



## **Austin Landline Report June 2018**

May was a very busy month with the culmination of the primary season and the beginning of preparations for next year's legislative session. The May 22nd run-off elections yielded the victory of five out of six pro-Straus state representative candidates. A run-off for state representative in Brownsville resulted in the defeat of long-time Democratic incumbent René Oliveira. In the South Texas Congressional race to replace Blake Farenthold, Mike Cloud of Victoria bested Bech Bruun of Rockport. Former Ted Cruz staffer Chip Roy won the Republican nomination to replace retiring Congressman Lamar Smith and he will be challenged by the victorious Democratic candidate, Joseph Kopser, a military veteran and high-tech entrepreneur. Lupe Valdez defeated Andrew White in the Democratic race to face Gov. Greg Abbott in November.

As reported earlier, at the beginning of May, Eric Opiela, STPRA board member and chair of our Eminent Domain Sub-Committee, testified on our behalf at a hearing of the House Land and Resource Management Committee in Houston. Eric was part of a landowner panel that included representatives of the Farm Bureau and the Texas Wildlife Association and STPRA member Joseph Fitzsimons, who represented the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers. STPRA's board and staff will be following through with efforts during the upcoming legislative session to reform existing state eminent domain law to more fairly protect landowners in those transactions. Early June has already been marked by Texas House and Senate Committee hearings on groundwater regulation by Groundwater Conservation Districts. There will be a push next session to strengthen property rights and standardize regulations across Groundwater Management Areas with which STPRA board and staff will be involved.

Another item of interest in May was a meeting we organized at the Texas Tribune office concerning their first rural summit being planned for this fall. Thanks to initial introductions to Tribune staff by STPRA member Blair Fitzsimons, she, Eric Opiela, a few others, and I met with them to provide input for their agenda. The summit will occur on November 12th at College Station and we hope STPRA will be well represented there.