

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE · OCTOBER 22, 2026

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Talarico 48%, Paxton 43%; Abbott and Hinojosa Closely Matched: Texas's Top Races Are Inside the Margin in New Pollfinity Survey

Exclusive Pollfinity Research Survey — Texas Registered Voters — October 15–18, 2026 | n=278 Senate-ballot respondents, weighted

APTOS, CA, October 22, 2026 —

Pollfinity Research LLC today released results of a survey of 278 registered Texas voters on the 2026 races for U.S. Senate, Governor and Lieutenant Governor, conducted October 15–18, 2026. In the Senate race, Democrat James Talarico draws 48% to Republican Ken Paxton's 43%, with 2% backing Libertarian Ted Brown and 5% undecided. In the race for Governor, Democrat Gina Hinojosa is at 46% and Governor Greg Abbott at 45%, with Libertarian Pat Dixon at 2% and 5% undecided. For Lieutenant Governor, Dan Patrick leads Vikki Goodwin 46% to 42%, with Libertarian Anthony Cristo at 2%, Green Kevin McCormick at 1% and 6% undecided. All three gaps are inside the survey's full-sample margin of error of ± 6.5 points.

Abbott's job approval is under water: **45% approve and 52% disapprove**, with 41% disapproving strongly. His favorability is 44% favorable, 52% unfavorable. Paxton is the least liked name on the ballot at 40% favorable, 56% unfavorable (net -16); Talarico is 50% favorable, 47% unfavorable. Hinojosa is 47% favorable, 39% unfavorable, with 14% offering no opinion. 49% say Texas is on the wrong track; 39% say it is headed in the right direction.

Donald Trump's favorability among Texas voters is 44% favorable, 54% unfavorable.

On the hemp-derived THC products that the Legislature voted to ban in 2025 and Abbott vetoed, Texans side with the Governor: 42% would keep the products legal for adults 21 and older as they are now, 23% would legalize them with fewer restrictions, 19% would ban them and 16% are not sure.

KEY FINDINGS

U.S. SENATE

Talarico 48% · Paxton 43%

Brown (L) 2% · Someone else 2% · Undecided 5%

GOVERNOR

Hinojosa 46% · Abbott 45%

Dixon (L) 2% · Someone else 2% · Undecided 5%

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Patrick 46% · Goodwin 42%

Cristo (L) 2% · McCormick (G) 1% · Someone else 2% · Undecided 6%

ABBOTT JOB APPROVAL

Approve 45% · Disapprove 52%

Strongly disapprove: 41%

HEMP-DERIVED THC PRODUCTS

Keep legal 42% · Loosen 23%

Ban 19% · Not sure 16%

DIRECTION OF TEXAS

Right direction 39%

Wrong track 49% · Not sure 11%

TOP ISSUES

Cost of living / inflation	22%
Immigration and border security	18%
Civil liberties and personal freedom	9%
Something else	9%
Education	9%
Government spending and fiscal responsibility	9%
Economy and jobs in general	8%
Property taxes and other taxes	7%
Crime and public safety	6%
Healthcare	3%

PARTISAN DYNAMICS

The races are defined by near-total partisan sorting. Among voters the file identifies as Democrats, Talarico leads 79%–14%. Among Republicans, Paxton leads 72%–19%. Recalled 2024 presidential vote tells the same story: Harris voters go 100% for Talarico and 98% for Hinojosa; Trump voters go 83% for Paxton and 81% for Abbott.

Women favor Talarico 57%–38% and Hinojosa 54%–39%; men favor Paxton 50%–37% and Abbott 52%–37%. Voters under 30 (n=29) favor Talarico 68%–29%.

REGIONAL BREAKDOWN (U.S. SENATE)

Houston (n=65)	Talarico 58%–33%	Talarico +25 pts
Dallas-Fort Worth (n=80)	Talarico 49%–45%	Talarico +4 pts
Austin (n=27)	Talarico 58%–36%	Talarico +22 pts
San Antonio (n=22)	Talarico 45%–43%	Talarico +2 pts
Border (n=13)	Paxton 50%–40%	Paxton +10 pts
Rest of Texas (n=71)	Paxton 51%–37%	Paxton +14 pts

Regions are assigned from the county of registration on the voter file. Houston: Harris, Fort Bend, Montgomery, Brazoria, Galveston. Dallas-Fort Worth: Dallas, Tarrant, Collin, Denton, Rockwall, Ellis, Kaufman, Johnson, Parker. Austin: Travis, Williamson, Hays, Bastrop. San Antonio: Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe. Border: Hidalgo, Cameron, El Paso, Webb, Starr, Maverick, Val Verde, Zapata, Willacy. Rest of Texas: all other counties. Austin, San Antonio and Border subsamples are small and should be read as directional.

HEMP THC, BALLOT ACCESS AND THIRD-PARTY SENTIMENT

The THC question is one of the few where the parties overlap: "keep them legal as now" is the plurality answer among Democrats (42%) and Republicans (40%) alike. Republicans are more likely to back a ban (25%) and Democrats to want fewer restrictions (34%).

Asked whether "Texas needs more political choices beyond the two major parties," 46% of voters agree and 41% disagree; agreement is 60% among Democrats and 29% among Republicans.

The Libertarian candidates remain largely unknown: 67% of voters have never heard of Pat Dixon and 66% have never heard of Ted Brown. 5% of Texas voters say they already describe their views as libertarian and 13% say they might.

On political violence, 20% agree that "Americans may have to resort to violence in order to get the country back on track" and 71% disagree (60% strongly). Agreement is 16% among Democrats and 23% among Republicans.

ABOUT POLLFINITY RESEARCH LLC

Pollfinity Research LLC is an independent, nonpartisan polling firm based in Aptos, California. The firm conducts public opinion research on elections, policy, and civic issues, with a focus on original first-party data collection using text-message-to-web methodology. This survey was not commissioned by any candidate, political party, or outside organization. Full topline, crosstabulations, weighting targets and diagnostics are available at pollfinity.com.

Survey Methodology: This poll was conducted by Pollfinity Research LLC October 15–18, 2026. Respondents were drawn from a statewide voter file of active registered Texas voters with a cell phone on record, with no turnout or response-likelihood filter applied. The 40,000-record sample was a random draw within four age bands (9,600 ages 18-29; 10,400 ages 30-44; 11,200 ages 45-64; 8,800 ages 65 and over) and within two surname groups (15,000 Spanish-surname, 25,000 all other), deliberately oversampling younger and Hispanic voters, who respond to text surveys at lower rates. Respondents were recruited by text-message invitation to complete a web questionnaire. 297 respondents started the survey; 19 did not answer the U.S. Senate ballot question and are not included; 278 answered it and are included. Respondents were matched to their voter-file record; registered-voter status and all demographic classifications are based on that record, and 5% nevertheless self-reported that they were not registered. Thirteen percent of respondents have no 2022 or 2024 general-election vote on their voter-file record and are retained. Because 2026 is a midterm, the demographic weighting targets are the age, gender, ethnic group and region profile of Texas's 2022 general-election voters on the voter file (the most recent midterm electorate), rather than of all registered voters; recalled vote was weighted to the certified 2024 presidential and 2022 gubernatorial results. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 278 is ± 6.5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, adjusted for weighting (effective sample size 230, design effect 1.21). The margin of error reflects sampling error only; it is larger for subgroups, for questions later in the survey that have smaller bases, and for the difference between two candidates. Candidates were shown to respondents with their party in parentheses, for example "Ted Brown (Libertarian)." Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Disclosure: Pollfinity Research LLC is owned and self-funded by Lars Mapstead, a 2024 Libertarian presidential candidate who also funds ballot-access advocacy organizations; the ballot-access question was asked after all ballot tests and is reported by party in the crosstabs. EIN: 41-5279083.

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