



## **Austin Landline Report April 2018**

Things are gradually heating up for a few May 22nd primary run-off elections after a period of recovery after the March 6th primary. The hottest races in our areas of interest are by far in Congressional races. Bech Bruun, who we have endorsed, is working to win his race to replace Blake Farenthold. We first met Bech many years ago as chief of staff for State Rep. Todd Hunter. Bech is an attorney, originally from Corpus Christi, who resigned after a distinguished tenure as chair of the Texas Water Development Board. If you are in the area, please try to attend an event for Bech in Victoria on April 9th after our meeting in Kingsville that afternoon. (See our updates and website for details on both.)

In the race for Lamar Smith's Congressional seat, Ted Cruz's candidate, Chip Roy, will have a run-off with Matt McCall, a perennial candidate. The Democrats also have a hotly contested run-off featuring a former military officer and successful businessman, Joseph Kopser, versus an unknown woman. Though the election of a Democrat is highly unlikely in that district, Kopser has raised more money than any candidate in either party. If he wins the nomination and an off-year backlash strengthens, Kopser could put up a good fight in the general election.

Other than political campaigning, issues of note are Hurricane Harvey recovery and public school finance. On the Hurricane Harvey front, it appears more relief funding is on the way with passage of the federal omnibus spending bill. Phil Wilson, general manager of LCRA and former ED of TxDOT, has been detailed to the General Land Office to help in the administration of relief efforts.

As for school finance, in the last session of the Texas Legislature, a bill was enacted creating the Texas School Finance Commission to address the purpose, adequacy and policy direction of the public school finance system. The state's share of funding has declined from 49 percent to 38 percent over the last period of years. On March 19, the commission heard educators argue more money is needed to meet long-term academic goals and the state needs a study to determine what amount of funding, efficiently spent, is appropriate. The commission will hear from public witnesses April 9th.

As Texas public education's dependence on local property tax funding has grown, it has become more vulnerable to disruptions such as disasters like Hurricane Harvey – which is reducing education resources as property values drop in impacted counties.