

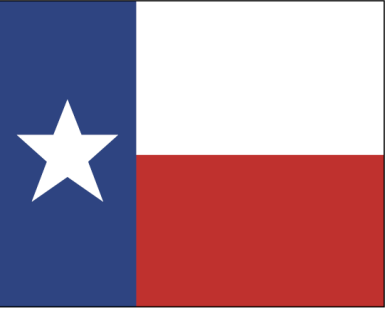
Chapter 5: Elections in Texas

Champagne & Harpham

State and Local Government

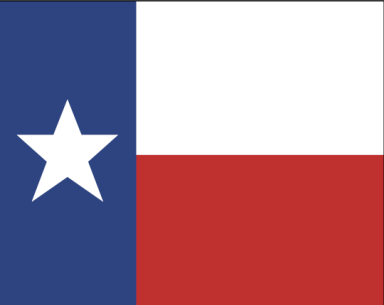
GOVT 2306

Professor Davis



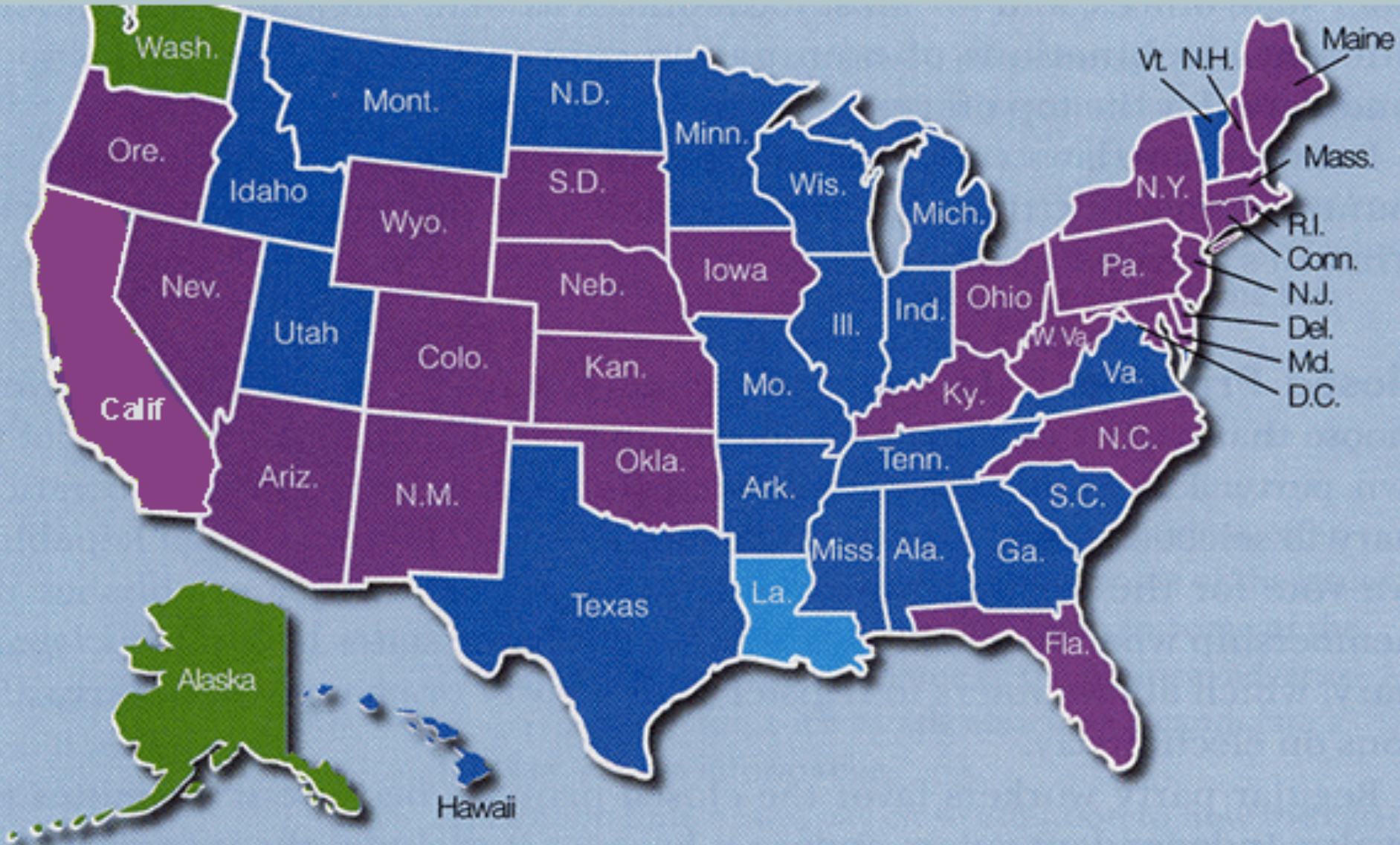
Features of Texas Elections

- Texans select candidates in all branches of government and in numerous local elections
- Texans also vote for changes to the state constitution
- One-party dominance and low levels of voter participation often leave the government exposed to special interests and big money



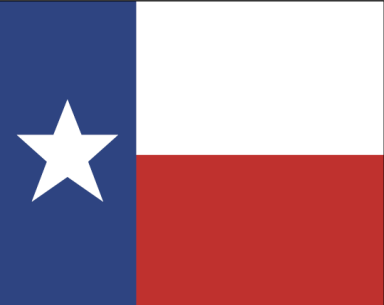
Primary Elections

- Democratic and Republican parties conduct **primary elections**, which determine a party's nominees for the general election
- If no candidate receives an absolute majority, there is a **runoff primary**
- An **open primary** allows voting in either, but not both, primaries
 - Any registered voter can participate in an open primary, regardless of party affiliation.
- In a **closed primary**, one must declare one's party affiliation



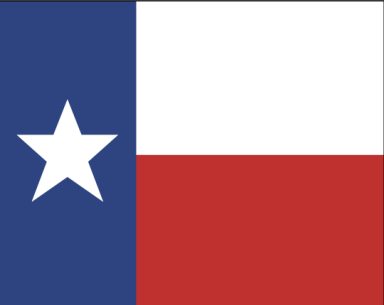
- Closed
- Open
- Blanket primary
- Nonpartisan primary

Primary Type by State



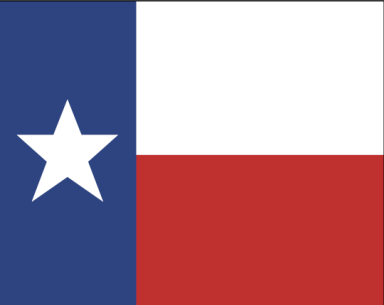
Types of Primaries Across States

- State Primary Election Types
 - [National Conference of State Legislature](#)



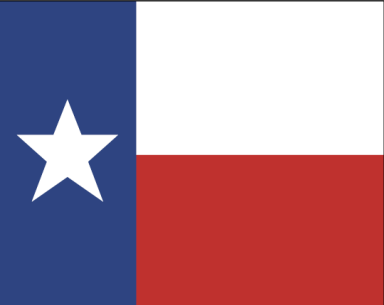
Is Texas really an open primary state?
Yes.

The Texas Constitution and election laws call the Texas system a closed primary because one must declare one's party affiliation before voting; but in practice, it is an open primary, because the voter declares a party affiliation only a few moments prior to voting in the primary.



General Elections

- In general elections, held in November, voters cast ballots to select public officials
- Major state officials are elected in nonpresidential election years
- Local elections often take place outside the early November time period and have low voter turnout
- [Voter Turnout](#), Office of Texas Secretary of State
- [Voter turnout graphs](#)



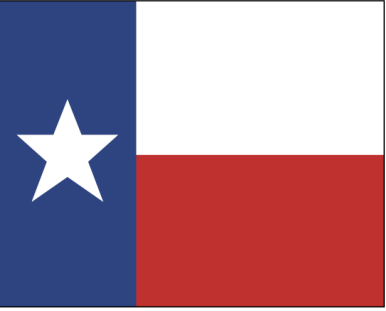
Special Elections and Independent Elections

Special Election

- An election not held on a regularly scheduled basis
- Used to fill vacancies in office, to give approval to borrow money, or to ratify or reject amendments to the Texas Constitution. The dates are specified by the Texas legislature.

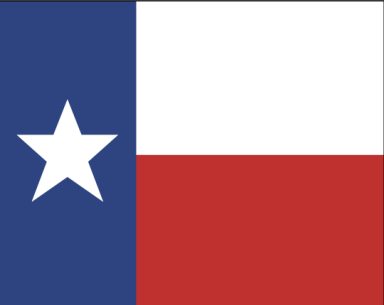
Running as an Independent

- It is unusual to run for office in Texas as an independent
- Tough to get on the ballot
- Lack of party support



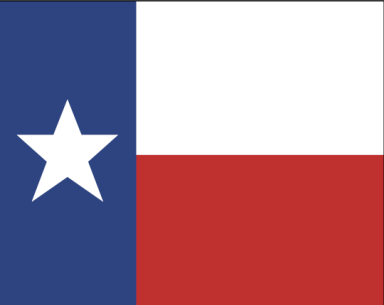
Participation in Elections

- Voting
- Signing petitions
- Protesting
- Writing letters to the newspaper and elected officials



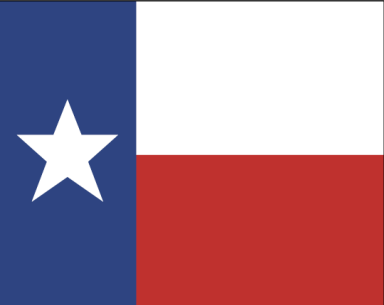
Early Restrictions on Voting

- Women obtained the right to vote in all elections in 1920 as a result of the **Nineteenth Amendment**
- The **poll tax** required voters to pay a tax
 - Tended to disenfranchise poorer people
- Texas also required **early registration** of voters long before the general election
 - Effectively prevented migrant workers from voting



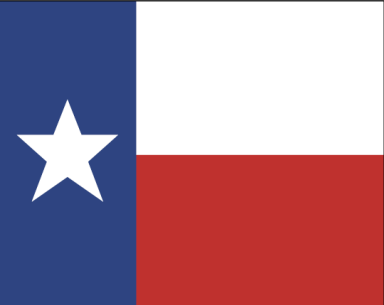
Early Restrictions on Voting

- The **white primary**, designed to minimize the strength of African American voters, was the most oppressive restriction on the franchise
- Both the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments have been applied in arguments against the white primary
 - *Smith v. Allwright* (1944)



Expanding the Right to Vote

- **Voting Rights Act of 1965**
 - legislation passed in order to ensure that African Americans would be guaranteed the right to vote
 - Renewed several times since 1965, the act also prevents the dilution of minority voting strength.
- The act had an important influence on elections in Texas
 - African Americans had been systematically denied the ability to register to vote
 - Federal examiners were sent to southern states to register voters



Qualifications to Vote

Contracting the Franchise?

- A Texas voter ID law may make it more difficult for some people to vote

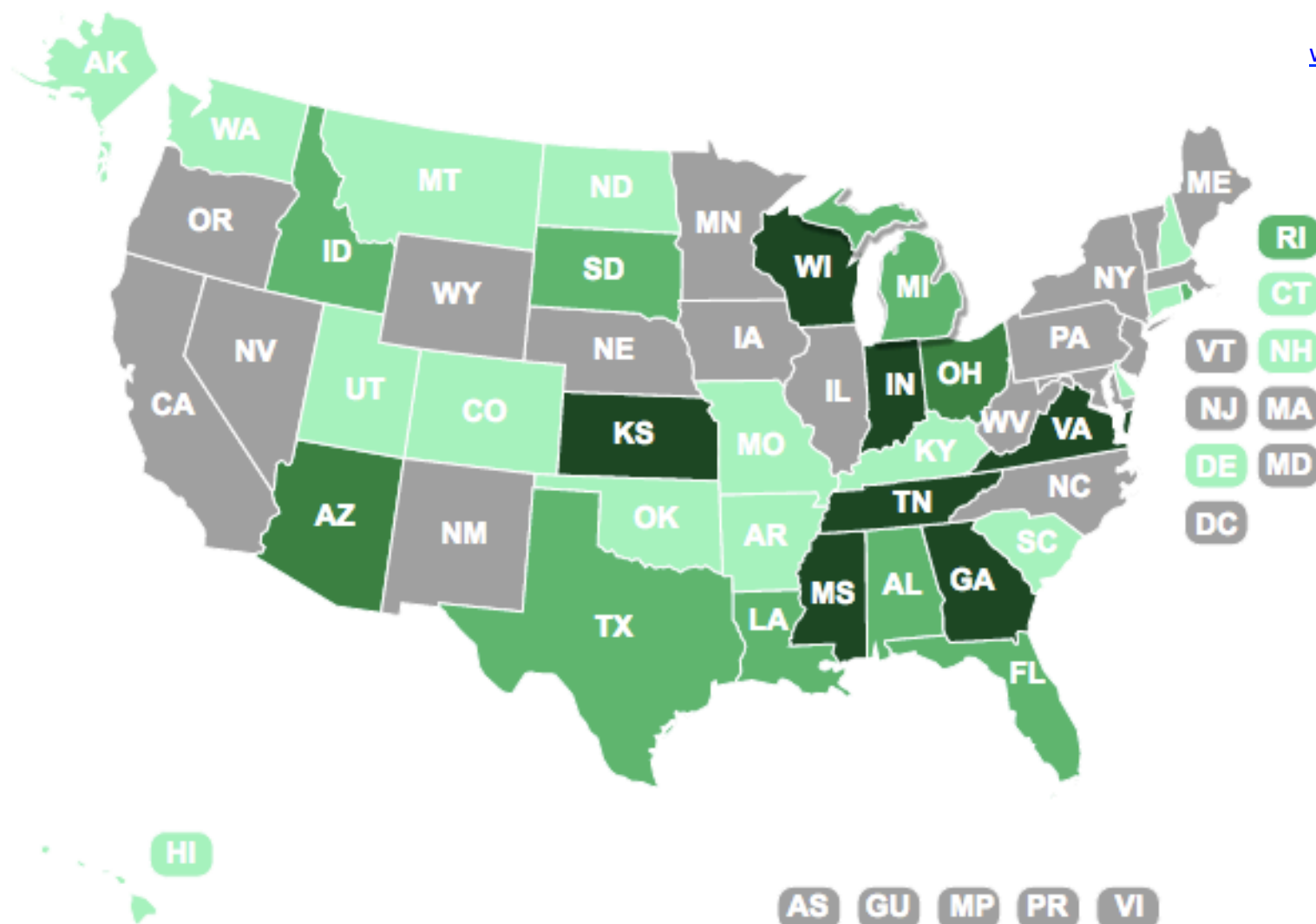
[Video: Texas Voter ID Law – Huffington Post](#)

Qualifications to Vote

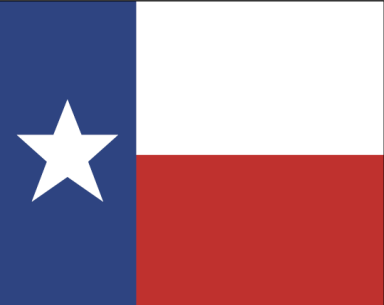
1. Eighteen years of age
2. A U.S. citizen
3. A resident of Texas for 30 days
4. A resident of the county for 30 days
 - The **motor voter law** allows voter registration when applying for or renewing a driver's license

Voter Identification Laws in Effect in 2016

Strict Photo ID	Strict Non-Photo ID	Photo ID requested	ID requested; photo not required	No document required to vote



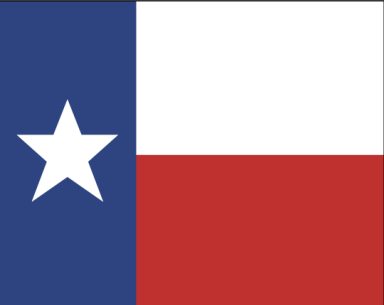
www.ncsl.org



Low Voter Turnout

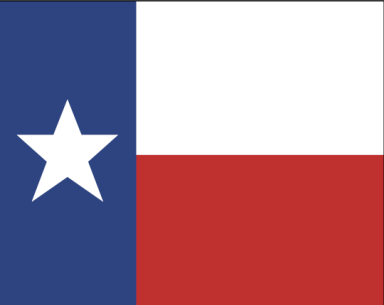
Factors that contribute to low voter turnout

- Low levels of educational attainment, low income levels, and high poverty rates
 - A young population located in the South
 - The traditionalistic/individualistic political culture
 - Candidate-centered elections and little competition
 - Lack of media attention to substantive issues
 - Large numbers of undocumented residents and felons
- ❖ Education and income, often referred to as socioeconomic status (SES), appear to be the most important factors.



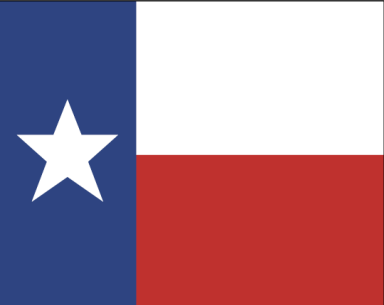
Redistricting in Texas

- The process of **reapportionment** determines how many congressional seats each state will receive
- The process of **redistricting** is used to redraw district lines in the Texas legislature and U.S. House
 - The Voting Rights Act's **preclearance** process has complicated the situation
 - The majority party uses redistricting to retain power by creating as many friendly districts as it can.
 - One possible solution is the use of commissions



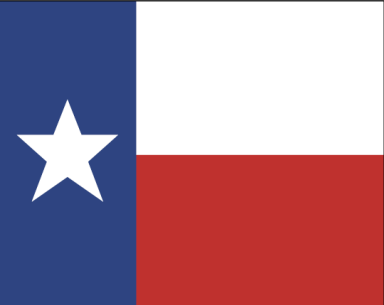
Contemporary Barriers to Voting

- In many cities in Texas, council members are elected at-large; there are no individual districts
- Other tactics sometimes in play include:
 - Reduced number of polling places
 - Broken voting machines
 - Misleading information provided to voters
 - Voter intimidation



Election Campaigns

- Campaigns are efforts to win elections
- Recently, the distinguishing feature of campaigns was the lack of emphasis on state issues
- Campaigns are enormously expensive
- Campaigns are subject to finance laws
- The single biggest expense of a campaign is media ads



Election Policy Changes and Voting Concerns

How can policy changes have an influence with respect to the following concerns?

- Election competitiveness
- Redistricting issues and their impacts
- Demographic changes and representational models
- Costs of campaigning for public office
- Challenges of low voter turnout in the Lone Star State