

Chapter 1: The Environment of Texas Politics: 1-1 Everything Is Changing in Texas

Book Title: Practicing Texas Politics

Printed By: Andrea Ivory (ajackson027@gmail.com)

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1-1 Everything Is Changing in Texas

They say everything is bigger in Texas. Even the stereotypes are big—big trucks, big belt buckles, big hair—but if that’s all you know about the Lone Star State, you don’t know today’s Texas. Perhaps the biggest things about Texas are the changes it has seen and the diversity that has resulted. It’s the land of Willie Nelson, for certain; but it’s also the land of Selena Gomez, Beyoncé Knowles, Chingo Bling, Leon Bridges, Chamillionaire, The Mars Volta, Kacey Musgraves, Post Malone, and Mitch Grassi. It’s still the land of cattle barons and oil tycoons; but it’s also the land of high-tech pioneers, international traders, defense contractors, manufacturers, and service providers. Texas’s stunning growth in recent decades has brought massive transformation and breathtaking variety in its people, economy, and politics.

If you live here, these transformations and the way our political system handles them have a significant impact on your life. Better understanding Texas and its political system will help you navigate these changes and contribute to the development of a better government. If you don’t live here, pay attention anyway; the Texas experience is a preview of the changes facing the United States as a whole. The Lone Star State’s successes and failures in negotiating these changes and balancing diverse interests will provide lessons for the rest of the nation. And you’ll probably end up moving here anyway—everyone else seems to be. Since 2005, Texas has welcomed nearly twice the number of new arrivals as any other state. In the past few decades, tens of millions have told their place of origin what David Crockett allegedly told the people of his Kentucky district: “You may all go to hell, and I’ll go to Texas.” Because of the sheer size of Texas, what happens here also has an impact on the direction of the United States as a whole. 🌟 In 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau ranked Texas second largest among the 50 states, with a population approaching 29 million. That places the Lone Star State between California with its 39.5 million residents and Florida with more than 21 million.

Substantial changes and diverse interests put democratic institutions of government to the test. The increased population of the Lone Star State includes over 21 million men and women of voting age (18 years or older). 🌟

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Our analysis of the politics of Texas’s state and local governments will help you understand political action and prepare you to be an active and informed participant in the political life of the state and its counties, cities, and special districts. As Texas Congresswoman Barbara

Jordan once said, “The stakes are too high for government to be a spectator sport.” It’s time to suit up and play. To help you play effectively, we will introduce you to the playing field (government, political culture, land, and economy of the state), the players (citizens, activists, politicians, public employees, and opinion leaders), and the rules of the game (constitution, laws, and political processes).

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