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SPOTLIGHT

Will the GOP's Texas Map Be Ready for 2026?

If the map passes, many legal questions remain.

By James A. Downs

Texas Republicans unveiled their map proposal and early prognostications suggest Republicans may secure up to 30 seats as a result of the changes. Republicans currently hold 25 of the state's 38 districts.

A hearing will be held on the map later this week, and the Legislature will likely vote on the lines in August. Texas Democrats affected by the gerrymander slammed the lines as racist and illegal.

But no matter what happens in the immediacy, the only certainty is the uncertainty. The lines likely face a long legal road ahead.

If enacted, the map is all but certain to be challenged in court. Multiple national Democratic operatives, as well as election law experts, told *Hotline* they believed the map would violate minority voter protections.

On a press call with reporters Thursday, National Democratic Redistricting Committee President John Bisognano said he expects a multitude of lawsuits "in hours not days," if the proposed map passes

"Texas has a long history of maps being struck down because of racial discrimination," said Dan Vicuña, senior policy director of voting and fair representation at Common Cause. Vicuña told *Hotline* that the organization is currently analyzing the lines.

"I have no doubt that our allies in the civil rights space are doing the same ... and I think they have been preparing for this and will go to court very quickly," said Vicuña.

A key question over the map is timing. The filing deadline for primary candidates in Texas is Dec. 8, leaving just a few months to answer major legal questions in time for the 2026 elections. One possible scenario is a preliminary injunction if it appears the plaintiffs—likely voting rights groups—are probable to win the case. Such a ruling would stay the map ahead of the midterms as it awaits trial, but, even then, this result is no guarantee.

“Texas is going to try to drag this out as long as possible,” said Justin Levitt, a Loyola University Law professor and former senior advisor for democracy and voting rights in the Biden administration. Levitt added that there will be no full answer to the redistricting question before the elections. He also said a redistricting case would likely appear before the Supreme Court because of a “procedural quirk” involving redistricting and constitutional claims.

One domino may have fallen in this redistricting puzzle, but more questions await.

Hotline will be following it all.

— *James A. Downs*

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Quote of the Day

" Trump will talk about G-D-P while Americans are worried about E-G-G. " — Democratic strategist Jesse Ferguson, NOTUS, 7/31

HOTLINE LATEST EDITION

Kamala Harris leaves door open for 2028 primary as Democrats try to move past 2024

By Erika Filter

DEMOCRATS: Hesitation Toward Potential Harris Run in 2028

While former Vice President Kamala Harris would likely “enter the 2028 presidential primary as the most recognizable Democrat with the broadest fund-raising network, she would also carry the baggage of a 2024 campaign that Democrats do not view with much fondness.”

- **BOTTOM LINE.** Harris is “expected to form an organization shortly that would allow her to raise funds and pay for travel and political activities.”
- **THE MEDIA JUNKET.** Harris, “who was widely criticized last year for doing very few media interviews, is expected to begin talking with podcast hosts and journalists beginning after Labor Day.” (*New York Times*) See the *States* section for more.
- **BOOKED IT.** Harris announced an upcoming book chronicling her experience campaigning, set to come out on Sept. 23. (X)
- **WE MOVE.** Former DNC Vice Chair David Hogg “is undeterred” by early losses from younger candidates his PAC, Leaders We Deserve, has backed.
- **THE MAMDANI FACTOR.** Leaders We Deserve’s biggest win, New York Assemblyman Zohran Mamdani’s (D) victory in the New York City mayoral primary, had little to do with Leaders We Deserve. “The group did not publicly endorse him until just a few days before the primary, when it was clear an upset was on the cards. It did ultimately give \$300,000, however, to a super PAC supporting Mamdani and other candidates against former” New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (I), “the largest single contribution to the super PAC.”

- **FOXXHOLE.** “Hogg attributed” activist Deja Foxx’s (D) loss in the primary for AZ-07 “partly to the timing of the special election, which took place in the middle of summer, a time when college students—a key constituency for Hogg’s candidates—aren’t on campus.”
- **TRACK RECORD.** “During the 2024 election cycle,” Leaders We Deserve “endorsed 12 candidates across state and federal races, and four won.” (*Slate*)

REPUBLICANS: MAGA’s Potential Distancing from Israel

“Amid scenes of starvation in Gaza, the MAGA movement has become an unlikely epicenter of the national reckoning over America's relationship with Israel.”

- **GENERATIONAL CHANGE.** As younger conservatives come into their own without the historical context surrounding Israel, they increasingly want to cut ties with Israel. MAGA podcaster Jack Posobiec said those over 40 support Israel, while those under 40 are more skeptical.
- **WHAT I SAY GOES.** The shift puts President Trump, “who has described himself as the most pro-Israel president in U.S. history ... at odds with many of his youngest supporters,” but his stance still dominates the broader movement. (*Axios*)

2028 WATCH: Sarah Huckabee Sanders to Visit SC

Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders (R) “is set to headline the latest iteration of an event previously billed as the largest annual gathering of Republicans in South Carolina on Aug. 18 in Anderson.”

- **STUMPING GROUND.** “Historically a catalyst for Republican White House hopefuls, the South Carolina venue provides Sanders a chance to introduce herself to a large number—typically around 2,000—of party activists.” (AP)

HOTLINE LATEST EDITION

Michael Whatley to announce North Carolina Senate bid today

By Nicholas Anastácio

BATTLE FOR THE SENATE: Battleground Senators Secure Multimillion-Dollar Earmarks

Vulnerable appropriators are looking to direct millions in congressionally directed spending to their states ahead of tough reelection bids.

- **MAINE ATTRACTION.** Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) is looking to make the most of being chair of the Appropriations Committee as her reelection approaches. The senator “has loaded up her panel’s FY2026 spending bills with more than \$810 million in earmarks and directed spending for Maine.”
- **DOWN THE LIST.** Collins secured \$460 million in upgrades to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, \$135 million in transportation earmarks, \$59 million for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure projects, \$52 million for the University of Maine system, and tens of millions of dollars for her state’s fishing industry.
- **GEORGIA GAINS.** Sen. Jon Ossoff (D-GA), the ranking member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies, secured more than \$550 million for Georgia military construction projects and nearly \$79 million across 88 earmarks.

- **NOT GUARANTEED.** “Yet with the likelihood of a stopgap funding bill and possibly a government shutdown increasing, these Senate spending bills are at risk of falling by the wayside.” (*Punchbowl News*)

GEORGIA: Several GOP State Legislators Back Mike Collins

Rep. Mike Collins (R-10) continues to rack up GOP endorsements in his campaign against Sen. Jon Ossoff (D). Collins faces Rep. Buddy Carter (R-01) in the primary and could face former Tennessee football Coach Derek Dooley (R) as well.

- **JOINING THE PARADE.** More than 20 GOP state legislators are currently backing Collins’ campaign. State Sens. Carden Summers, Sam Watson, and Rick Williams and state Reps. Josh Bonner, Clint Crowe, Jutt Howard, Rey Martinez, Carmen Rice, Jason Ridley, and Brad Thomas join the congressman’s list of supporters.
- **PEACH STATE PLAY.** Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, once a Georgia congressman, also endorsed Collins. (X)

IOWA: 99 Counties, 99 Days for Nathan Sage

Former Knoxville Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Nathan Sage (D) is planning a 99-county tour across Iowa in just 99 days as he challenges Sen. Joni Ernst (R). Sage will kick off his tour on Aug. 1 in Warren County as he looks to boost his name identification.

- **HIS COMPETITION.** He faces state Sen. Zach Wahls (D) and 2020 IA-04 nominee J.D. Scholten (D) in the Democratic primary. State Rep. Josh Turek (D) and Des Moines School Board Chair Jackie Norris (D) are considering bids. (*Des Moines Register*)

NORTH CAROLINA: Michael Whatley to Announce Campaign Today

RNC Chairman Michael Whatley is set to officially announce his campaign to succeed retiring Sen. Thom Tillis (R) in Gastonia today. Whatley is considered the frontrunner for the GOP nomination, receiving President Trump’s blessing to run for the open seat. (WRAL)

- **MODERATES UNITE!** Modsquad Action, a group dedicated to electing more moderate Senate Democrats, is launching a \$15,000 ad buy supporting former Gov. Roy Cooper’s (D) bid. The spot characterizes the former governor as one who “gets stuff done,” highlighting his role in expanding Medicaid in North Carolina.
- **JOIN US.** “The spending represents ModSquad’s first expenditure of the 2026 cycle and the group’s first ever spending on a non-incumbent Democratic challenger.” The group is chaired by Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) and includes several battleground state senators as members. (*Punchbowl News*)

HOTLINE LATEST EDITION

Danny Davis set to retire

By James A. Downs and Amelia Monroe

RACE FOR THE HOUSE: Republicans Turn to Latino Recruitment Efforts

“Republicans are leaning into a simple strategy to win over the crucial bloc of Latino voters: recruit them as candidates.”

- **FARM SYSTEM.** Republicans hope to recruit Latino candidates to help establish these “pro-Trump voters” into consistent Republican voters. The shift has put Democrats not accustomed to competitive reelections into potential battleground races. Democrats say Hispanic Democrats were able to win in competitive seats even with President Trump on the ballot because “they’re rooted in their communities.” (*Punchbowl News*)

REDISTRICTING ROUNDUP: Democrats React to New Texas Map

“Texas GOP lawmakers released their first draft of the state’s new congressional map Wednesday, proposing revamped district lines that attempt to flip five Democratic seats in next year’s midterm elections.” The map targets two seats in the Rio Grande Valley, and a seat in Austin, Dallas, and Houston. President Trump won each of the newly drawn seats by 10 points or more.

- **EFFORTS TO RESIST.** Democrats immediately decried its release and could flee the state to deny a legislative quorum. “The draft ... will likely change before the final map is approved by both chambers and signed” by the governor. A lawsuit against the map is all but certain. (*Texas Tribune*)
- **THE GOLDEN STATE STRIKES BACK.** In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) “has told aides” he will respond with redistricting action of his own if Texas passes its map. Democrats in California would target at least five Republicans in a redistricting effort. The Legislature would draft the map and then put it before the voters in a special election. “The referendum plan is subject to change and has yet to receive final approval from Newsom, who has also publicly suggested the Legislature could change the maps without voter approval.” (*Texas Tribune*)
- **FL.** In the Sunshine State, Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) said he’s considering asking his Legislature to redraw his map and added that the “Trump administration was considering whether to approve a new census before the end of the decade,” which could create an extra seat in Florida. Republicans hold a 20-8 advantage in the congressional delegation. A new Census would be legally murky, at best. (*Politico Florida*)

PRIMARY ROUNDUP: Danny Davis to Hang Up the Cleats

Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL 07) is expected to call it quits today at a press conference. Davis, 83, will likely announce his retirement, setting off a fierce scramble to replace the 30-year incumbent.

- **ALWAYS READY.** Chicago City Treasurer Melissa Conyears-Ervin (D), who ran in the primary against Davis last year, jumped in the race today. Her announcement video “strikes a populist tone.” Attorney Richard Boykin (D), Davis’ former chief of staff, is already in the race, as is businessman Jason Friedman (D). State Rep. La Shawn Ford (D) previously launched a campaign and is expected to secure a Davis endorsement.
- **IL-09.** Entrepreneur Bruce Leon (D) launched a campaign to succeed retiring Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D). Leon founded an HR outsourcing company and serves in local Cook County politics. He is self-funding his campaign in the crowded primary. (*Illinois Playbook*)
- **GA-10.** State Rep. Houston Gaines (R) officially entered the open race for Rep. Mike Collins’ (R) seat, who is instead opting for a Senate bid. Gaines is an early frontrunner with a close allyship with Gov. Brian Kemp (R), more than \$900,000 in his campaign account, and endorsements from dozens of state legislators and officials.
- **RACE FOR RED.** Collins’ victory in 2022 sets the seat up for an “all-out GOP brawl.” Collins defeated a former Democrat endorsed by President Trump during a runoff election.
- **POTENTIAL FIELD.** Other Republicans are eyeing the race, including former Rep. Paul Broun (R), who lost in 2022. (*Atlanta-Journal Constitution*)

COLORADO: Veterans PAC Push for Blue

VoteVets PAC, which primarily endorses Democratic veteran candidates, announced its dual endorsement for Army veteran Jessica Killin (D) in CO-05 and Navy veteran Eileen Laubacher (D) in CO-04.

- **IN THE MONEY.** Last election cycle, VoteVets funneled in more than \$50 million to help elect Democratic candidates. More than 140 candidates they invested in clinched victory despite the major Republican shift that was seen in 2024. (release)

NORTH CAROLINA 11: Democrat Puts All His Eggs in One Congressional Basket

Farmer Jamie Ager (D) launched his campaign to take on Rep. Chuck Edwards (R). Ager touts his generational ties to the agriculture industry throughout the state, citing first-hand experience of the negative impact tariffs have had on farmers. Ager will join a crowded primary, taking on at least four other Democratic candidates.

- **WATCH.** In his launch video, Ager leans into his experience working on his family farm. (release)

NEW YORK 17: Former DCCC Chair Apparently Won't Run

Former Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D) won't seek a rematch with Rep. Mike Lawler (R), according to Westchester County Democratic Party Chair Suzanne Berger. Berger said she and Maloney spoke recently, where he said he "doesn't want people in the district diverting energy toward his possible return."

- **HOLD THE PHONE.** A staffer for Maloney reached out to say he is considering a run following the publication of this story.
- **CONSOLIDATION EFFORT.** Westchester County Executive Ken Jenkins believes the Democratic field—which is seven right now—needs to shrink and "the point of floating Maloney as a possible candidate could be to consolidate the field." Jenkins is not a candidate. (*City & State New York*)

HOTLINE LATEST EDITION

Kamala Harris won't run for California Governor

By Abby Turner

STATE OF THE STATES: DGA Raises \$50M

The DGA announced it raised \$50 million in the first six months of the year. The amount is more than double what the organization raised by this time in 2021, when New Jersey and Virginia had gubernatorial races. (release)

ARIZONA: State Dems Launch War Room Against GOP Gubernatorial Candidates

State Democrats launched a rapid response hub called the Copper State War Room that "will hold extremist politicians," naming Rep. Andy Biggs (R-05) and Karrin Taylor Robson (R), "in Arizona accountable for their toxic and dangerous agenda ahead of the 2026 midterms." Gov. Katie Hobbs (D) has not officially declared her run for a second term. (release)

CALIFORNIA: Kamala Harris Forgoes Speculated Gubernatorial Bid

Former Vice President Kamala Harris announced she won't run for governor after months of speculation that she would join the race to succeed term-limited Gov. Gavin Newsom (D). Harris said: "For now, my leadership—and public service—will not be in elected office." (X)

- **HER OPTIONS.** "Many in her orbit viewed her next steps as a binary choice: either she run for governor and forgo an opportunity at another presidential run, or she skip her home state run with an eye toward the next presidential cycle."
- **WITH THE CREW.** She "convened a small team of advisers in Los Angeles to weigh all her options," including "running for governor, not running to keep 2028 open and ending her career as an elected official altogether." (*NOTUS*)
- **THE FIELD IS OPEN.** "Harris' decision to stay out of the governor's race could reenergize the field as major donors and possible candidates come off the sidelines. ... Limited public polling has shown that without Harris in the field," former Rep. Katie Porter (D) "has an edge over her Democratic rivals, but many voters are undecided."
- **WHO WILL EMERGE.** Still, "the field of candidates for the governor's mansion will still lack a candidate with real star power. Though the list of Democrats running reads like a who's-who of political power in the Golden State, none are household names."
- **PELOSI HAS HER SAY.** Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-11) "announced her support of" Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis (D).
- **ALREADY IN.** Others running include former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa (D), former state Senate leader Toni Atkins (D), and former Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra (D). (*Los Angeles Times*)
- **HOTLINE ANALYSIS.** The race is officially underway. With Harris forgoing a run to succeed term-limited Newsom, the Democratic field is now wide open. With Harris out, and little polling conducted without her in the field, the race lacks a clear frontrunner. But that will quickly change. Donors who had largely held back while waiting on Harris' decision will likely reengage in the race as endorsements start rolling in. Pelosi got a head start, throwing her support behind Kounalakis shortly after Harris' announcement. With nearly 10 candidates, any edge could make the difference in a crowded field.

OHIO: Billionaire Backs Pro-Vivek Ramaswamy Super PAC

Billionaire Jeff Yass "gave \$10 million in March to Victors not Victims," a super PAC supporting 2024 presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy's (R) campaign. The super PAC "raised \$16.8 million in the first half of 2025, according to a filing the Super PAC made on Wednesday morning." (*Signal Cleveland*)

VIRGINIA: House Democratic Caucus Places \$9M TV Reservation

"Virginia's House Democratic Caucus announced an over \$9 million television advertising reservation in" the "Washington, Richmond, Norfolk, and Roanoke media markets." The buy includes "over \$8.5 million in the last three weeks before Election Day."

- **BIG MOVES.** The caucus said "the reservation is the earliest and largest single-day TV reservation in its history. Additionally, it's the earliest fall-time reservation made by any committee or campaign in Virginia's 2025 campaign cycle so far." (*The Hill*)
- **JONES DECLINES DEBATE.** Former Delegate Jay Jones (D) "has declined an invitation to participate in a televised debate with" state Attorney General Jason Miyares (R). (WJLA)

OVERLOOKED**Right Hand Man—Or Woman**

By Amelia Monroe

At the center of the interest around President Trump's relationship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein sits the U.S. attorney general. Pam Bondi has worked to sweep the recent explosion of interest in Epstein under the rug. In doing so, Bondi joins the ranks of seven other attorney generals who have solidified a legacy of being the buffer against political controversy. Each one has earned their own nickname: The Foxtrotter, the Wingman, the Co-Conspirator, the Company Man, the Stand-Up Lady, the Witness, and the Wallflower. Attorney General William P. Rogers, known as the Foxtrotter, operated under President Eisenhower and was pivotal in solidifying President Nixon's time in office and aided him during his many scandals. Attorney General Robert Kennedy, known as the Wingman, made headlines leading a Justice Department that aided his brother, President Kennedy, in multiple ways. Bobby was known for keeping a watchful eye on FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who worked to undermine political moves made by the Kennedys, and reworking the DOJ to undermine Hoover's goals.