

THE EMPOWER TEXANS FOUNDATION
PRESENTS

The Joe Straus RECORD

Opposing Conservatives, Obstructing Reforms

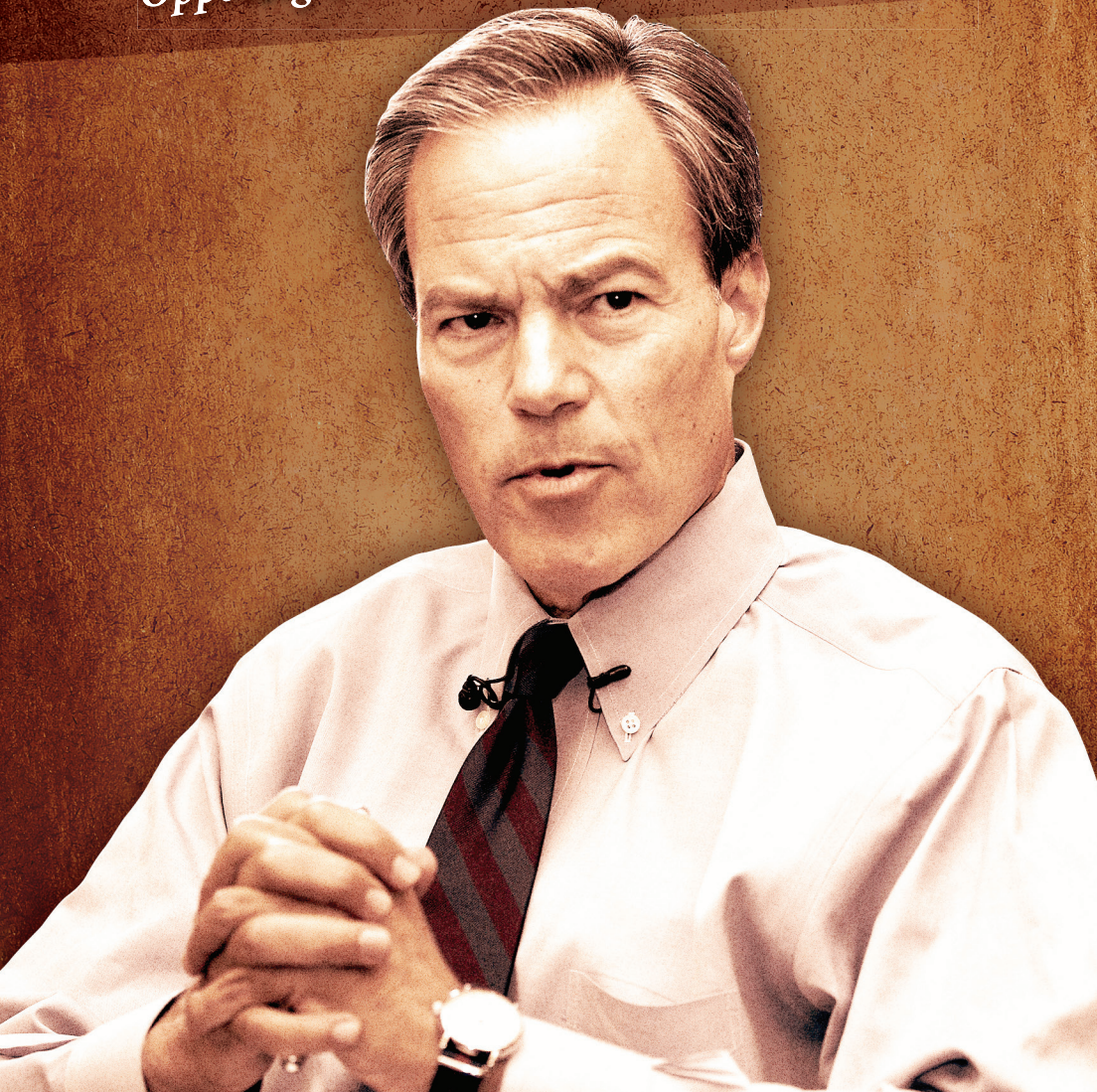


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The President and CEO of Planned Parenthood
South Texas, Jeffrey Hons, acknowledged & thanked Joe Straus for his
“Tireless Effort”

Source: Politifact Texas

STRAUS' RATINGS AS A LEGISLATOR



HERITAGE ALLIANCE

51%
2006



TEXANS
FOR FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

71%
2007

TEXAS EAGLE FORUM



58%
2005

68%
2007



YOUNG CONSERVATIVES OF TEXAS

73%
2005

62%
2007

TEXAS RIGHT TO



50%
2005



NARAL Pro-Choice

100%
2007

STRAUS' RECORD AS A LEGISLATOR

First elected in a special election partway through the 2005 legislative session, Straus' first full session (2007) demonstrated his apathy towards conservative reforms.

Fiscal Policy

Voted to create a payroll tax in Texas, several industry specific taxes, and a **1-cent increase to the state sales tax**. While allegedly reducing the property tax burden, this scheme **would have created an 80 percent net tax increase** on 80 percent of Texans. (*HB 3, RV 119, 79th Legislature*)

Voted to levy a new, burdensome “**granny tax**” on nursing home residents. (*HB 3778, RV 1048, 80th Legislature*)

Voted to **expand welfare** by changing the basis of eligibility for the Children's Insurance Program from “gross income” to “net income”, and expanding the eligibility period from 6 months to 12 months. (*HB 109, RV 266 & RV 299, 80th Legislature*)

Social Issues

Voted in favor of **allowing homosexuals and bisexuals to become foster parents**. (*SB 6, RV 328, 79th Legislature*)

Supported making it **easier to get a 3rd trimester abortion**. Original language of the bill allowed a 3rd trimester abortion only when the mother was at risk of death or the fetus had a severe irreversible brain impairment. Straus voted to expand the exemptions to allow a 3rd trimester abortion if there was “substantial risk of serious impairment” to the mother or if the fetus had a “severe and irreversible abnormality.” (*SB 419, RV 672, 79th Legislature*)

Joe Straus received a **\$1,000 donation from Planned Parenthood** of San Antonio and South Central Texas. (*Texas Ethics Commission, 08/27/2008*)

In 2007, **Joe Straus received a 100 percent rating by NARAL**. (*the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League*)

ELECTION AS SPEAKER

Heading into the 2009 legislative session, a group of 11 Republicans joined forces with 65 Democrats to oust conservative Republican Tom Craddick as speaker. Craddick was the first GOP House Speaker in Texas since the 19th Century.

The New York Times called Straus a “**centrist**” that rose to power during the “Democratic tide that swept President Obama into office” (*New York Times*, 1/27/2009, *Texas Rebellion Gives a Centrist a Lift*)

The Economist referred to Straus as a “**moderate**” backed by “centrists” (*The Economist*, 11/25/2010, *The resurgent right, and an unlikely possible ally for moderates*)

Following his election as House Speaker, Straus told *Texas Monthly* that **he supports Roe v. Wade** and does not believe it should be overturned. He went on to call the pro-life movement “campaign fodder” and not a serious political position.

The highest support for his first term as speaker came from Planned Parenthood, praising his “tireless efforts.”

{ “The Harry Reid
of Texas” }

Forbes Magazine, 8/14/14, *Meet the Harry Reid of Texas*

CONSERVATIVE CHALLENGERS

While Straus was named speaker in 2009 following the initial Barack Obama wave of 2008 that gave Democrats 74 seats out 150, the 2010 “Obama backlash” brought 101 Republicans into the Texas House in 2011.

Reports surfaced that conservatives were told there would be **retribution if they failed to support Straus**. (*Texas Tribune, 11/10/2010, Bryan Hughes Withdraws Support for Straus*)

Then-State Rep. Ken Paxton (R-McKinney) mounted a last-minute challenge to Straus’ speakership. Fearful of retribution from Straus and the Austin lobby, Republicans demanded that Paxton withdraw his challenge. A dozen Republicans – including Paxton – gave a no-confidence vote for Straus on the first day of the 2011 session.

None of those who voted against Straus in 2011 have suffered politically; indeed, Paxton himself defeated Straus-ally Dan Branch for Attorney General. Others voting against Straus include Sen.-elect Van Taylor of Plano and Sen. Charles Perry of Lubbock. On the other hand, Straus supporters and committee chairmen have been voted from office in large numbers every election cycle.

PRAISE FROM DEMOCRATS

While the Democrats now hold barely one-third of the seats in the Texas House, they have had great success under Straus’ speakership.

In a study of legislative results, Rice University’s Mark Jones described legislation passed under Straus’ watch as “purple” at best in what is otherwise a very “red” state. The data-crunching website HardHatters.com has found that 51 percent of legislation passed from the House and to the governor’s desk in 2013 was authored or coauthored by Democrats.

Liberal Democrat Joaquin Castro said at a press conference that he “**can’t think of a better person to lead us...**” than Joe Straus. (*Burnt Orange Report YouTube Video, 1/5/2009, Joe Straus Supporters at Press Conference*)

Characterized as the “Harry Reid of Texas,” in a recent *Forbes* article that identifies Straus as a “left-of-center” speaker who will be a major obstacle to conservative reforms in the 84th Legislative Session. (*Forbes Magazine, 8/14/14, Meet the Harry Reid of Texas*)

STIFLING CONSERVATIVES AND CONSERVATIVE REFORMS

A chief lieutenant of Joe Straus, Ralph Sheffield, proudly admitted to constituents in late 2011 that Straus punished conservative GOP members. (It should be noted that Sheffield was defeated by a conservative challenger in the 2014 primary.)

Meanwhile, *Texas Monthly* blogger Paul Burka said **Straus oversaw a budget meant to help Democrats browbeat Republicans.** (*Texas Tribune*, 6/20/2011, Video: *Burka and Blakeslee at TribLive*)

On Public Policy Issues...

Joe Straus **refused to sign the Texas Budget Compact.** (*Press Release*, 4/16/2012, *Statement on Texas Budget Compact*)

Straus called the TSA Anti-Groping Bill “**nothing more than an ill-advised publicity stunt.**” (*Texas Tribune*, 6/24/2011, *Updated: Straus Calls TSA Bill “Publicity Stunt”*)

In 2013, Straus and his hand-picked Appropriations Committee **spent the entire \$8 billion budget surplus and took \$4 billion from the state’s rainy day fund.**

Straus presided over a legislative session that **increased total spending by 26% over the previous biennium**—including taking \$4 billion from the state’s savings account. (*The Wall Street Journal*, 6/7/13, *Texas goes Sacramento*)

Straus and his allies repeatedly **pushed for the state to expand Medicaid under Obamacare.** (*San Antonio Express-News*, 3/6/13, *Straus touts Medicaid action*)

Straus allowed passage of an amendment specifically banning funding for any school choice program in the state appropriations bill. (*83rd Legislature, RV #169, Amendment 9S by Herrero to SB1*)

After the sunset bill for reauthorization of the Texas Lottery Commission failed its first record vote in the House, Straus organized a re-vote and passed the measure. (*83rd Legislature, House Journal page 1764*)

In 2013, with a near super-majority of Republicans in the Texas House, not a single pro-life measure was moved to the floor of the House for a vote during the regular legislative session. It was not until Gov. Rick Perry called two special sessions and forced Straus to take up the measures that any such legislation was considered.

STIFLING CONSERVATIVES AND CONSERVATIVE REFORMS (CONT.)

On the other hand, Straus has pushed a decidedly liberal legislative agenda. Most notably, he sided with the Obama Administration's Internal Revenue Service in seeking to enact rules targeting the privacy of donors to conservative organizations (*The Wall Street Journal*, 5/21/13, *Texas Targets Conservatives*).

Likewise, **Straus commissioned the “witch-hunt” investigation into UT Regent Wallace Hall.** It has been Wallace Hall's work that uncovered inappropriate influence of legislators on university officials and corrupt admissions practices by certain staff of the University of Texas at Austin. (*D Magazine*, 6/25/13, *House Speaker Joe Straus Empowers Impeachment Investigation Against UT Regent Wallace Hall*)

Among the **conservative reforms killed by Joe Straus** in the most recent legislative session included:

Urging Congress to cease imposing the Obamacare contraception mandate on businesses, HCR 32 by Jonathan Stickland died in Select committee on Federalism and Fiscal Responsibility

Monthly reporting requirement for abortion doctors, providing penalties, HB 2308 by Matt Schaefer, died in State Affairs Committee

Allowing volunteer security staff with a CHL to carry a concealed weapon in the course of their service with church permission, HB 2535 by Matt Schaefer, died in Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee

Requiring counties, cities, and school districts to list total outstanding debt and debt per capita on any ballot for a new bond election, HB 960, 961, & 962 by Scott Sanford, died in Elections Committee

Repealing state renewable energy mandates and credit trading program, HB 2026 by Scott Sanford, died in State Affairs Committee

Preventing school boards from discriminating against religious organizations seeking to use public school facilities during non-instructional time, HB 1525 by Matt Krause, died in Public Education Committee

Providing penalties and definition for oppression by a law enforcement officer, HB 80 by David Simpson, died in State Affairs Committee

Preventing local governments from prohibiting oil and gas development unless certain standards are met, HB 1496 by Van Taylor, died in Land and Resource Management Committee

Preventing insider trading by state officials or employees, HB 1576 by Van Taylor, died in State Affairs Committee

Protecting Texans from federal gun registrations, HB 872 by Jodie Laubenberg, died in Select Committee on Federalism and Fiscal Responsibility

Prohibiting discrimination by institutions of higher education against faculty or students who research Intelligent Design, HB 285 by Bill Zedler, died in Higher Education Committee

Protecting Texans from the Obamacare individual mandate, HJR 48 by James White, died in Select Committee on Federalism and Fiscal Responsibility

Adopting Zero-based budgeting for all state agencies and institutions, HB 98 by Charles Perry, died in Appropriations Subcommittee on Budget Transparency and Reform

Asserting state sovereignty under the Tenth Amendment and beseeching the federal government to cease any legislative or executive actions infringing upon Second Amendment rights, HCR 63 by Scott Sanford, died in Calendars Committee

Closing the “judicial bypass” loophole allowing minors to receive an abortion without parental notification, HB 3302 by Matt Krause, died in Calendars Committee due to delay by State Affairs Committee

Requiring elected officials to disclose contracts that relatives or business partners may have with the state, HB 524 by Giovanni Capriglione, died in Calendars Committee due to delay by State Affairs Committee

Preventing state funds from being invested in companies doing business in Iran, HB 819 by Van Taylor, died in Calendars Committee

Urging the U.S. Congress to repeal the Dodd-Frank Act, HCR 26 by Van Taylor, died in Calendars Committee

Placing greater restrictions on eminent domain powers of the state, HB 1250 by Craig Goldman, died in Calendars Committee

STIFLING CONSERVATIVES AND CONSERVATIVE REFORMS (CONT.)

Preventing abortions after 20 weeks post-fertilization, HB 2364 by Jodie Laubenberg, died in Calendars Committee due to delay by State Affairs Committee

Outlawing “ballot harvesting” vote-by-mail fraud, authorizing penalties, HB 1560 by Stephanie Klick, died in Calendars Committee due to delay by Elections Committee

Establishing interstate voter registration cross-check to prevent duplicate vote registrations, HB 2372 by Stephanie Klick, died in Calendars Committee

Preventing abortion service referrals in Public School sex education courses, HB 1057 by Jeff Leach, died in Calendars Committee

Preventing school districts from offering marriage benefits to same-sex couples, HB 1568 by Drew Springer

Preventing municipal bans of plastic bags, HB 2416 by Drew Springer, died in Calendars Committee

Addressing coercive conditions imposed on the state by the receipt of federal funds, HB 1379 by Steve Toth, died in Calendars Committee due to delay by Select Committee on Federalism and Fiscal Responsibility

Phasing-out the franchise tax, HB 607 by Scott Turner, died in Calendars Committee due to delay by Ways and Means Committee

Establishing a Taxpayer Savings Grant Program to provide parents a choice in directing a portion of their child’s state education money, HB 3497 by Scott Turner, died due to late referral to Government Efficiency and Reform Committee by Speaker

Requiring school districts to post check registers online, HB 284 by Bill Zedler, died in Calendars Committee

Removing limitations on the authority of the Attorney General to investigate alleged voter fraud, HB 289 by Bill Zedler, died in Calendars Committee

TEXANS REJECT STRAUS ALLIES

Over the last three election cycles, voters have been retiring from office those legislators most aligned with Joe Straus. The most recent election cycle has been no different:

Five Straus loyalists lost in the 2014 primaries, including one committee chair and two committee vice chairs. Linda Harper-Brown (R-Irving), Diane Patrick (R-Arlington), Ralph Sheffield (R-Temple), Lance Gooden (R-Terrell), and Bennett Ratliff (R-Carrollton) were defeated in the primary.

Straus-favored candidates running for higher office lost in the 2014 primaries. Straus committee chairs Harvey Hilderbran (R-Kerrville) and Dan Branch (R-Dallas) lost their bids for statewide office. Former Straus lawyer Eric Opiela failed to make a runoff for Agricultural Commissioner despite pouring millions of dollars of his personal fortune into the effort.

Several Straus loyalists and committee chairs retired from the House. Jim Pitts (R-Waxahachie), Tryon Lewis (R-Odessa), John Davis (R-Houston), Rob Orr (R-Burleson), Allan Ritter (R-Nederland), and Bill Callegari (R-Katy) all chose not to seek re-election.

Serious Straus-backed challenges to outspoken conservative House incumbents failed. Representatives Jonathan Stickland (R-Hurst), Matt Schaefer (R-Tyler), and Charles Perry (R-Lubbock) all defeated moderate primary challengers receiving money and support from organizations connected to Straus.

Liberal Democrat Joaquin Castro
said at a press conference that he

“Can’t think of a better person to lead us...”

Source: *Burnt Orange Report YouTube Video, 1/5/2009, Joe Straus Supporters at Press Conference*

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