

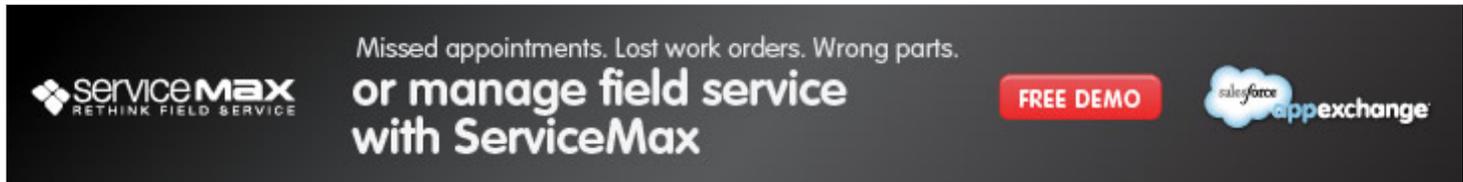
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A group of Texas Democrats say it is the Latino electorate which can turn the state blue in future elections. (Photo/Getty Images)

Texas can be blue – but it's up to Latinos, says Democratic group

by [Sandra Lilley](#), [@sandalilley](#)

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A group of Texas Democrats say the state could turn blue sooner than many think, since the voters are already there, and they are mostly Latinos – the issue is no one is paying attention to them.

“The biggest problem is we are not asking them for their vote,” said Dr. [Julie Martinez Ortega](#), vice president of policy and advocacy for [PowerPac](#), a progressive political action committee. Ortega conducted a poll of over 2,600 randomly selected Hispanic registered voters. According to the poll, 57 percent of Latino registered voters said Democrats best represent their views on social issues like same-sex marriage, religion and abortion, and 57 percent say Democrats best represent their views on jobs, economy and immigration.

And though Texas is considered a “red” state, only 23 percent of Latinos said they generally vote Republican, whereas 52 percent said they generally vote Democrat and 16 percent say they vote Independent.

One of the reasons why Republicans are still winning elections by about a million votes is that there are over 3 million

Latinos “sitting on the sidelines,” according to Democratic state representative [Trey Martinez Fischer](#) and founder of [One Texas PAC](#). There are over 2 million Latinos in Texas not registered to vote, he says, and another million mostly Hispanic registered voters who are not voting.

Yet one of the poll's findings was that only 54 percent of Latinos recall being contacted by a campaign in the last presidential election. “When pretty much half of Latinos didn't even get a piece of mail, we have a problem,” said Martinez Ortega. She added that while a third of Texas Latinos who voted for Obama also voted for conservative Republican [Senator Ted Cruz](#), about a third of Latinos who voted for Senator Cruz did not know he was a Republican, according to the poll's findings. “Here in Texas we didn't make a concerted effort to educate Latinos on who Ted Cruz really is,” said Martinez Ortega.

Texas Republican Joshua Treviño takes issue with the Democrats' contention that more Latino voters would turn Texas blue. “This is the old trope that gets trotted out, that demographic change in the state will go Democrat, and you hear this a lot these days from them,” says Treviño, who was a speechwriter for George W. Bush and is currently vice president of communications at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. “While there are partisan tendencies among groups, the fact is that as affluence and social integration occurs, political pluralism increases,” he says.

Treviño adds it is not a “safe assumption” that more Latino voters will translate to increased Democratic numbers and Democratic elected officials, though he does say current Hispanic voter participation does not represent the proportion of Latinos in Texas.

But Texas Democrats say a focus on 6 key counties in the state where the majority of Latinos reside can make a big difference in increased voter registration, turnout – and future Democratic victories.

“Some look at my district and think it should be functioning as a Republican district,” says [Senator Wendy Davis](#), who represents an area that is 29 percent Latino, 19 percent African American and 47.6 percent non-Hispanic white. “But we've demonstrated that by talking and connecting with these voters – it will happen,” Davis said. She adds that while many areas have been redistricted as “purely Democrat” or “purely Republican,” the strategy is to take a district approach and apply it statewide – “focus on places where you have the biggest potential gain,” says Davis.

Democrat Martinez Fischer stated he is not concerned whether Texas turns blue in 2016 or 2020 – “the key is not to be fast, but to be right,” he said.

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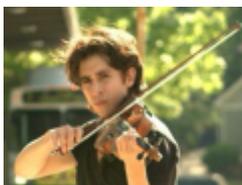
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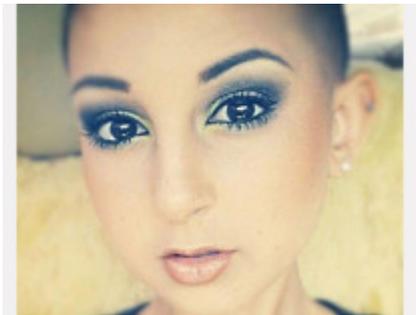
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