SEEING RED ANALYSIS · TEXAS 2026

WHY TEXAS REPUBLICANS LOST: A BAD YEAR, THEN A BAD NOMINEE.

Trump's approval put the whole Texas ticket about 6 points in the hole, and the ticket finished right there. Paxton doubled it. The gerrymander and turnout were not the story.

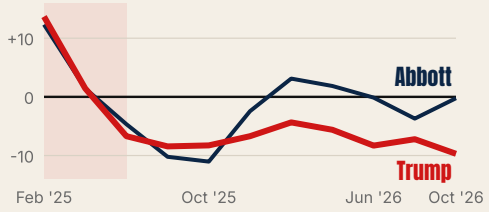
81%

of the variation in 2026 Senate margins across 28 states explained by Trump's approval alone

1. THE YEAR WAS SET BY TRUMP'S APPROVAL

Trump's Texas approval fell from 52% to 42% (net +14 to -10). **87% of the drop was done by June 2025**, 17 months out, and it never came back. What kept it down: economy and prices about 40%, immigration 22%, tariffs 18%, foreign policy 13%.

Nationally, each point of Trump net approval was worth about 0.9 points of Senate margin. At Trump's Texas number, a generic Republican loses by 6.3. The rest of the statewide ticket lost by 5.8. Abbott moved with Trump, running several points ahead of him through 2026.



Net approval, Texas registered voters, UT/TxPP. Shaded: spring 2025.

12

Paxton's losing margin, about 2x what the Trump line predicted

2. A HOLE THAT COULD BE CLIMBED OUT OF, AND A NOMINEE WHO DUG DEEPER

A 6-point hole was beatable. **5 of 28 Republican Senate candidates beat their Trump line by 6 or more** this year; the best ran 12 to 15 ahead: Barr (KY) +15, Collins (ME) +12, Tafoya (MN) +12. Paxton went the other way, losing by 12.1, about 6 points worse than the Republicans below him on the same ballot. A top-fifth candidate makes Texas a coin flip. Texas nominated one who ran below the line.

1 of 5

targeted seats the 2025 map actually flipped. It cost none

3. THE GERRYMANDER WAS A NON-FACTOR

The map was drawn to flip five Democratic seats; only TX-32 went Republican. Republicans finished with 24 of 38 seats, one fewer than in 2024, and about one more than the old map would have given them. Herrera (CD-23) and De La Cruz (CD-15) lose on the old 2021 lines too, by about 8 and 25. The map's only measurable cost ran through Trump: Texans rated his handling of redistricting 29 approve, 45 disapprove (Oct 2025). The Hispanic swing was real and statewide, about 39 points toward Democrats in majority-Hispanic counties, double the state. But redrawn seats moved no more than equally Hispanic counties outside them; El Paso and the Panhandle swung too, with nothing on the House ballot.

+1.6

points of Democratic margin from where turnout rose, out of 5.8

4. TURNOUT FOLLOWED THE NATIONAL PATTERN

Turnout in the redrawn seats rose exactly as much as the state's. The pattern was the usual midterm against the president: Democratic areas came out, Republican base counties stayed near their 2022 level. Worth about 1.6 points. Real, but secondary: most of the shift was voters changing sides.

TURNOUT, % OF REGISTERED	2018	2022	2026	VS 2022
Texas	53	46	52	+6.1
Redrawn South Texas seats	42	38	44	+6.1
GOP base counties	54	50	52	+1.8

BOTTOM LINE

Trump's approval dug a 6-point hole a year before anyone voted. **The map didn't cause it, and turnout didn't cause it.** Five Republicans elsewhere climbed out of holes that deep. Texas's Senate nominee made it twice as deep.

Sources: UT/Texas Politics Project polls, Feb 2025 to Oct 2026 (registered voters). Civiqs state Trump approval, Nov 4, 2026. Texas SOS final unofficial results, Nov 4, 2026, and county registration, 2018 to 2026. County Hispanic share: Census county estimates, 2023. Old-map seat check uses Texas Legislative Council 2024 district results. GOP base = counties Trump won with 70%+ in 2024 and under 30% Hispanic. "Trump line" = linear fit of Senate margin on state Trump net approval, Texas excluded. Analysis: Garrett Fulce.

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