



## **Austin Landline Report February 2018**

In Austin, it's all politics all the time, with early primary voting scheduled to begin February 20<sup>th</sup>. The Ag Council spent two long sessions in January interviewing a long list of political candidates. Many of the candidates were very impressive, with distinguished professional backgrounds and good understandings of landowner issues. STPRA is involved in the state-wide election process by leading an effort to secure commitments from all candidates for state office to support specific eminent domain reforms.

There are three hot Congressional races of interest in or near South Texas. STPRA has endorsed Bech Bruun in his quest to replace Blake Farenthold. In the race to replace Lamar Smith, whose district partially includes San Antonio, there are 18 Republican candidates. The leading fundraiser in that group is William Negley, relative of Walter Negley, STPRA's founding board chairman. On the Democratic side, a candidate with a high-tech background has raised more money than any candidate, including the Republicans, but is not currently considered to be competitive in the general election in that district.

The third hot Congressional race is Will Hurd's effort to be re-elected in a highly competitive district between the major parties. There is no clear leader for the Democratic nomination, but whoever the victor is will probably mount a significant challenge to Hurd because of the nature of the district and off-year elections. However, reports indicate that Hurd is currently in solid shape to win re-election.

In a more local race, STPRA has endorsed Ryan Guillen of Rio Grande City in his race to retain his state House seat against a serious primary challenger. Rep. Guillen has worked closely with STPRA, passing a range of legislation important to our members.

At the federal level, there is continued hope on the Texas Coast that Congress will reach a consensus that will include funding for hurricane relief by a looming budget deadline. As for two high-profile presidential appointments of Texans, Kathleen Hartnett White is no longer under consideration to head the White House's environmental office and the status of Susan Combs' confirmation for a top position in the Department of the Interior is unknown.