

Trump-backed fascist wins Texas Republican primary

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Texas state Attorney General Ken Paxton won Tuesday's runoff election for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate, defeating incumbent four-term Senator John Cornyn in a contest largely decided by a last-minute endorsement from Donald Trump.

The impact of the endorsement was expressed more in the collapse of Cornyn's vote compared to the primary election in April than in any gains for Paxton. Cornyn led narrowly in the first vote, 42 to 40 percent, with each candidate receiving about 900,000 votes. A third ultra-right candidate, Representative Wesley Hunt, received nearly 300,000 votes. In the runoff, with Hunt eliminated, Cornyn's total fell to barely 500,000 votes, while Paxton declined only slightly to 886,000 votes.

Cornyn, 74, and first elected in 2002, had overwhelming support from the Republican Party establishment and big business. He massively outspent Paxton in what became the most expensive state primary contest in American history, costing an estimated \$128 million. Cornyn's own campaign spent just under \$7 million, but Republican-aligned political action committees pumped in a staggering \$85 million, bringing the pro-Cornyn total to nearly three times that spent on behalf of Paxton.

Paxton was viewed as a problematic candidate by Senate Republicans and their corporate backers. He was the subject of a long-running corruption investigation and was actually impeached by the Republican-controlled state assembly. He survived only because the state Senate failed to reach the two-thirds vote required to convict him.

What endeared him to Trump was his leading role in the Republican campaign to steal the 2020 election. Paxton was one of a handful of Republican elected officials who joined Trump in addressing the January 6, 2021, rally outside the White House, which preceded the attack by a fascist mob on the US Capitol.

Paxton spearheaded the effort by Republican state attorneys general to have the electoral votes of

"battleground" states like Pennsylvania handed over to Trump. He was the lead plaintiff in a suit that was tossed out by the Supreme Court on a 9-0 vote, without a single justice, including the three appointed by Trump, agreeing that Texas could interfere in the elections conducted by another state.

The Texas attorney general is also notorious for his leading role in the bullying of abortion providers and women seeking abortions and his open demonization of Muslims and other minorities. He also sought to take over election administration in Houston, peddling Trump's baseless and racist claims of widespread voter fraud in heavily minority areas.

The *Wall Street Journal* noted in an editorial: "Mr. Trump apparently could never forgive Mr. Cornyn's 2023 electoral analysis that 'President Trump's time has passed him by.'" Cornyn did not initially support Trump's campaign for reelection, although he was a loyal handraiser for Trump's nominees and policies in both his first and second terms.

Paxton's campaign against Cornyn made little mention of current political issues. A *Washington Post* columnist noted: "Absent from Paxton's stump speech was any mention of the Iran war or Americans' growing dissatisfaction with the economy. As he listed legal challenges against the Democrats he has brought as attorney general, Paxton seemed to suggest that the country's biggest problems were culture wars and hangovers from the Biden and Obama administrations."

Paxton will now face the Democratic nominee, state legislator James Talarico, in November in what is certain to be the most expensive Senate campaign in US history. Talarico raised \$27 million in the first quarter alone, allowing him to swamp his primary rival, Representative Jasmine Crockett. Polling on the general election, still five months away, suggests a close contest.

Talarico has emphasized his religious background as a

former seminarian who is comfortable appealing to Christian fundamentalists and other right-wing supporters of Trump and the Republican Party.

There were other fascistic candidates nominated to statewide office (three-term Governor Greg Abbott won the Republican nomination last month and did not face a runoff).

Particular note should be taken of the outcome of the statewide vote for a seat on the Texas Railroad Commission, which contrary to its name is actually responsible for regulating oil pipelines and the drilling of oil wells. Incumbent Republican Jim Wright was defeated by Bo French, chairman of the Tarrant County (Fort Worth) Republican Party.

French had the backing of Paxton and hosted vigilante gunman Kyle Rittenhouse at a campaign rally, while Wright had the support of both Governor Abbott and Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, an even more right-wing figure.

French campaigned as the representative of smaller, independent oil drillers whose interests diverge from the large global oil giants. But his main focus was a vitriolic anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant campaign that amounted to incitement of genocide. He called for deporting 100 million people from the United States—nearly a third of the entire population.

He vilified the incumbent as “Jihadi Jim,” claiming that Wright had supported a Saudi company, which was responsible for the water pollution crisis in Corpus Christi that forced residents to use bottled water for weeks. Last year, French posted a poll asking Fort Worth Republicans to weigh in on whether Jews or Muslims posed a “bigger threat” to the United States. He also described Texas mosques as “training centers” for people “to rape your wife and daughter.”

This gutter Nazi will now be the favorite to win a six-year seat on the panel that regulates the oil industry in the largest oil-producing state.



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