



Austin Landline Report December 2021

It is the first week of December 2021. I hope you were all able to find something to be truly thankful for last week. Thanksgiving is officially marked as a day on our calendars, but it should reside as a daily practice in our hearts.

The first Tuesday of November saw Texans approve all eight of the proposed constitutional amendments on the ballot. Proposed amendments ran the gamut from allowing raffle tickets at professional rodeo events, to increased oversight of judicial candidates and a prohibition on state restrictions of religious services. Of the three highest vote getters in the election, two dealt with property tax reductions for certain individuals and one allows for designation of an essential caregiver that cannot be restricted from visiting a patient at nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

Based on the activities of the third special session of the Legislature, you can expect two more proposed amendments to appear on the ballot in May of 2022. The first will deal with property tax reductions for elderly and disabled individuals and the second will propose increasing the current \$25,000 homestead exemption to \$40,000.

Gov. Abbott has begun spending part of the \$3 billion border security funding approved earlier this year by starting to build a wall of shipping containers along the border with Mexico. Billed as a quick and inexpensive solution to stemming the flow of illegal immigrants, this idea could catch on and grow. Stay tuned.

Retirements, realignments, redistricting and re-election are front and center this fall in South Texas. A strong advocate for the Rio Grande Valley and likely the most conservative Democrat in the Texas Senate, Eddie Lucio Jr. is not seeking re-election in 2022. State Rep. Alex Dominguez is stepping down from his House seat for a run in Lucio's now open Senate Dist. 27. Sen. Lucio's son, Eddie Lucio III, has also decided to forgo a run in 2022 and will not return to his House seat. Rep. Lucio has indicated that he will not seek election to any other office during this election cycle.

Longtime STPRA friend, veteran legislator, and House Dist. 31 State Rep. Ryan Guillen announced Nov. 15 that he would be seeking re-election in the newly redrawn Dist. 31 as a Republican candidate. Beginning as one of the youngest legislators ever elected to the Texas House, Rep. Guillen has long been considered one of the most conservative Democrats in the chamber. Recent changes to the boundaries of the district have made it more likely that such a move would be required to retain his current seat.

It seems there is never a good time to talk about money in politics, but now is as good as any. Primary campaigns are kicking off and invitations to fundraising events are starting to come in. Our association has a number of friends seeking re-election as well as several open seats that we would like to see a friendly face in. It is our plan to attend as many of these events as possible to show support for those friends.

Whether we like it or not, \$'s are necessary to win a modern election. Staff, advertising, travel and the like can run hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars. Our legislative friends need our help and we need your help to do that. This past legislative session, we were extremely successful in introducing and passing all three of our legislative priorities. Three for three for an organization our size is almost unheard of. We could not have done it without lawmakers that understood and respected our particular needs.

Help us show strong support, please consider contributing to the STPRA PAC. Our PAC can help see to it that those friendly faces return. Decisions on PAC contributions to any and all candidates is based on how that candidate aligns with the STPRA member approved Annual Policy Agenda, not their political affiliation.

Please have a Happy, Healthy, and Thankful Holiday Season,

Your Austin Team,
Eric Opiela, Joe Maley, Charles Maley, and Robert Howard