



Austin Landline Report November 2019

The biggest news coming out of Austin this month was the announcement by Speaker Dennis Bonnen that he would not seek re-election to his House seat, thereby assuring an imminent end to his tenure as House Speaker. His announcement came abruptly after a rapid cascade of events that emanated from the release of a much-discussed audio tape right before a caucus of Republican House members. The tape, which cast the Speaker and Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dustin Burrows in a very negative light, triggered a new round of reprisals from House members and the ultimate withdrawal of support from some of Bonnen's top committee chairs, making his exit inevitable.

Needless to say, shock waves are still being felt and behind-the-scenes jockeying and speculation are well underway regarding Bonnen's potential replacement. In this context, the House redistricting committee has begun hearings in advance of the 2020 census, with one already held in Corpus Christi. Less populated cities and counties will lose representation to larger metro areas. Meanwhile, intensive campaign fundraising has continued unabated.

This week, a small percentage of Texas voters went to the polls and passed a number of constitutional amendments, excluding one proposition which would have allowed municipal judges to work in multiple jurisdictions. Notable propositions that passed allowed Rainy Day funds to be used for disaster relief, provided property tax breaks for people in disaster areas, supported a continuation of a state cancer research fund, made it even harder to ever pass a state income tax, and guaranteed sporting goods sales tax revenue for state parks.