



Texas BOMA Legislative Update
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Last month, we highlighted the key Senate races across the state. This month, we will examine the key House of Representatives races in 2014.

Texas House

The Texas House is a 150 member body presided over by the Speaker of the House, who is selected from among its membership. Speaker Joe Straus (R-San Antonio) has held that post since being selected just prior to the 2009 legislative session, and he is generally expected to be re-elected to his fourth session in 2015. Unlike the Senate, where the chamber is guided by collegiality among members necessitated by the need to get two-thirds of members present to bring up a bill, the House is governed by rules and committees. Before a bill can get to the floor, it must proceed through the Calendars committee, which can keep a bill locked up forever, or put it on the fast-track to passage. Once on the floor, most bills are killed not by votes but by parliamentary maneuvering, including amendments to change the purpose of the bill or points of order, which can effectively kill the legislation.

The House generally has more turnover than the Senate, primarily because all Representatives serve two-year terms, while Senators serve four-year terms, with only half of the Senate seats being up each election. Over the past two election cycles, we have seen a large number of new members. In the 2013 session, 65 Representatives had one session or less experience serving in the legislature. While we do not expect as many new members in 2015, there will be many freshmen.

Stefani Carter (R-Dallas)

After the 2013 session, Representative Carter chose to forego re-election and instead run for an open seat on the Railroad Commission. In the fall of 2013, however, Rep. Carter changed her mind and declared instead for re-election to her House seat. By virtue of her first announcing she would not run again, then changing course, she now faces three challengers for the Republican nomination: Linda Koop, Sam Brown, and Adryana Boyne.

Sarah Davis (R-Houston)

Representative Davis, a moderate Republican who unseated a popular Democratic incumbent in 2010, has been under fire since her election for not being conservative enough. Bonnie Parker is running against Rep. Davis in the primary. The winner of that contest will face off against Democrat Alison Ruff in a seat that will be competitive in November.

Mary Gonzalez (D-El Paso)

Representative Gonzalez won election to her first term in the House in 2012. By virtue of El Paso politics, few of their elected officials escape unopposed in the primaries, and Rep. Gonzalez is no exception. She is facing off with Rey “Coach” Sepulveda in the primary.

Naomi Gonzalez (D-El Paso)

Rep. Gonzalez first joined the Texas House in 2011 after defeating incumbent Representative Norma Chavez (D-El Paso). During the 2013 session, Rep. Gonzalez was arrested for DWI in Austin. This March, she has two primary opponents: Cesar Blanco and former Rep. Norma Chavez.

Linda Harper-Brown (R-Irving)

Representative Harper-Brown will face off against former Representative Rodney Anderson. Representative Anderson was elected to the House in 2010, but because of redistricting, his seat was drawn out of the map and he chose to not run in 2012. The winner of that seat will face off against a Democrat in one of the few competitive fall races. The Democratic nominee will be Susan Motley, Bernice Montgomery, or Terry Mesa.

Jim Keffer (R-Eastland)

Representative Keffer is Chairman of the House Energy Resources Committee and a top lieutenant of Speaker Straus. He has been targeted by some conservative groups for not being conservative enough. Those groups are now funding his opponent, Cullen Crisp (R-Granbury), in an effort to take Rep. Keffer out.

Marisa Marquez (D-El Paso)

Rep. Marquez is a three-term incumbent who is similarly caught up in the El Paso local politics. Rep. Marquez will face Lyda Ness-Garcia for the Democratic nomination.

Charles Perry (R-Lubbock)

Representative Perry first won election to the House in 2010, defeating long-time incumbent and Straus ally Delwin Jones. This year, he faces a primary challenger in Steve Massengale, a former school board member. Rep. Perry is seen as a more conservative member, while Mr. Massengale would be more of an establishment-type.

Bennett Ratliff (R-Coppell)

Bennett Ratliff comes from a long line of elected officials in his family, including his grandfather, former State Senator and Lieutenant Governor Bill Ratliff. Representative Ratliff is facing a challenge from the right by Matt Rinaldi.

Matt Schaefer (R-Tyler)

Representative Schaefer defeated Representative Leo Berman in 2012. Upon arriving in Austin, Representative Schaefer proved to be a very conservative member, frequently taking unpopular positions against the majority of the chamber. This March, Representative Schaefer will face off against Skip Ogle, who is appealing to the more moderate, “establishment” Republicans in the primary.

J.D. Sheffield (R-Gatesville)

Representative Sheffield won election to his first term in the House in 2012 after defeating Representative Sid Miller, a conservative who had held the seat since 2001. Representative Sheffield has been targeted by some conservative interest groups for defeat, and is facing two opponents, Howard Ray (R-Rochelle) and Danny Pelton (R-Stephenville).

Ralph Sheffield (R-Temple)

Representative Sheffield, a Temple restaurateur, has served in the House since 2008. His race would generally have been considered not competitive, but he has been impacted by advertisements in a neighboring district. Representative J.D. Sheffield (R-Gatesville), who upset incumbent Representative Sid Miller in 2012, is facing stiff opposition. Because of the proximity of his district to Rep. Ralph Sheffield’s, Rep. Ralph Sheffield finds himself in a competitive race.

Jonathan Stickland (R-Bedford)

Representative Stickland, a favorite in ultra-conservative circles, served his first term in 2013 after winning election to an open seat vacated when then-Rep. Todd Smith chose to run for the state Senate. Rep. Stickland faces Andy Gargile (R-Hurst) in the primary. This is a closely watched matchup between a very conservative member and one backed more by the business community.

Open Seats

In addition to those incumbents who have drawn serious opposition, below are the open seats in the House of Representatives, listed by the incumbent who will not be on the ballot in 2014:

- HD 10: Jim Pitts (R-Waxahachie) (retired)
- HD 15: Steve Toth (R-The Woodlands) (seeking higher office)
- HD 16: Brandon Creighton (R-Conroe) (seeking higher office)
- HD 21: Alan Ritter (R-Beaumont) (retired)
- HD 23: Craig Eiland (D-Galveston) (retired)
- HD 50: Mark Strama (D-Austin) (retired) (Celia Israel, D-Austin, won special election)

HD 53: Harvey Hilderbran (R-Kerrville) (seeking higher office)
HD 58: Rob Orr (R-Burleson) (retired)
HD 66: Van Taylor (R-Plano) (seeking higher office)
HD 81: Tryon Lewis (R-Odessa) (retired)
HD 108: Dan Branch (R-Dallas) (seeking higher office)
HD 129: John Davis (R-Houston) (retired)
HD 132: Bill Callegari (R-Katy) (retired)