



Texas House Drama Appears to Be Over; Enough Dems Show Up for Quorum

The Democrat denial-of-quorum attack that has stifled the Texas state government for 38 days appears to be at an end as enough of the fugitive Democrats who left the state to hide out in Washington, D.C., have returned to the Lone Star State to secure a quorum. GOP House Speaker Dade Phelan was finally able to convene a special session of the state's House of Representatives to order.

Nearly 60 Democrats [fled the state](#) in July in order to delay a vote on an election-integrity bill championed by Republicans and Governor Greg Abbott. With 99 members reporting on Thursday, a quorum was present. Originally, a quorum should have been at least 100 representatives, but San Antonio Democrat Leo Pacheco's resignation went into effect on Thursday, dropping the number required by one.

The Democrat siege against the state government finally ended when three Houston-area Democrats — Garnet Coleman, Armando Walle and Ana Hernandez — announced their intention to break ranks with their fellow Democrats earlier on Thursday. Coleman was not a part of the group that fled to Washington, but had been out since surgery to have a leg amputated. He showed up for work in a wheelchair pushed by Walle.

"We are proud of the heroic work and commitment we and our fellow Democratic caucus members have shown in breaking quorum in May and again over this summer. We took the fight for voting rights to Washington, D.C. and brought national attention to the partisan push in our state to weaken ballot access. Our efforts were successful and served as the primary catalyst to push Congress to take action on federal voter protection legislation," the three Democrats said in a [joint statement](#).

"Now, we continue the fight on the House floor."

Other Democrat,s including Representatives James Talarico, Joe Moody, Art Fierro, and Eddie Lucio, III had previously trickled back to Texas after initially joining in the D.C. circus.

Many of those continuing hold-out Democrats are not happy with the decision of those who headed back to Texas.

"We were literally on caucus calls for 2 hours this morning and none of the defecting Democrats mentioned they were planning on helping the Republicans pass voter suppression bills," Representative Ana-Marie Ramos vented on [Twitter](#). "Guess what the other defecting Democrats have accomplished by going back — NOTHING!"



SusanRisdon/iStock/Getty Images Plus
State Capitol in Austin, Texas



Written by [James Murphy](#) on August 20, 2021

Fellow Democrat Ryan Reynolds was upset that the three returning Democrats didn't communicate their intentions. "I'm extremely disappointed that they went back to make quorum. It was not what was ... communicated with our House Democratic caucus," Reynolds told Austin television station KXAN.

State Representative Michelle Beckley bluntly tweeted, "This is how Texas Democrats lose elections."

Republicans, on the other hand, were quite happy to see some of their wayward colleagues return. "It's been a very long summer. Been through a lot. I appreciate you all being here," Speaker Phelan said. "It's time to get back to the business of the people of Texas."

The GOP worked quickly once the House was back in session and scheduled a hearing on the new election integrity bill for Saturday.

"People want to get to work. They're relieved that after all this time that we've been held hostage in Austin that we can finally get down to business," said state Representative Jim Murphy, chairman of the House Republican Caucus.

The current special session is scheduled to end on September 5, which should be plenty of time for the Texas House of Representatives to vote on the new election bill. The Texas Senate passed the election-integrity bill on August 12 after a 15-hour filibuster by State Senator Carol Alvarado. It was an old-school filibuster, as Alvarado was not allowed to sit, lean on her desk, eat, or drink for the duration.

There should also be enough time to address other hot-button issues in the state such as bail reform and transgender athletes competing in women's sports in the state.

Earlier this week, the Texas Supreme Court affirmed that it was well within the state government's rights to arrest fugitive Democrats and force them to attend the special session. However, with a quorum again intact, it seems unlikely that that will happen.



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