

A photograph of the Texas State Capitol building in Austin, Texas, featuring its iconic dome and classical architecture. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text is centered over the lower half of the image.

Texas Legislative Issues 2025

The 2026 Republican U.S. Senate Primary Election



Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON



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February 2025

The Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston conducted an online survey of Texans age 18 and older to assess their preferences and opinions about legislation being considered by the Texas Legislature during the 2025 regular session along with other salient political issues. The survey was fielded between January 13-21 2025, in English and Spanish, via a YouGov panel of Texas adults. Representative of the Texas adult population, the analysis population of 1,200, with a margin of error of +/- 2.83%, was matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race/ethnicity and education. The population for this sixth report is limited to two inter-related populations: Texans who are likely to vote in the 2026 Republican primary (population of 556 with a margin of error of +/- 4.16%) and Texans who voted in the 2022 and/or 2024 Republican primaries (population of 377 with a margin of error of +/- 5.05%).

The Texas Legislative Issues 2025 study includes six reports. The first report examined Texans' top priorities for using the state's \$24 billion dollar budget surplus and their positions on Education Savings Account (ESA) and sales tax exemption legislation. The second report focused on Texans' attitudes on immigration and border security. The third report examined the opinions of Texans on legislation which would legalize different forms of gambling and marijuana use in Texas. The fourth report analyzed Texans' opinions on proposed legislation in the policy areas of abortion and gun control. The fifth report explored Texans' opinions on election administration in 2024 and proposed election reforms as well as their evaluations of 10 political figures. This sixth and final report focuses on the 2026 Republican Texas U.S. Senate primary election.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

28% of likely 2026 Republican primary voters say they definitely would vote to re-elect U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, while 34% report they probably would vote to re-elect Cornyn.

13% of likely 2026 Republican primary voters say they definitely would vote for someone other than Cornyn, while 25% report they probably would vote for someone other than Cornyn.

Among a combined (averaged) population of past and future Republican primary voters:

32% definitely would consider voting for John Cornyn in a 2026 GOP U.S. Senate primary.

43% might consider voting for Cornyn in a 2026 GOP U.S. Senate primary.

15% would never vote for Cornyn in a 2026 GOP U.S. Senate primary.

10% do not know enough about Cornyn to have an opinion about voting for him.

Among a combined (averaged) population of past and future Republican primary voters:

- 36% definitely would consider voting for Ken Paxton in a 2026 GOP U.S. Senate primary.
- 32% might consider voting for Paxton in a 2026 GOP U.S. Senate primary.
- 19% would never vote for Paxton in a 2026 GOP U.S. Senate primary.
- 13% do not know enough about Paxton to have an opinion about voting for him.

Among a combined (averaged) population of past and future Republican primary voters:

- 24% definitely would consider voting for Dan Crenshaw in a 2026 GOP U.S. Senate primary.
- 30% might consider voting for Crenshaw in a 2026 GOP U.S. Senate primary.
- 18% would never vote for Crenshaw in a 2026 GOP U.S. Senate primary.
- 28% do not know enough about Crenshaw to have an opinion about voting for him.

Seven other potential 2026 GOP U.S. Senate candidates have a notably higher proportion of past and future Republican primary voters who do not know enough about them to have an opinion about voting for them in a 2026 U.S. Senate primary: Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar (41%), State Sen. Angela Paxton (42%), former State Sen. Don Huffines (46%), Texas Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham (48%), and State Sen. Mayes Middleton (54%).

60% of these past and future Republican primary voters have a favorable opinion of Paxton, while 53% have a favorable opinion of Cornyn.

25% of these past and future Republican primary voters have an unfavorable opinion of Paxton, while 35% have an unfavorable opinion of Cornyn.

Paxton's net-favorability rating (percentage favorable minus percentage unfavorable) among these past and future Republican primary voters is +35%, while Cornyn's net-favorability rating is +18%.

89% of these past and future Republican primary voters have a favorable opinion of President Donald Trump, while 11% have an unfavorable opinion of Trump.

82% of these past and future Republican primary voters have a favorable opinion of Texas Governor Greg Abbott, while 15% have an unfavorable opinion of Abbott.

78% of these past and future Republican primary voters have a favorable opinion of U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, while 19% have an unfavorable opinion of Cruz.

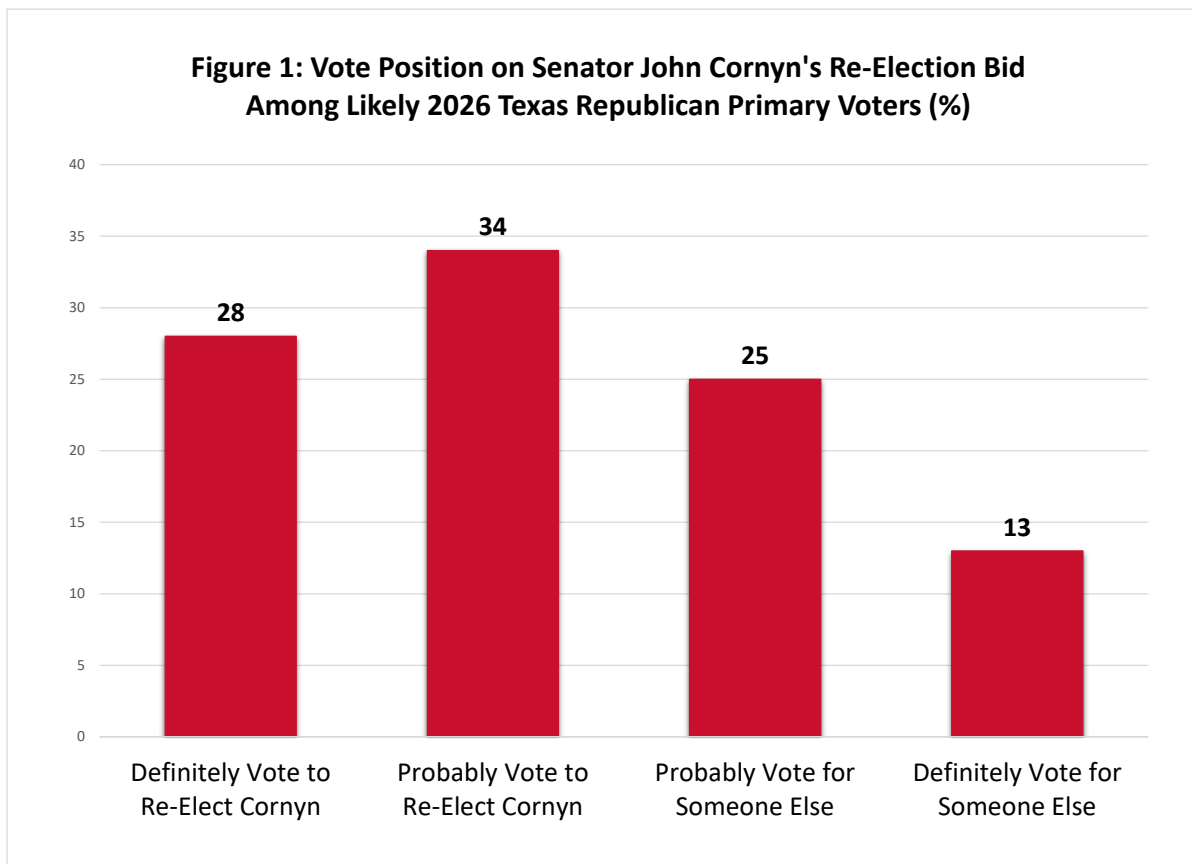
VOTING TO RE-ELECT U.S. SENATOR JOHN CORNYN IN THE 2026 REPUBLICAN PRIMARY

The Republican and Independent survey respondents were asked:

If the March 2026 Texas Republican U.S. Senate Primary Election were held today, would you:

- *Definitely vote to re-elect Senator John Cornyn*
- *Probably vote to re-elect Senator John Cornyn*
- *Probably vote for someone else*
- *Definitely vote for someone else*
- *Would not vote in the 2026 Republican primary election*

Figure 1 provides the distribution of those Republicans and Independents who indicated that they plan to vote in the March 2026 Republican primary election. A little more than one in four (28%) of these likely primary voters report that they would definitely plan on voting to re-elect Cornyn in 2026, while 34% say they would probably vote to re-elect Cornyn. In contrast, 13% of these likely primary voters indicate they definitely would vote for someone else, with 25% saying they would probably vote for someone else. Independents account for one-fifth of these likely 2026 GOP primary voters, and a majority (62%) of these Independents either probably (40%) or definitely (22%) would vote for someone else, compared to 32% of Republicans who either probably (22%) or definitely (10%) would vote for someone else.



VOTING FOR 10 POTENTIAL CANDIDATES IN THE 2026 REPUBLICAN U.S. SENATE PRIMARY

The Republican and Independent survey respondents were asked:

Independently of who else is running, please indicate for these potential 2026 Republican U.S. Senate candidates if they are someone you definitely would consider voting for in the primary, someone you might consider voting for in the primary, someone you never would vote for in the primary, or someone you don't know enough about to have an opinion either way.

The rotated list of potential candidates included:

- *Senator John Cornyn*
- *Attorney General Ken Paxton*
- *Congressman Dan Crenshaw*
- *Congressman Ronny Jackson*
- *Congressman Michael McCaul*
- *Comptroller Glenn Hegar*
- *Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham*
- *State Senator Angela Paxton*
- *State Senator Mayes Middleton*
- *Former State Senator Don Huffines*

Table 1 provides the proportion of Texans who voted in the 2022 and/or 2024 (henceforth 2022/2024) Republican primaries and the proportion of Texans who are likely to vote in the 2026 Republican primary, who definitely would consider voting for, might consider voting for and never would vote for Ken Paxton and John Cornyn in the 2026 U.S. Senate primary in Texas, along with the proportion who do not know enough about these two potential candidates to have an opinion about voting for them.

Table 1. The 2026 GOP U.S. Senate Primary Vote for John Cornyn & Ken Paxton Among Two Populations (%)

Potential Candidate	2026 Vote Position	2022/2024 Primary Voters	2026 Primary Voters
U.S. Sen. John Cornyn	Definitely Consider Voting For	34	31
	Might Consider Voting For	43	42
	Never Would Vote For	16	15
	Don't Know	7	12
State AG Ken Paxton	Definitely Consider Voting For	39	33
	Might Consider Voting For	32	33
	Never Would Vote For	18	19
	Don't Know	11	15

Among the population of 2022/2024 Republican primary voters, 34% definitely would consider voting for Cornyn for the U.S. Senate and 43% might consider voting for him, with 16% reporting that they would never vote for the U.S. Senator and 7% not knowing enough about Cornyn to have an opinion about voting for him.

Among the population of 2022/2024 Republican primary voters, 39% definitely would consider voting for Paxton for the U.S. Senate and 32% might consider voting for him, with 18% reporting that they would never vote for the Texas attorney general and 11% not knowing enough about Paxton to have an opinion about voting for him.

Among the population of likely 2026 Republican primary voters, 31% definitely would consider voting for Cornyn for the U.S. Senate and 42% might consider voting for him, with 15% reporting that they would never vote for the U.S. senator and 12% not knowing enough about Cornyn to have an opinion about voting for him.

Among the population of likely 2026 Republican primary voters, 33% definitely would consider voting for Paxton for the U.S. Senate and 33% might consider voting for him, with 19% reporting that they would never vote for the Texas attorney general and 15% not knowing enough about Paxton to have an opinion about voting for him.

Figure 2 summarizes the data in Table 1 by averaging the proportion of the population of 2022/2024 GOP primary voters and the proportion of the population of likely 2026 GOP primary voters to produce a summary proportion of primary voters who definitely would consider voting for Paxton (36%) and Cornyn (32%), who might consider voting for Paxton (32%) and Cornyn (43%), who would never vote for Paxton (19%) and Cornyn (15%), and who do not know enough about Paxton (13%) and Cornyn (10%) to have an opinion about voting for them.

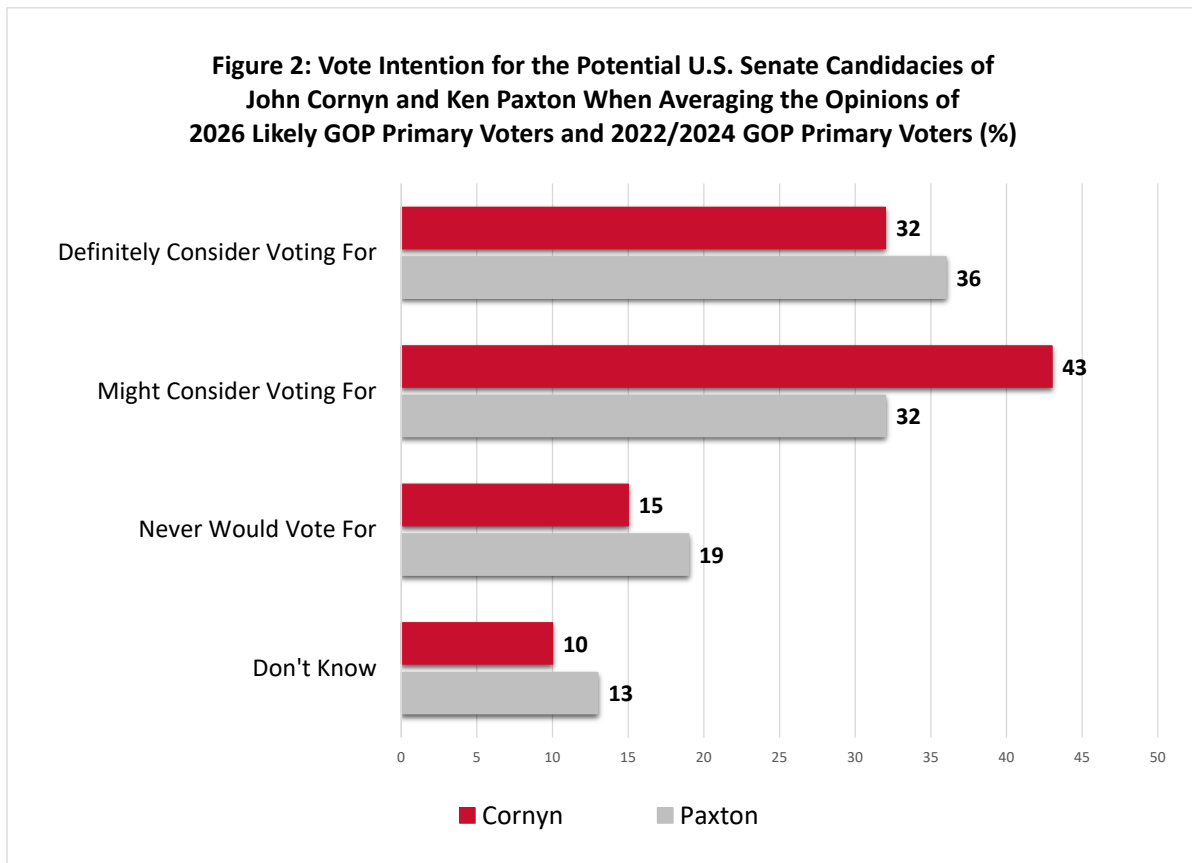


Table 2 provides the proportion of Texans who voted in the 2022 and/or 2024 Republican primaries and the proportion of Texans who are likely to vote in the 2026 Republican primary who definitely would consider voting for, might consider voting for and never would vote for eight other potential candidates in the 2026 Republican U.S. Senate primary in Texas, along with the proportion who do not know enough about these eight potential candidates to have an opinion about them.

Table 2. The 2026 GOP U.S Senate Primary Vote for Eight Other Potential Candidates Among Two Populations (%)

Potential Candidate	2026 Vote Position	2022/2024 Primary Voters	2026 Primary Voters
U.S. Rep. Dan Crenshaw	Definitely Consider Voting For	26	21
	Might Consider Voting For	31	30
	Never Would Vote For	18	18
	Don't Know	25	31
U.S. Rep. Ronny Jackson	Definitely Consider Voting For	19	16
	Might Consider Voting For	30	30
	Never Would Vote For	6	6
	Don't Know	45	48
U.S. Rep. Michael McCaul	Definitely Consider Voting For	20	15
	Might Consider Voting For	30	31
	Never Would Vote For	8	8
	Don't Know	42	46
Comptroller Glenn Hegar	Definitely Consider Voting For	21	16
	Might Consider Voting For	33	31
	Never Would Vote For	7	9
	Don't Know	39	44
Land Comm'r Dawn Buckingham	Definitely Consider Voting For	21	15
	Might Consider Voting For	24	27
	Never Would Vote For	9	8
	Don't Know	46	50
State Sen. Mayes Middleton	Definitely Consider Voting For	13	10
	Might Consider Voting For	27	27
	Never Would Vote For	7	7
	Don't Know	53	56
State Sen. Angela Paxton	Definitely Consider Voting For	18	14
	Might Consider Voting For	30	32
	Never Would Vote For	11	11
	Don't Know	41	43
Former State Sen. Don Huffines	Definitely Consider Voting For	15	11
	Might Consider Voting For	28	28
	Never Would Vote For	13	13
	Don't Know	44	48

With the exception of U.S. Representative Dan Crenshaw, a substantial proportion of the 2022/2024 and of the likely 2026 Republican primary voters do not know enough about these potential U.S. Senate candidates to have an opinion about their candidacy. While between a quarter and a third (25% and 31%, respectively) do not know enough about Crenshaw to have an opinion about his candidacy, the proportion who don't know enough about the other seven candidates ranges from a little less than two-fifths to a little more than half.

Crenshaw is the candidate in Table 2 with the highest proportion of 2022/2024 and likely 2026 GOP primary voters who report they would definitely consider voting for him (26% and 21%, respectively), but also is the candidate with the highest proportion who say they would never vote him (18% and 18%). Another 31% and 30% indicate they might consider voting for Crenshaw if he were to run for the U.S. Senate.

U.S. Representatives Ronny Jackson (19% and 16%) and Michael McCaul (20% and 15%) along with Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar (21% and 16%) and Texas Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham (21% and 15%) have nearly identical proportions of respective 2022/2024 and likely 2026 Republican primary voters who definitely would consider voting them. Jackson (30% and 30%), McCaul (30% and 31%), Hegar (33% and 31%), in particular, but, also Buckingham (24% and 27%), to a lesser extent, also have very comparable proportions of primary voters who might consider voting for them.

Texas State Senators Mayes Middleton (13% and 10%) and Angela Paxton (18% and 14%), along with former Texas State Senator Don Huffines (15% and 11%), have respective proportions of 2022/2024 and likely 2026 GOP primary voters who definitely would vote for them which range from 10% to 18%. Between a quarter and a third of these respective primary voters might consider voting for Middleton (27% and 27%), Paxton (30% and 32%), and Huffines (28% and 28%), while approximately one in ten would never vote for Middleton (7% and 7%), Paxton (11% and 11%) and Huffines (13% and 13%).

FAVORABLE AND UNFAVORABLE EVALUATIONS OF NINE REPUBLICAN POLITICAL FIGURES

The respondents were asked:

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following political figures, or, do you not know enough about them to have an opinion.

The rotated response options included:

- *Greg Abbott*
- *Dustin Burrows*
- *John Cornyn*
- *Ted Cruz*
- *Elon Musk*
- *Dan Patrick*
- *Ken Paxton*
- *Donald Trump*
- *JD Vance*

Table 3 provides the proportion of the population of 2022/2024 Republican primary voters with a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable and very unfavorable opinion of these nine Republican political figures, along with the proportion who did not know enough about the political figure to have an opinion of them, one way or another.

Table 3. Favorable & Unfavorable Evaluations of Republican Political Figures Among 2022/2024 GOP Primary Voters (%)

Political Figure	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Don't Know Enough
Donald Trump	72	19	3	6	0
Greg Abbott	59	25	4	10	2
JD Vance	57	25	7	8	3
Ted Cruz	52	28	10	7	3
Elon Musk	46	31	11	9	3
Dan Patrick	33	29	11	9	18
Ken Paxton	29	34	11	14	12
John Cornyn	20	34	21	16	9
Dustin Burrows	8	16	11	6	59

More than nine out of ten (91%) of these 2022/2024 primary voters have either a very favorable (72%) or somewhat favorable (19%) opinion of President Donald Trump. At least four-fifths of these 2022/2024 GOP primary voters have a favorable opinion of Texas Governor Greg Abbott (84%, 59% very favorable), Vice President JD Vance (82%, 57% very favorable), and U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (80%, 52% very favorable). More than three-fourths of these 2022/2024 primary voters have a favorable opinion of Elon Musk (77%, 46% very favorable), while more than three-fifths have a favorable opinion of Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick (62%, 33% very favorable). Approximately three-fifths (59%) do not know enough about Texas House Speaker Dustin Burrows to have an opinion about him.

A little more than three-fifths (63%) of these 2022/2024 primary voters have either a very favorable (29%) or somewhat favorable (34%) opinion of Paxton. A little more than one-half (54%) have either a very favorable (20%) or somewhat favorable (34%) opinion of Cornyn. Conversely, 25% of these primary voters have an unfavorable opinion of Paxton (14% very unfavorable) while 37% have an unfavorable opinion of Cornyn (16% very unfavorable). Approximately one in ten of these primary voters don't know enough about Paxton (12%) and Cornyn (9%) to have an opinion of them.

Table 4 provides the proportion of the population of likely 2026 Republican primary voters with a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable and very unfavorable opinion of these nine Republican political figures, along with the proportion who did not know enough about the political figure to have an opinion of them, one way or another.

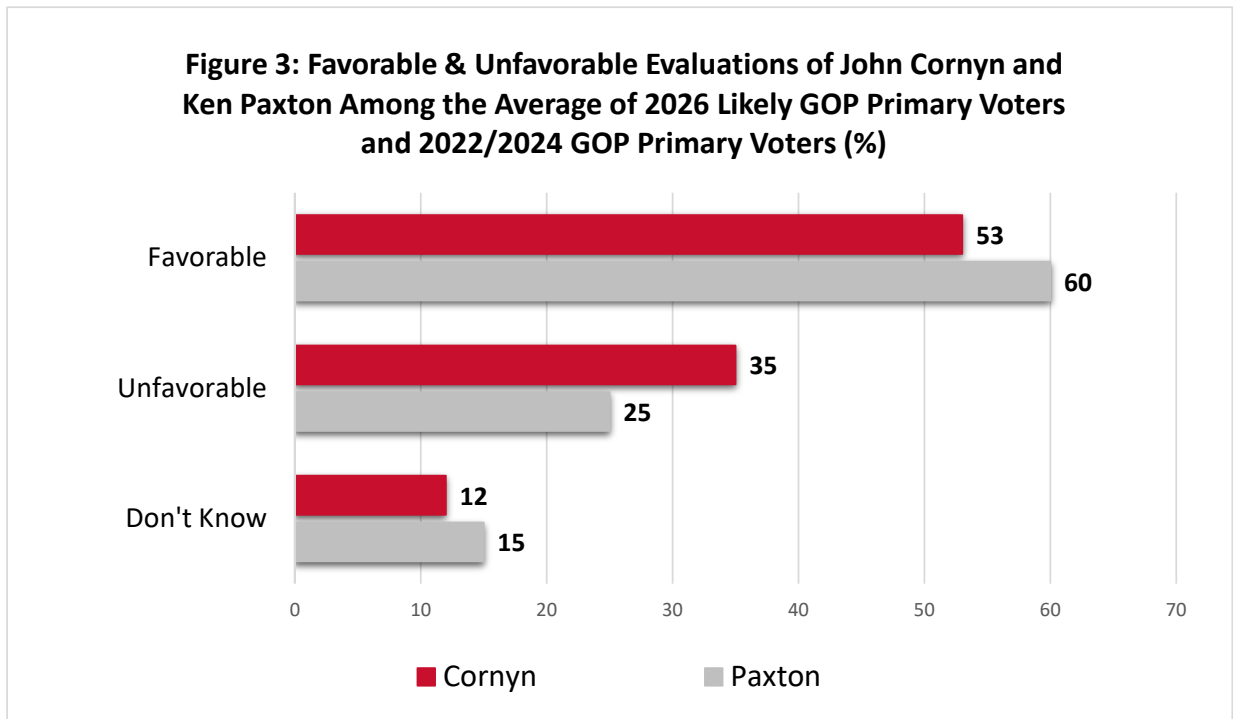
Table 4. Favorable & Unfavorable Evaluations of Republican Political Figures Among Likely 2026 GOP Primary Voters (%)

Political Figure	Very Favorable	Somewhat Favorable	Somewhat Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Don't Know Enough
Donald Trump	64	23	6	7	1
Greg Abbott	52	27	7	10	4
JD Vance	49	26	10	8	7
Ted Cruz	45	31	11	10	3
Elon Musk	43	32	13	9	4
Dan Patrick	27	28	11	10	24
Ken Paxton	25	31	13	14	17
John Cornyn	19	33	18	16	14
Dustin Burrows	6	17	10	5	62

Almost nine out of ten (87%) of these likely 2026 GOP primary voters have either a very favorable (64%) or somewhat favorable (23%) opinion of Trump. At least three-quarters of these 2026 likely GOP primary voters have a favorable opinion of Abbott (79%, 52% very favorable), Cruz (76%, 45% very favorable), Vance (75%, 49% very favorable), and Musk (75%, 43% very favorable). More than half of these likely 2026 GOP primary voters have a favorable opinion of Patrick (55%, 27% very favorable), while 62% do not know enough about Burrows to have an opinion.

A little more than one-half (56%) of these likely 2026 GOP primary voters have either a very favorable (25%) or somewhat favorable (31%) opinion of Paxton. A little more than one-half (51%) also have either a very favorable (19%) or somewhat favorable (33%) opinion of Cornyn. Conversely, 27% of these primary voters have an unfavorable opinion of Paxton (14% very unfavorable) while 34% have an unfavorable opinion of Cornyn (16% very unfavorable), with 17% and 14% not knowing enough about Paxton and Cornyn, respectively, to have an opinion about voting for them.

Figure 3 summarizes the data in Tables 3 and 4 by providing the average proportion of the population of 2022/2024 primary voters and of the population of likely 2026 Republican primary voters with a favorable (very or somewhat) or unfavorable (very or somewhat) opinion of Paxton and Cornyn. Slightly more of these Republican primary voters have a favorable opinion of Paxton than Cornyn (60% vs. 53%) and have an unfavorable opinion of Cornyn than Paxton (35% vs. 25%), with an average of 15% and 12% not knowing enough about Paxton and Cornyn to be able to evaluate them either favorably or unfavorably. Based on the data in Figure 3, Paxton's net-favorability rating (percentage favorable minus percentage unfavorable) is +35%, while Cornyn's net-favorability rating is +18%.



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RECOMMENDED CITATION

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