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Texas Is Campaign Issue in California Ads

By **JESSE MCKINLEY**

SAN FRANCISCO — In baseball, the San Francisco Giants and the Texas Rangers will meet in the World Series beginning Wednesday. In politics, California and the Lone Star State have been battling for a while.

At stake are both old-fashioned bragging rights and the fate of more specific issues, like California's landmark 2006 law that set limits on greenhouse gas emissions. A [ballot measure](#) next week would effectively suspend the law, if passed.

Much of the financial support for the measure, which is on the ballot as Proposition 23, has come from Texas-based [oil](#) companies. And those companies have become the target of an in-your-face advertising campaign against the proposition.

In one commercial, a man is seen tied to a chair in a darkened room, surrounded by a number of sinister characters. A caption identifies the bad guys as "Texas Oil;" the bound man — played by the actor David Arquette — is labeled "California."

"So are you going to vote yes on Prop 23?" one of the bad guys says.

"No," Mr. Arquette responds. He then slips his bonds and beats up several of his captors before a caption flashes onscreen.

"[Don't Mess With California](#)," it reads, a twist on the well-known Texas antilittering campaign. "Vote No on Prop 23."

The commercial is one several in California that have painted Texas as the enemy, including one featuring the president of the state chapter of the American Lung Association, Jane Warner, calling out two Texas-based companies — Tesoro and Valero — for supporting Proposition 23.

"These oil companies are putting this proposition on our ballot for their bottom line," she says. The ad ends with an image of a smoggy Los Angeles skyline and a child using an inhaler.

The interstate debate has also played a part in the California races for governor and United States senator, with Democrats and Republicans taking sharply different positions.

[Meg Whitman](#), the Republican nominee for governor, who is trailing the Democrat Jerry Brown in polls in her bid to become the first woman to lead the state, names Texas in her stump speech as a fierce competitor for business and jobs, saying that Gov. [Rick Perry](#) of Texas comes to California to go "hunting" for companies. Ms. Whitman, the former chief executive of eBay, also cites Texas as a place where there is no capital gains tax, something she would like to see in California.

In a television interview with the CBS affiliate in Sacramento, Ms. Whitman was asked if California should "try to be more like Texas."

"Texas isn't a perfect state on every dimension," she said, but it does "have a much better business climate than we do."

"They are creating jobs; they are attracting businesses from all over the country," Ms. Whitman said. "And you know they are looking to California for jobs because they know in Texas taxes are lower, regulations are more streamlined, and they compete."

Those comments are echoed by [Carly Fiorina](#), the Republican who is challenging Senator [Barbara Boxer](#). Ms. Fiorina says that Texas is "fighting harder for our jobs." She also has a personal connection to the state: she was born in Texas and has family roots there, something she highlighted in a [2003 speech](#) when she was the chief executive of Hewlett-Packard.

In the speech, Ms. Fiorina said that while her home was in California, "I actually am a Texan."

"I actually come from a long line of farmers and ranchers and Texas preachers," Ms. Fiorina said.

That the two states are at odds is not surprising. California, the nation's most-populous state, also has the largest economy, despite its recent problems, including chronic budget deficits and an unemployment rate of more than 12 percent. Texas is No. 2 in population and close behind California in economic muscle.

California's problems have given Texans a chance to crow. Governor Perry, a Republican, lists a number of favorable comparisons between his state and California on his campaign Web site, including a link to [an article from Investor's Business Daily](#) that "explains that Texas is leaving California in the dust."

"Texas is leading the country out of the recession," the article reads. "California is holding it back."

Mr. Perry's Web site also cites an October report from a conservative research group, the Texas Public Policy Foundation — "Competitive States 2010: Texas Versus California" — that outlined the economic advantages that Texas enjoyed over California. The report included data from the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) that showed "Texas had gained 129,000 new jobs in the last year — more than half of the national total — while California had lost 112,000."

Democrats in California, meanwhile, have seized on Proposition 23 as a way to express home-state pride and — maybe — win some votes. Mr. Brown, a lifelong Californian who served as governor from 1975 to 1983, has attacked Texas oil companies in debates for their support

of the ballot measure.

“They’re putting up all the money,” he said.

Mayor [Gavin Newsom](#) of San Francisco, who is running for lieutenant governor, has also made Texas an issue in the California campaign.

Last week, he staged a Texas-style barbecue in front of the Capitol in Sacramento “to defend California’s environment from Texas polluters.” He has also filmed a “Don’t Mess With California” commercial that attacks his Republican opponent, Lt. Gov. [Abel Maldonado](#), for his connections with energy companies.

In an interview, Mr. Newsom said he was “sick of Californians being the butt of jokes” about their economic woes. And while he said he did not hate Texas — “I don’t have any animus, except for these oil companies.”

“The question is, ‘Is Texas a better place?’ ” Mr. Newsom said. “And I would say not.”