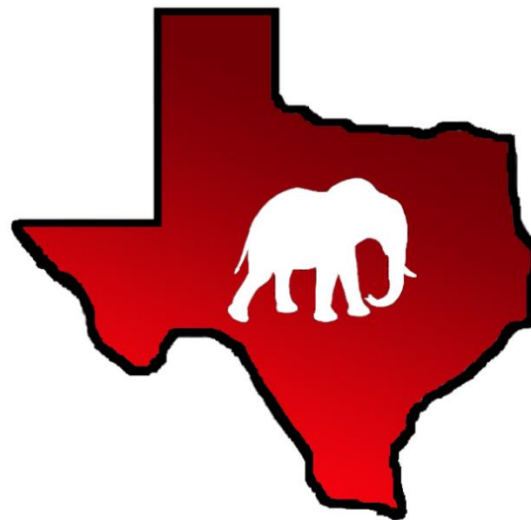


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## **RED TEXAS**

**~Keeping Texas Republican Red!~**



In America, we often hear of majority Republican states being “red” and heavily Democrat-leaning states being “blue,” but why? Historically, this has not always been the case. To understand the color association, a journey to 1976 is needed. In October of 1976, NBC constructed a map to illustrate -- in vivid blue and red -- which states supported Republican incumbent Gerald Ford, and which states backed Democratic challenger Jimmy Carter. Ironically, during this time, a map of the United States lit up blue for Republicans, red for Democrats, and white for undecided.



1980 CBS News Presidential Election Coverage Color Scheme Map (Smithsonian, 2012)

The color of a state was not necessarily an indication of its political party, but, rather, a visual way to display results, crafted by media outlets . Color association tended to change from election to election.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, no clear distinction could be made or attached to one political party based on a color for an extended duration. The designations we have now come to associate with blue for Democrats and red for Republicans would not come about until the year 2000. The *New York Times* and *USA Today* are credited with the color schemes of the two major political parties becoming commonplace and perpetual when they published their full-color election maps.<sup>2</sup>

Thinking of Texas today, it's hard not to imagine it not being a red State. Nonetheless, historically, , Texas was a blue state longer than it's been a red state. From its inception in 1867 to 2021 (154 years), Texas has had 41 governors with

only 14 percent being Republican (6); and 86 percent being Democrat (35).<sup>3</sup> Three of the six Republican governors emerged in just the past 26 years. Prior to that, only 7 percent were Republican. Additionally, the Republicans have had control of the Texas House and Senate since 2003, less than 20 years.<sup>4</sup>

Internally, Texans tend to think of Texas as the most Republican state in the nation. However, this is far from reality, as that honor goes to Wyoming. Texas is, however, in the Top 10 (at least according to this source)<sup>5</sup>:

1. [Wyoming](#) (R+26)
2. [West Virginia](#) (R+23)
3. [North Dakota](#) (R+20)
4. [Oklahoma](#) (R+20)
5. [Idaho](#) (R+19)
6. [Arkansas](#) (R+16)
7. [Kentucky](#) (R+16)
8. [South Dakota](#) (R+16)
9. [Alabama](#) (R+15)
10. [Texas](#) (R+15)

Although being one of the top 10 most Republican states in the nation is admirable, it vastly differs from where most Texans believe they are when compared to other red states. History shows that though Texas enjoyed a few years of

Republican rule starting in 1867, it was short-lived as Democrats captured the Texas Legislature in 1872 and the Governor’s office in 1873. Democrats would maintain this dominance for the better of 120 years. The last 20+ years of Republican dominance in Texas, however, may have Republicans feeling a sense of “Red State’ Dominance,” which can be dangerously deceptive.

Texas Republicans may also feel the state is a safe red state based on recent political victories and the state’s history. Historically, none of Texas’s electoral votes have gone to a Democratic presidential candidate since 1976 when Jimmy Carter won Texas. And, no Democrat has won a statewide election in Texas since 1994.<sup>6</sup> Democrats are ever hopeful that our red state will turn purple and then blue. Although the left made gains in the more metropolitan areas of Texas, the border regions of Texas have trended heavily Republican, as seen below<sup>7</sup>:

### Texas metro areas got bluer in 2020

Shift in presidential election vote from 2016 to 2020, by metropolitan area or region

METRO AREA/REGION	SHARE OF 2020 TX VOTE	PRESIDENTIAL MARGIN		
		2016	2020	SWING
Dallas-Fort Worth	27.2%	R+6.3	D+1.3	D+7.6
Austin	9.4	D+19.5	D+26.8	D+7.3
San Antonio	9.2	R+1.1	D+3.3	D+4.4
Houston	23.6	R+1.0	D+1.0	D+2.1
Rest of Texas	22.5	R+47.6	R+46.2	D+1.5
Border/South Texas*	8.1	D+33.1	D+17.2	R+15.8

\*This region consists of the following 28 counties near or along the state’s border with Mexico: Brewster, Brooks, Cameron, Culberson, Dimmit, Duval, El Paso, Frio, Hidalgo, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kinney, Kleberg, La Salle, Maverick, Nueces, Presidio, Reeves, Starr, Terrell, Val Verde, Webb, Willacy, Zapata and Zavala.

SOURCE: DAVE LEIP’S ATLAS OF U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

As Texas continues to trend red on the borders, it remains a red state. However, history shows that Texas did not end the 120-year Democrat domination until a population shift of Republican-leaning people started to populate the suburban (major) cities during the 70s and 80s.<sup>8</sup> This consisted of such people relocating into Texas and many conservative Democrats shifting to the right and voting Republican.

Just like Texas, California saw a shift politically, however, it was in the opposite direction. Until the 1990s California was considered a red state, giving rise to the likes of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, but it eventually flipped to a blue

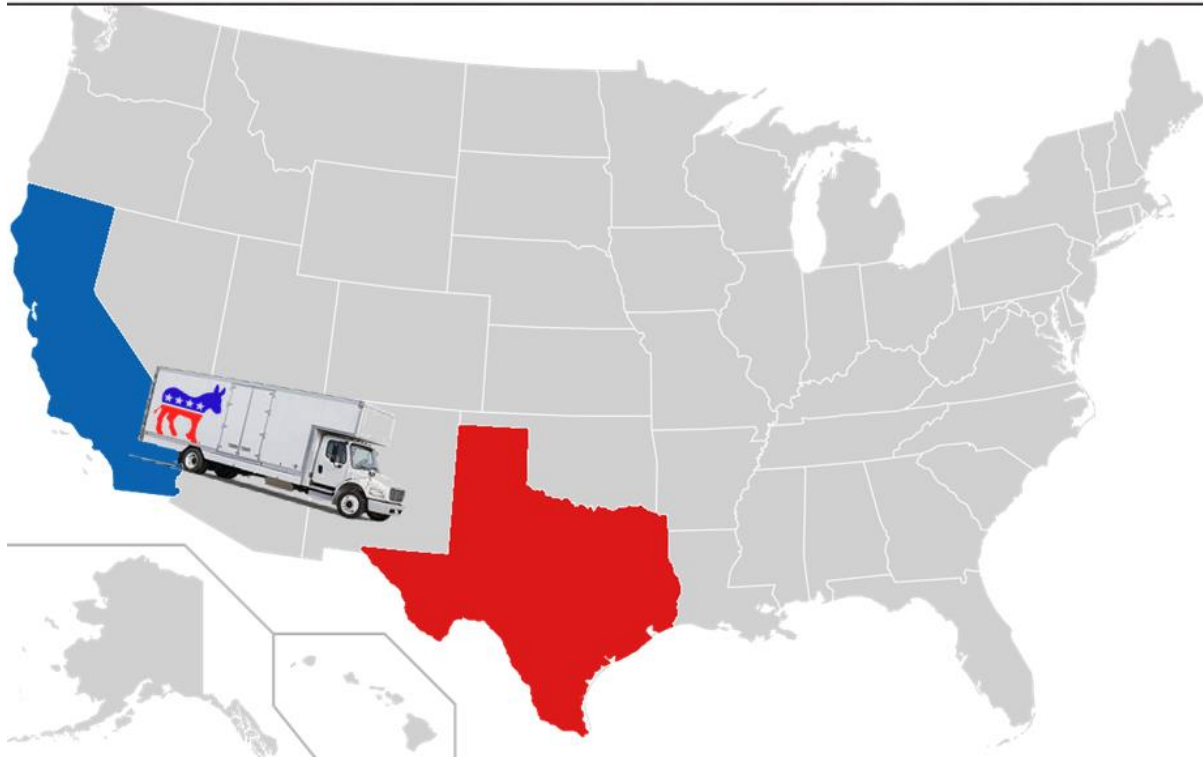


President Richard Nixon (R) and Future President Ronald Reagan (Nixon Foundation, Circa 1970)

state with illegal immigration at the heart of the change. The Latino vote was also a key factor.<sup>9</sup>

The irony is that many Californians (who tend to be left-leaning Democrats) are relocating to Texas metropolitan areas at a high rate and large cities in those areas have gone from Republican to Democrat and remain Democrat strongholds. The number of Californians moving to Texas has risen over the past few years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 700,000 Californians have relocated to Texas since 2010.<sup>10</sup> So, if history is any indication, Texas remaining a red state could prove to be a challenge.

## Californians moving to Texas





For now, however, Democrats admit that Texas has failed to turn. They noted that, though they managed to register and turn out voters in record numbers in 2020, Republicans did the same and erased any gains Democrats made.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, if Republicans are to keep Texas a red state, they must continue to increase voter turnouts, register new voters, continue attracting minority voters, work at gaining ground in the metropolitan areas, and maintain control of the Texas House, Senate, and Governor's office.

History shows Texas could be an entrenched red state today and quickly become a blue state tomorrow if Republicans fail to adapt to changes happening demographically, politically, socially, etc. As always, there's so much to be learned from the rich history of Texas Republican politics. It's therefore paramount, that the lessons of the past are considered, to ensure a more prosperous and sounder future for generations to come. Remember, *History Matters!* #RedTexas

## Endnotes

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