TEXAS DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY ELECTION SURVEY 2020

Evaluation of Democratic Political Elites

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The University of Houston Hobby School of Public Affairs conducted an online survey among likely Democratic primary voters in Texas to identify the leading candidates for the Democratic nominees for president and U.S. senator, opinions of salient policies and approval ratings of key national and state politicians. The survey was fielded between February 6 and February 18 with 1,352 YouGov respondents, resulting in a confidence interval of +/-2.7%. The results of this survey are presented in four separate reports. The first report found at uh.edu/hobby/texasprimary2020/ focuses principally on the vote intention in the Texas Democratic presidential primary election. The second report (also available via the link above) concentrates on the vote intention in the Texas Democratic senate primary election. The third report examines the position of Texas Democratic primary voters on a range of public policies, especially related to health care and the Green New Deal. This final report provides Texas Democratic primary voters' evaluations of leading national and state politicians.

Evaluation of Democratic Political Elites

Table 1 contains Texas Democratic primary voters' evaluations of three sets of political elites: National and Texas elites not currently running for the Democratic nomination for president or U.S. Senate, the eight remaining (as of 2/29) Democratic presidential candidates, and the four leading candidates competing in the Texas Democratic senate primary.

The most popular Democrat among Texas Democratic primary voters by far is Barack Obama, who is viewed very favorably by 70.1% of Texas Democrats and favorably by an additional 17.2% for a total of 87.3% favorable against an 11.0% unfavorable evaluation. After Obama, the two most popular Democrats are Nancy Pelosi and Beto O'Rourke who are viewed very favorably by 49.0% and 43.1% and favorably by 25.6% and 35.9% for respective overall favorable ratings of 74.6% and 78.9% respectively versus a overall unfavorable ratings of 21.5% and 16.8%. Obama, Pelosi and O'Rourke are more popular than the most popular Democratic presidential candidates, Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden, who possess overall favorability evaluations of 71.6%, 65.3%, and 65.2% and overall unfavorable evaluations of 23.0%, 32.0% and 30.9%.

The presidential candidates tended to have the highest overall unfavorable evaluations, with Tulsi Gabbard (50.6%), Michael Bloomberg (31.7), Bernie Sanders (32.0%), Joe Biden (30.9%) and Pete Buttigieg (27.3%) all viewed unfavorably by more than one-quarter of Democratic primary voters. The only other Democrat with an overall unfavorable evaluation in this range is Hillary Clinton, who is viewed unfavorably by 29.6% of Texas Democratic primary voters.

Voters were given the option in the survey of not providing an opinion about a candidate if they believed they did not have enough information about them to give an opinion. Four of the five least well known Democratic politicians are the leading candidates in the Democratic senate primary: Cristina Tzintzún Ramirez (70.4%), Chris Bell (63.1%), Royce West (61.3%) and MJ Hegar (52.3%). Among the 22 politicians, the only non-senate candidate in the bottom five in regard to the proportion of Democratic primary voters who did not know enough about them to offer an opinion was Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner at 56.1%. While Turner is not very well-known statewide, he is very well known in the Houston area, with all but

8.4% of metro Houston Democratic primary voters knowing enough about him to offer an opinion, and 67.1% of Houston area Democratic voters having a favorable opinion of him (32.8% Very Favorable and 34.3% Favorable).

It is noteworthy that the four Texas Democratic politicians (Joaquín Castro, Julián Castro, Wendy Davis, Beto O'Rourke) who are best known as well as are viewed favorably by between one-half (Davis, 56.4%) and three-fourths (O'Rourke, 78.9%) of Texas Democratic primary voters, and are unknown by only between 30.1% (Davis) and 4.4% O'Rourke), all opted to not run for the senate in 2020. Julián Castro and Beto O'Rourke launched failed bids for the presidency, Davis is running against Republican incumbent Chip Roy in Texas's 21st Congressional District and Joaquín Castro is running for a guaranteed re-election in Texas's 20th Congressional District. As a point of comparison, the most favorably viewed Democratic senate candidate is MJ Hegar whose overall favorable evaluation is 38.1%, considerably lower than those of Davis (56.4%), Joaquín Castro (63.3%), Julián Castro (70.4%) and O'Rourke (78.9%). That said, among those Democratic primary voters who did know enough about Hegar to have an opinion, her overall favorable rating (38.1%) is 28.4% greater than her unfavorable rating (9.7%).

Table 1: Popularity of National and State Democratic Politicians Among Texas Democratic Voters

Politician Evaluation (%)					
Politician	Very Favorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	No Opinion
Barack Obama	70.1	17.2	4.8	6.2	1.6
Nancy Pelosi	49.0	25.6	8.0	13.5	3.9
Beto O'Rourke	43.1	35.8	7.6	9.2	4.4
Hillary Clinton	36.8	30.8	13.7	15.9	2.9
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez	34.8	28.3	11.1	12.4	13.3
Julián Castro	30.6	39.8	7.6	7.6	14.5
Chuck Schumer	29.9	30.9	7.1	13.0	19.0
Wendy Davis	27.5	28.9	7.4	6.1	30.1
Joaquín Castro	28.5	34.8	5.1	7.6	23.9
Sylvester Turner	11.4	18.9	8.0	5.7	56.1

Candidate Evaluation (%)					
Presidential Candidate	Very Favorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	No Opinion
Elizabeth Warren	33.0	38.6	12.2	10.8	5.3
Bernie Sanders	32.9	32.4	17.7	14.3	2.7
Joe Biden	29.3	35.9	18.0	12.9	3.9
Pete Buttigieg	23.6	36.7	15.8	11.5	12.4
Michael Bloomberg	23.0	34.8	15.6	16.1	10.4
Amy Klobuchar	17.0	34.9	17.0	8.0	23.2
Tom Steyer	8.8	31.9	15.1	8.4	35.8
Tulsi Gabbard	5.3	14.3	19.8	30.8	29.8

Candidate Evaluation (%)					
Leading Senate Candidate	Very Favorable	Favorable	Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	No Opinion
Mary "MJ" Hegar	17.5	20.6	5.6	4.1	52.3
Royce West	8.7	17.7	6.5	4.0	63.1
Chris Bell	8.4	19.1	5.7	3.8	63.1
Cristina Tzintzún Ramirez	7.1	14.8	4.1	3.7	70.4