



Texas Republican candidates hold first debate

CHRIS TOMLINSON, Associated Press

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AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Former Texas Solicitor General Ted Cruz repeatedly challenged Lt. Gov. [David Dewhurst](#)'s conservative credentials Thursday night in the first formal debate of the five Republican candidates for the [U.S. Senate](#).

Dewhurst spent much of the evening defending himself, while touting his experience leading the [Texas Senate](#) since 2003. Former ESPN commentator [Craig James](#) and businessman [Glenn Addison](#) urged voters not to send a career politician to Washington and echoed tea party positions calling for strict adherence to

the U.S. Constitution.

Former Dallas Mayor [Tom Leppert](#) called on voters to ignore fancy speeches and to elect someone who would get things done, saying his experience as a businessman qualified him as the best choice to replace Sen. [Kay Bailey Hutchison](#), who is retiring this year.

All of the candidates attacked President [Barack Obama](#)'s policies and promised to change Washington, but the substance of the debate centered on who was the true conservative. Many of the candidates focused their barbs on Dewhurst, who is the perceived front-runner because of his statewide name recognition and a personal fortune he can use to finance his campaign.

"The challenges we have in Washington are so grave that the answer in this election is not to go with another timid, career politician," said Cruz, who spent five years representing Texas before the U.S. Supreme Court. "The answer is to go with a proven conservative and fighter."

Dewhurst said Texas has added 1 million jobs, cut \$15 billion in spending and made \$44 billion in tax cuts during his tenure as lieutenant governor, demonstrating the skills he would take to Washington. He also touted his experience as a [U.S. Air Force](#) officer, a [Central Intelligence Agency](#) employee and his appointment by President [George H.W. Bush](#) to a panel on reforming the nation's intelligence agencies.

"That's why I am running for the U.S. Senate, to take my unique background, my proven conservative experience having balanced budgets and having cut spending to Washington to take our country back," Dewhurst said.

Using folksy charm, Addison said voters should elect "a common man" to the Senate and promised to serve only one term. He said he would support legislation to shut down the Environmental Protection Agency and nine other government departments and agencies. He

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of the United Nations," Addison added.

James, the last candidate to enter the race, appeared to agree with many of the other candidates' positions on immigration and opposing the Obama administration, except that he felt his lack of experience in public office made him a better candidate to reform Washington. He played up his impoverished childhood and belief in God, family and the U.S. Constitution.

"The Second Amendment I'm very fond of, I'm a big hunter," the former [Southern Methodist University](#) running back said. "I have a pistol and a shotgun between my mattresses. I believe in the Tenth Amendment, and all of it."

Leppert said he was frustrated with politicians who talk about change, but rarely deliver it.

"We agree on the principles, that's not the difference (between us)," Leppert said. "It's whose going to go out and solve the problems, put their neck on the line to solve it and not worry about political careers."

The conservative [Texas Public Policy Foundation](#) hosted the event in Austin. Currently, former state Rep. [Paul Sadler](#) is the only Democratic candidate.

A legal challenge to the state's political maps has delayed the Texas primary elections, and a date for the election will depend on a federal court decision.

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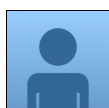
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georgex 8:00 AM on January 13, 2012

The Senate is well known to be very unpopular and dysfunction and the blame for this fits squarely with the GOP which votes in lock step. The main aim seems to be to defeat President Obama. I wish that any new Republican from Texas would be free from party regimentation to vote his/her conscience.

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