

LONE STAR PROJECT

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Baseline Analysis of Texas Governor's Race *Strayhorn's Task Harder and Bell's Chances Better than Assumed*

The unusual multi-candidate gubernatorial field in Texas has created an environment that may defy current conventional wisdom. Particularly, early observers may be overestimating the ability of Carole Strayhorn to garner a plurality of support in a potential four candidate field without the base of support that a party nomination provides. Conversely, although Chris Bell has raised relatively little money to date, he won the Democratic primary easily and has a voting record and political history virtually all Democrats, and some true independents, can embrace.

An analysis of the four-candidate field, based on projected voter turnout in 2006, shows that in order to compete and win, Strayhorn would have to run a campaign that simultaneously cuts deeply into the expected Republican vote that would otherwise go to Rick Perry **AND** cut significantly into the expected Democratic vote that would otherwise go to Bell. Gaining a little from both won't work, and cutting deeply into one, but not the other, falls short as well.

The Lone Star Project developed a model to help forecast the election results for Texas Governor. An explanation of the model and the Lone Star Project's conclusions are offered below. However, you can use the model to develop your own forecast online at the [Lone Star Project Vote Simulator](#).

Methodology and Assumptions

The Lone Star Project constructed potential election scenarios for each of the major gubernatorial candidates - Rick Perry, Chris Bell and Carole Strayhorn.

- **Turnout & Partisanship** – The highly polarized Bush/Kerry 2004 Presidential race was used as a measure of baseline partisanship reflecting how Republicans, Democrats and Independents typically align in a contested two-candidate race. The Bush/Kerry race is less favorable to

Democrats than the 2002 Perry/Sanchez gubernatorial race, but is probably a better measure of how Democrats would perform in a traditional two-candidate race against a better-known Republican. The results of the Bush/Kerry race were applied at the precinct level using turnout projected for 2006 (a non-presidential year) by the National Committee for an Effective Congress. (NCEC). This resulted in a baseline of 61.5% for Republicans and 38.5% for Democrats. Strayhorn must pull from either or both of these groups to gain her votes.

- **Kinky Friedman** – An assumption is made that Kinky Friedman will not emerge as a major candidate and will garner no more than 8 percent of the final vote. Also, it is assumed that neither he nor Strayhorn will attract enough “new” voters to materially affect the final turnout. In the projected scenarios, Friedman’s vote is calculated by assuming that 40 percent (of Friedman’s 8 percent) would come from those who would otherwise support Bell, 40 percent from those who would otherwise support Strayhorn and 20 percent from those who would otherwise support Perry.

Rick Perry

Perry’s challenge is straight-forward. He cannot let Carole Strayhorn cut deeply into his base, which explains Perry’s “hard right” strategy. As the Republican nominee, Perry would go into a two person race expecting about a 60 percent level of support, so he can afford to give up no more than one-third of his expected vote.

- Perry must make sure the “hard right” ideological base of the Republican Party is motivated to turn out at levels normal for a non-presidential year. The “hard right” vote is concentrated in heavily Anglo precincts in the outer suburbs and some rural parts of the state.
- If Strayhorn’s share of Perry’s vote approaches or exceeds one-third, he must hope that turnout among base Democratic voters is low, thereby “shrinking” the electorate so that “hard right” Republicans make up a higher percentage of overall turnout.

Perry Win Scenario

Strayhorn Captures	
35%	From Baseline GOP Vote (Perry)
20%	From Baseline Democratic Vote (Bell)

Candidate	Total %	Total Vote
Perry	38.4%	1,844,711
Bell	27.6%	1,324,923
Strayhorn	26.0%	1,250,620

Friedman	8.0%	384,370
Total 2006 Projected Vote	100%	4,804,624

Chris Bell

Bell also has a straightforward task and an unwitting ally in Strayhorn. He must hold his base knowing that, if nothing else, Strayhorn must spend time and money battling Perry for Republican voters.

- Bell can surrender no more than 10 percent of his expected Democratic vote.
- Bell must spend whatever organizational resources he has to turn out minority and other base Democratic voters to keep turnout at a normal non-presidential year level.
- Bell must count on Strayhorn’s appeal to disgruntled Republicans and her ability to pull more than one-third of the Republican vote away from Perry.
- To further hold his base (and perhaps appeal to some independents), Bell must remind Democrats that Strayhorn is not a true “independent,” but rather a reabeled partisan Republican politician. She shares responsibility for the failure of Republican leadership in Texas and would serve as a Republican, not an independent, Governor.

Bell Win Scenario

Strayhorn Captures	
45.0%	From Baseline GOP Vote (Perry)
7.0%	From Baseline Democratic Vote (Bell)

Candidate	Total %	Total Vote
Perry	32.24%	1,549,105
Bell	32.58%	1,565,103
Strayhorn	27.18%	1,305,975
Friedman	8.00%	384,364
Total 2006 Projected Vote	100.00%	4,804,546

Carole Strayhorn

Strayhorn has to win a difficult game of “playing both sides against the middle.” She has no natural base, so she has to carve one from a very large number of regular Republican voters. However, she must build this Republican base while establishing voter appeal to Democrats, with whom she has no natural affinity.

- Strayhorn must win almost one-half of the vote that would normally go to

Rick Perry.

- Strayhorn must win at least one-third of the Democratic vote that would normally go to Chris Bell, even though she has no natural ties or appeal to Democratic leaning voters.
- Strayhorn must hope that a large number of regular Democratic voters are willing to support her in the belief that Bell can't win, but who will also not get so discouraged that they fail to vote at all.

Strayhorn Win Scenario

Strayhorn Captures	
41%	From Baseline GOP Vote (Perry)
35%	From Baseline Democratic Vote (Bell)

Candidate	Total %	Total Vote
Perry	34.7%	1,667,334
Bell	21.8%	1,047,672
Strayhorn	35.5%	1,705,248
Friedman	8.0%	384,370
Total 2006 Projected Vote		4,804,624

Conclusion

- Carole Strayhorn's independent bid for Texas Governor has actually "shortened the field" for both Rick Perry and Chris Bell.
- Chris Bell's prospects move from the near impossible in a two-candidate race to very difficult in a multi-candidate race. By holding his base, he has a chance to win.
- Strayhorn, interestingly, appears to face the most difficult task of all – she must concentrate heavily on voters who typically vote Republican in a two party race for at least two reasons.
 1. Splitting or even winning a majority of Democratic voters does not get Strayhorn to a plurality. She must capture a major portion of votes that would otherwise go to Perry.
 2. Strayhorn is a Republican. She identifies herself as a Republican. She became and ran as a Republican before Rick Perry. (Source: *The Associated Press, 11/2/1986 and Associated Press, 5/11/1989*) Prior to 2006, she had voted in every single Republican primary since at least 1990. (Source: *Travis County Elections Administration*) She has close political and family ties to the Bush White House. In 2002, she endorsed, ran with, and campaigned for the entire Texas Republican ticket, including Rick Perry.

It is a long time until November and millions of dollars on message and

organization have yet to be spent, but those who assume that Strayhorn is the only alternative to Rick Perry may be surprised. Chris Bell has the luxury of working to encourage, organize and mobilize his base while Strayhorn and Perry must slug it out for Republican votes. Those who have already helped Carole Strayhorn because of their strong belief that Rick Perry has failed and should no longer be Texas Governor may want to “hedge their bet” and assist Chris Bell too.

Disagree?

At the [Lone Star Project Vote Simulator](#) you can enter your own estimates of the percentage vote Carole Strayhorn and Kinky Friedman will capture from Perry and Bell and then see the results.

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