president Barack Obama.

In the past, national conventions were often the sites of high drama and political intrigue. As late as 1968, the identities of the presidential and/or vice-presidential nominees were still unknown to the general public when the convention opened. It was also common for groups protesting key events and issues of the day to try to raise their profile by using the conventions to gain the media spotlight. National media outlets would provide “gavel to gavel” coverage of the conventions, and the relatively limited number of national broadcast channels meant most viewers were essentially forced to choose between following the conventions or checking out of the media altogether. Much has changed since
the 1960s, however, and between 1960 and 2004, viewership of both the Democratic National Convention and the Republican National Convention had declined by half.[22]

National conventions are not the spectacles they once were, and this fact is almost certainly having an impact on the profile of the national party organization. Both parties have come to recognize the value of the convention as a medium through which they can communicate to the average viewer. To ensure that they are viewed in the best possible light, the parties have worked hard to turn the public face of the convention into a highly sanitized, highly orchestrated media event. Speakers are often required to have their speeches prescreened to ensure that they do not deviate from the party line or run the risk of embarrassing the eventual nominee—whose name has often been known by all for several months. And while protests still happen, party organizations have become increasingly adept at keeping protesters away from the convention sites, arguing that safety and security are more important than First Amendment rights to speech and peaceable assembly. For example, protestors were kept behind concrete barriers and fences at the Democratic National Convention in 2004.[23]

With the advent of cable TV news and the growth of internet blogging, the major news outlets have found it unnecessary to provide the same level of coverage they once did. Between 1976 and 1996, ABC and CBS cut their coverage of the nominating conventions from more than fifty hours to only five. NBC cut its coverage to fewer than five hours.[24] One reason may be that the outcome of nominating conventions are also typically known in advance, meaning there is no drama. Today, the nominee’s acceptance speech is expected to be no longer than an hour, so it will not take up more than one block of prime-time TV programming.

This is not to say the national conventions are no longer important, or that the national party organizations are becoming less relevant. The conventions, and the organizations that run them, still contribute heavily to a wide range of key decisions in the life of both parties. The national party platform is formally adopted at the convention, as are the key elements of the strategy for contesting the national campaign. And even though the media is paying less attention, key insiders and major donors often use the convention as a way of gauging the strength of the party and its ability to effectively organize and coordinate its members. They are also paying close attention to the rising stars who are given time at the convention’s podium, to see which are able to connect with the party faithful. Most observers credit Barack Obama’s speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention with bringing him to national prominence.[25]

The Party-in-Government

One of the first challenges facing the party-in-government, or the party identifiers who have been elected or appointed to hold public office, is to achieve their policy goals. The means to do this is chosen in meetings of the two major parties; Republican meetings are called party conferences and Democrat meetings are called party caucuses. Members of each party meet in these closed sessions and discuss what items to place on the legislative agenda and make decisions about which party members should serve on the committees that draft proposed laws. Party members also elect the leaders of their respective parties in the House and the Senate, and their party whips. Leaders serve as party managers and are the highest-ranking members of the party in each chamber of Congress. The party whip ensures that members are present when a piece of legislation is to be voted on and directs them how to vote. The whip is the second-highest ranking member of the party in each chamber. Thus, both the Republicans and the Democrats have a leader and a whip in the House, and a leader and a whip in the Senate. The leader and whip of the party that holds the majority of seats in
each house are known as the majority leader and the majority whip. The leader and whip of the party with fewer seats are called the minority leader and the minority whip. The party that controls the majority of seats in the House of Representatives also elects someone to serve as Speaker of the House. People elected to Congress as independents (that is, not members of either the Republican or Democratic parties) must choose a party to conference or caucus with. For example, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who ran for Senate as an independent candidate, caucuses with the Democrats in the Senate.

One problem facing the party-in-government relates to the design of the country’s political system. The U.S. government is based on a complex principle of separation of powers, with power divided among the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches. The system is further complicated by federalism, which relegates some powers to the states, which also have separation of powers. This complexity creates a number of problems for maintaining party unity. The biggest is that each level and unit of government has different constituencies that the office holder must satisfy. The person elected to the White House is more beholden to the national party organization than are members of the House or Senate, because members of Congress must be reelected by voters in very different states, each with its own state-level and county-level parties.

Some of this complexity is eased for the party that holds the executive branch of government. Executive offices are typically more visible to the voters than the legislature, in no small part because a single person holds the office. Voters are more likely to show up at the polls and vote if they feel strongly about the candidate running for president or governor, but they are also more likely to hold that person accountable for the government’s failures.[26]

Members of the legislature from the executive’s party are under a great deal of pressure to make the executive look good, because a popular president or governor may be able to help other party members win office. Even so, partisans in the legislature cannot be expected to simply obey the executive’s orders. First, legislators may serve a constituency that disagrees with the executive on key matters of policy. If the issue is important enough to voters, as in the case of gun control or abortion rights, an office holder may feel his or her job will be in jeopardy if he or she too closely follows the party line, even if that means disagreeing with the executive. A good example occurred when the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which desegregated public accommodations and prohibited discrimination in employment on the basis of race, was introduced in Congress. The bill was supported by Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, both of whom were Democrats. Nevertheless, many Republicans, such as William McCulloch, a conservative representative from Ohio, voted in its favor while many southern Democrats opposed it.[27]

A second challenge is that each house of the legislature has its own leadership and committee structure, and those leaders may not be in total harmony with the president. Key benefits like committee appointments, leadership positions, and money for important projects in their home district may hinge on legislators following the lead of the party. These pressures are particularly acute for the majority party, so named because it controls more than half the seats in one of the two chambers. The Speaker of the House and the Senate majority leader, the majority party’s congressional leaders, have significant tools at their disposal to punish party members who defect on a particular vote. Finally, a member of the minority party must occasionally work with the opposition on some issues in order to accomplish any of his or her constituency’s goals. This is especially the case in the Senate, which is a super-majority institution. Sixty votes (of the 100 possible) are required to get anything accomplished, because Senate rules allow individual members to block legislation via holds and filibusters. The only way to block the blocking is to invoke cloture, a procedure calling for a vote on an issue, which takes 60 votes.

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Cultural Background of Political Parties in Texas

The 19th-century culture of Texas was heavily influenced by the plantation culture of the Old South, dependent on African-American slave labor, as well as the patron system once prevalent (and still somewhat present) in northern Mexico and South Texas. In these societies, the government’s primary role was seen as being the preservation of social order. Solving of individual problems in society was seen as a local problem with the expectation that the individual with wealth should resolve his or her own issues.

Historical Dominance of the Democratic Party

From 1848 until Richard M. Nixon’s victory in 1972, Texas voted for the Democrat candidate for president in every election except 1928, when it did not support Catholic Al Smith. A full century of Democratic Governors stretched between the departure of Republican Governor E.J. Davis (1874) and the election of Republican William P. Clements (1979). The state had a white majority and Democrats re-established their dominance after the Civil War. In the mid-20th century 1952 and 1956 elections, the state voters joined the landslide for Dwight D. Eisenhower. (Texas did not vote in 1864 and 1868 due to the Civil War and Reconstruction).

In the post-Civil War era, two of the most important Republican figures in Texas were African Americans George T. Ruby and Norris Wright Cuney. Ruby was a black community organizer, director in the federal Freedmen’s Bureau, and leader of the Galveston Union League. His protégé Cuney was a mulatto whose wealthy, white planter father freed him and his siblings before the Civil War and arranged for his education in Pennsylvania. Cuney returned and settled in Galveston, where he became active in the Union League and the Republican party; he rose to the leadership of the party. He became influential in Galveston and Texas politics, and is widely regarded as one of the most influential black leaders in the South during the 19th century.

From 1902 through 1965, Texas had virtually disenfranchised most blacks and many Latinos and poor whites through imposition of the poll tax and white primaries. Across the South, Democrats controlled congressional apportionment based on total population, although they had disenfranchised the black population. The Solid South exercised tremendous power in Congress, and Democrats gained important committee chairmanships by seniority. They gained federal funding for infrastructure projects in their states and the region, as well as support for numerous military bases, as two examples of how they brought federal investment to the state and region.

In the post-Reconstruction era, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Republican Party became non-competitive in the South, due to Democrat-dominated legislatures’ disenfranchisement of blacks and many poor whites and Latinos. In Texas, the Democrat-dominated legislature excluded them through passage of a poll tax and white primary. As can be seen on the graph at the following link, voter turnout in Texas declined dramatically following these disenfranchisement measures, and Southern voting turnout was far below the national average.

Although blacks made up 20 percent of the state population at the turn of the century, they were essentially excluded from formal politics. Republican support in Texas had been based almost exclusively in the free black communities, particularly in Galveston, and in the so-called “German counties” – the rural Texas Hill Country inhabited by German immigrants and their descendants, who had opposed slavery in the antebellum period. The German counties continued to run Republican candidates. Harry M. Wurzbach was elected from the 14th district from 1920 to 1926, contesting and
finally winning the election of 1928, and being re-elected in 1930.

Some of the most important American political figures of the 20th century, such as President Lyndon B. Johnson, Vice-President John Nance Garner, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, and Senator Ralph Yarborough were Texas Democrats. But, the Texas Democrats were rarely united, being divided into conservative, moderate and liberal factions that vied with one another for power.

### Republicans Rising

Some analysts suggest that the rebirth of the Republican Party in Texas among white conservatives can be traced to 1952, when Democrat Governor Allan Shivers clashed with the Truman Administration over the federal claim on the Tideland. He worked to help Texas native General Dwight D. Eisenhower to carry the state. Eisenhower was generally highly respected due to his role as Commander of the Allies in World War II and was popular nationally, winning the election. Beginning in the late 1960s, Republican strength increased in Texas, particularly among residents of the expanding “country club suburbs” around Dallas and Houston. The election, to Congress, of Republicans such as John Tower (who had shifted from the Democrat Party) and George H. W. Bush in 1961 and 1966, respectively, reflected this trend. Nationally, outside of the South, Democrats supported the civil rights movement and achieved important passage of federal legislation in the mid-1960s. In the South, however, Democrat leaders had opposed changes to bring about black voting or desegregated schools and public facilities and in many places exercised resistance. Following passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, southern white Democrats began to leave the party and join the Republicans, a movement accelerated after the next year, when Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, providing for federal enforcement of minorities’ constitutional right to vote. Voter registration and turnout increased among blacks and Latinos in Texas and other states.

Unlike the rest of the South, however, Texas voters were never especially supportive of the various third-party candidacies of Southern Democrats. It was the only state in the former Confederacy to back Democrat Hubert Humphrey in the 1968 presidential election. During the 1980s, a number of conservative Democrats defected to the GOP, including Senator Phil Gramm, Congressman Kent Hance, and GOP Governor Rick Perry, who was a Democrat during his time as a state lawmaker.

John Tower’s 1961 election to the U.S. Senate made him the first statewide GOP officeholder since Reconstruction and the disenfranchisement of black Republicans. Republican Governor Bill Clements and Senator Phil Gramm (also a former Democrat) were elected after him. Republicans became increasingly dominant in national elections in white-majority Texas. The last Democrat presidential candidate to win the state was Jimmy Carter in 1976. Previously, a Democrat had to win Texas to win the White House, but in the 1992 election, Bill Clinton won the Oval Office while losing Texas electoral votes. This result significantly reduced the power of Texas Democrats at the national level, as party leaders believed the state had become unwinnable.

### Republican Dominance

Republicans control all statewide Texas offices, both houses of the state legislature and have a majority in the Texas congressional delegation. This makes Texas one of the most Republican states in the U.S.
Despite overall Republican dominance, Austin, the state capital, is primarily Democrat, as are El Paso, Houston, Dallas, San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley. However, the suburbs of these cities remain heavily Republican.

What Does the Future Hold?

The Hispanic population had continued to increase, based on both natural increase and continued immigration from Mexico. It accounted for 38.1% of the state’s population as of 2011 (compared to 44.8% for non-Hispanic whites).

The state’s changing demographics may result in a change in its overall political alignment, as most Hispanic and Latino voters support the Democrat Party. Mark Yzaguirre questioned forecasts of Democrat dominance by highlighting Governor Rick Perry’s courting of 39% of Hispanics in his victory in the 2010 Texas Gubernatorial election. Analysts with Gallup suggest that low turnout among Texas Hispanics is all that enables continued Republican dominance. In addition to the descendants of the state’s former slave population, the African American population in Texas is also increasing due to the New Great Migration; the majority supporting the Democrat party.

15. “Platform of the States Rights Democratic Party,” http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25851 (March 12,

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