



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on July 31, 2012

Texas Republican Runoff Race Has National Implications

The retirement of Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R) is leaving a coveted Senate seat up for grabs. In a Republican run-off election today, which — many Texans are promoted to quip — has forced them to decide “whom to vote against,” the Lone Star State’s Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst (pictured at right) faces off against Ted Cruz (pictured at left), former Texas Solicitor General. Cruz, if elected, would be the state’s first Latino senator.



Since no Democrat has won a statewide vote since 1994, the winner of the Republican run-off will likely snag the seat, but the race is widening a split in the party.

Wealthy incumbent Dewhurst, a former CIA employee, has been criticized as “[wishy-washy](#)” and “too-moderate to represent such a red state in Washington,” according to [statesman.com](#). Cruz is the Tea Party choice, who claims he is more conservative than Dewhurst. Indeed, Cruz claims his opponent “is too willing to [compromise](#) with political foes” according to a July 30 Bloomberg report.

[Sarah Palin](#), in fact, stumped for Cruz in the Woodlands, a Houston suburb, last Friday. A report from KHOU.11 News for July 27 carried this quote from Cruz: “Gov. Palin’s support has a tremendous impact in galvanizing conservatives.”

The race proving to divide Texas Republicans is one of the most expensive the party has seen since the 1990s. The campaigns of both Cruz and Dewhurst combined have spent over \$26 million through July 11, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. In addition another \$13.6 million has flowed in from outside groups.

The Bloomberg article continued, “There are already serious divisions between Republican elites and a big part of their grassroots,” said [Jim Henson](#), who directs the Texas Politics Project at the [University of Texas at Austin](#). “Just the fact that Cruz has made such a powerful run against Dewhurst, regardless of who wins, will have implications” for their party.

The outcome of this race is important for several reasons. If Cruz wins, activists in the Tea Party will have learned that their efforts have political impact and can defeat an established Republican in a big red state like Texas. And Cruz has counted on Tea Party support. He has also bagged [endorsements](#) from David Barton, Club for Growth, FreedomWorks, Young Conservatives of Texas, Rand Paul, and U.S. Senator Jim DeMint.

DeMint (R-S.C.) has said a Cruz win would “provide him with conservative reinforcements in Washington,” and has donated almost \$2 million to his campaign. If Cruz takes the seat, and keeps campaign promises such as ending ObamaCare, the more conservative faction of the party will have scored a victory.

By contrast, Dewhurst has the endorsement of Texas Governor Rick Perry, who has earned sharp criticism for such non-conservative moves as issuing an executive order forcing anti-STD inoculations on adolescent girls to pressing the implementation of the disastrous Trans Texas Corridor.



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About those Texans who are deciding whom to vote against? They're concerned about persistent allegations from Dewhurst that Cruz is a Chinese sympathizer. Cruz is supposed to have defended a Chinese firm against an American company in a trademark dispute. Yet, Dewhurst himself had ties to [China](#) in 1996. He served as CEO of Falcon Seaboard, a company with power projects in China.

Dewhurst's reputation as an establishment Republican has given Cruz a leg up in the race. Cruz is expected to deliver a much more conservative voting record, if elected, than Senator Hutchison and more than would Dewhurst. However, Cruz told an Allen, Texas, crowd last week that, while he disagreed with the actions of the UN, he was not in favor of withdrawal from the organization — he believes we need a "place to talk."

One point heavily in Cruz's favor is that he has made commitments on the issues during his campaign. If he fails to deliver, he'll have some explaining to do to Tea Party Republicans.

Either way, Texas voters are encouraged to thoroughly vet the candidates. And to remember that the real work of a responsible electorate starts after election choices are made — the office holders must be held accountable for their actions.



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