

To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group
Date: May 20, 2026
Re: NEW POLL RESULTS: Texas Republican Runoff Voters Actually Support Stronger Gun Laws

In 2022, Republican Senator John Cornyn co-authored the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act — the most meaningful and comprehensive federal gun violence prevention legislation in a generation. Since then, political analysts have wondered if supporting background checks and other reforms would cost Cornyn in a Republican primary.

A new GIFFORDS survey of 600 likely Texas Republican runoff voters answers that question. The research finds that Texas Republicans both reject gun lobby messaging and are prioritizing other issues when considering their vote. The Republican voters — including those who support the candidacy of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton — overwhelmingly support the policies in the 2022 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, and perhaps surprisingly, also support further reforms to close loopholes, require background checks on all gun sales, and crack down on ghost guns.

The sample is representative of the modern Texas Republican primary electorate. 85% of Republican runoff voters are favorable toward President Donald Trump, and 82% are favorable toward Texas Governor Greg Abbott. 67% of respondents report being either gun owners themselves or living with a gun owner. Paxton leads the head-to-head with Cornyn 52-40.

Key Findings

Republican runoff voters have plenty of reasons to oppose Cornyn — but gun rights are at the bottom of the list. Right now, Cornyn trails Paxton in the runoff election by double digits (40% Cornyn/52% Paxton). Voters are deciding based on concerns about the direction of the country, immigration and border security, support for Donald Trump, and more. Only 5% of voters recall hearing anything about Cornyn’s record on guns — a number that would surely be higher if Paxton’s own research said attacking Cornyn on guns would work — and concerns about gun rights and access to guns pale in comparison to the host of other priorities voters are weighing.

Factors Runoff Voters Considering in Making Vote Choice

% Most Important Factor	Overall	Paxton Voters
Concerns about the direction the country is heading in	73	72
A candidate who will be the strongest voice for Texas	66	73
Concerns about border security and immigration	64	73
Needing to put a check on the Democratic Party's extremism in Washington	62	69
Concerns about the economy, inflation, and government spending	59	56
Concerns about crime and public safety	55	58
A candidate who will fiercely fight for my beliefs	55	
A candidate’s support for President Trump	45	50
A candidate’s willingness to take on the establishment of both parties	44	46
Concerns about gun rights and access to guns	43	51
A candidate’s experience and record in office	28	29

Messaging against Cornyn’s record on guns is the least resonant of all the attacks against him.

Among the messages in seven recent anti-Cornyn ads GIFFORDS tested, Republican runoff voters rate attacks on Cornyn’s gun rights record the least important in deciding their vote. This is even the case among voters who support Paxton's challenge against Cornyn. Texas Republican runoff voters rate messages attacking Cornyn for failing to support the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act, being called a Republican in Name Only (“RINO”) by Trump, betraying Trump, being out of touch with Texas MAGA Republicans, and being pro-amnesty as mattering more in deciding their vote.

Below are GOP MAGA attacks that were featured in anti-Cornyn spots during the campaign.

How Much Each Anti-Cornyn Message Matters in Vote Choice

	% Matters	Overall	Paxton Voters
<u>SAVE ACT</u>		34	54
<u>RINO/FAKE MAGA</u>		33	54
<u>BETRAYED TRUMP</u>		33	53
<u>ASYLUM/OUT OF TOUCH WITH MAGA</u>		31	50
<u>AMNESTY</u>		29	50
<u>GUNS</u>		30	49
<u>GUNS II</u>		26	42

Why? Republican runoff voters support common sense gun safety policies, including those in 2022’s Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Large majorities of Republican runoff voters support a host of the gun safety policies, including every major component of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act that Cornyn helped write. Should Paxton make it to the general election, his opposition could prove to be a liability with Texas swing voters given that even conservative primary voters support these measures.

Support for Gun Safety Policies

	% Support	Overall	Paxton Voters
*Including juvenile criminal history and mental health records in background checks for gun purchasers under 21		90	85
*Making gun trafficking and straw purchasing federal crimes punishable by up to 15 years in prison		86	85
Closing loopholes in the law that allow criminals and other dangerous people to get their hands on a gun		83	77
Requiring background checks on all gun sales		82	72
*Blocking unmarried domestic abusers from owning guns		80	75
Cracking down on untraceable guns sold without background checks, also known as ghost guns		76	62
*Requiring unlicensed gun dealers to conduct background checks when they “predominantly” sell guns to “earn a profit”		76	69
*Increasing federal support for school-based mental health services for students		76	71

*Increasing support for community violence intervention programs, which use local peacekeepers to stop violence from happening in the first place	73	63
*Enacting red flag laws that allow law enforcement to obtain a court order to temporarily remove firearms from a person who poses an immediate threat to themselves or others	66	54

*** Denotes provision in the 2022 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act**

ABOUT THE POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 600 likely Republican runoff voters in Texas between May 6 and May 11, 2026. The survey has a margin of error of +/-4.0%. Of the 600 interviews, 400 were conducted by telephone and 200 via text invitation to web-based survey. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of likely voters are properly represented.