

11-6-2006

## Hilltopics: Volume 3, Issue 9

Hilltopics Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.smu.edu/hilltopics>

---

### Recommended Citation

Hilltopics Staff, "Hilltopics: Volume 3, Issue 9" (2006). *Hilltopics*. 55.  
<https://scholar.smu.edu/hilltopics/55>

This document is brought to you for free and open access by the University Honors Program at SMU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Hilltopics by an authorized administrator of SMU Scholar. For more information, please visit <http://digitalrepository.smu.edu>.

# HILLTOPICS

EXTENDED ELECTION SPECIAL

[www.smu.edu/honors/hilltopics](http://www.smu.edu/honors/hilltopics)

volume three, issue nine

week of november 06, 2006

## INSIDE this issue

**Endorsements:** Fellow Mustangs endorse their favorite candidates in the governors race. Andrea Allen on Carole Keeton Strayhorn and Samantha Urban on Chris Bell, page 3. Lance Webb on Kinky and Todd Baty on Perry, page 4.

**Culture:** Carter Twitty gives you an inside look at a new internet game: fantasy congress. Find out how to make your legislators win big for you, page 6.

**Kinky:** Dr. Countryman explains why Kinky had his vote—and lost it when he came to SMU last month. Read the whole story on page 2.

**Congress:** Dr. Simon gives his insight into the midterms with his consumer's guide to the 2006 elections. Check it out on page 2.

**Be Heard:** *Hilltopics* is always looking for good submissions on virtually any topic. Email your ideas, feedback, or articles to [hilltopics@hotmail.com](mailto:hilltopics@hotmail.com).



## 'If we can keep it': have we really earned our democracy?

by Dr. Dayna Oscherwitz

This election season, the AARP (Association for the Advancement of Retired Persons) has been running a television ad entitled "Don't Vote." The ad features an impeccably dressed politician who chops wood, drives a tractor, and serves apple pie, but who categorically refuses to address any serious political issues. The ad caught my attention for two reasons. First of all, it seems counterintuitive to run an ad entitled "Don't Vote" in a country where only 54% of those eligible actually vote. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the ad draws attention to the fact that voting, in and of itself, accomplishes nothing, and sometimes does more harm than good.

What do I mean? Well, let us start with the basics. Of that 54% who will vote in this election, how many will know the names of all the candidates running for office before they show up to the polls? How many of them will be familiar with the records of the candidates and their positions on the issues? I am betting not many. Why? Well first of all, because I conducted an informal poll among my students, and none of them could name all of the candidates running for Governor in Texas or all of the candidates running for Senator. If they could not even name the candidates, they were surely unfamiliar with their records or positions.

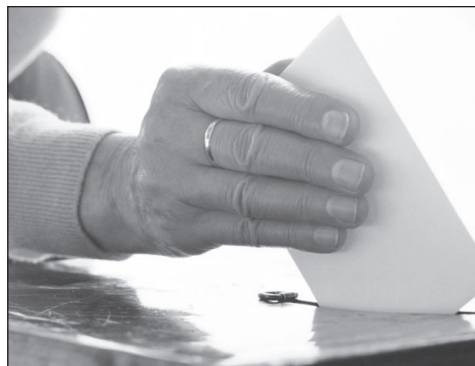
My students are not alone. In 2004, according to a poll conducted by PIPA (Program on International Policy Attitudes), a majority of those who voted for George W. Bush (anywhere from 51% to 84% depending on the question) were unfamiliar with or misidentified his positions on a wide range of issues. How, one wonders, did they arrive

at the decision to cast their vote for the President? Probably in the same way that many Americans do. That is, they vote for a candidate because their friends, their family, their pastor, a political party, or a television commercial tells them to, or they decide (rightly or wrongly) that a candidate agrees with them on a single issue, and they ignore the rest. It is little wonder that most Americans feel let down and betrayed by government. The real question is whether elected officials have betrayed these voters, or whether they have

betrayed themselves.

Thomas Jefferson once famously quipped that a republic was the best form of government "if you could keep it." He was, undoubtedly, reminding us that government and powerful interests will always overreach and conspire to take away the rights of citizens. However, I am fairly certain he was also expressing a fear that the voting public would not live up to its responsibility in guaranteeing the stability and integrity of our democracy. After all, Jefferson and the other founders put in place a carefully thought out system of checks and balances. However, the most important check they put in place was that of the people, the people who would go regularly and assess the success or failure of the government. Perhaps this explains the founders' reluctance to give the vote to all citizens. It seems they were already wondering whether the people were up to the task.

I do believe the average citizen is capable of fulfilling their responsibilities in this democracy, but I wonder what Thomas Jefferson would make of the electorate in 2006, an



see VOTING on page 5

We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300-600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to [hilltopics@hotmail.com](mailto:hilltopics@hotmail.com) by Wednesday at 7:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

## A Consumer's Guide to the midterm elections

by Dr. Dennis Simon

Every two years, political junkies in the United States experience the electoral equivalent of a Thanksgiving feast - national and local coverage of election returns. The upcoming feast will be on the evening of Tuesday, November 7th. The menu includes 435 contests for the U.S. House of Representatives, 33 races for the U.S. Senate, 36 gubernatorial contests and thousands of state legislative and local elections. As the campaigns peak, the national limelight focuses upon the "hot races" for both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. I offer the following as a consumer's guide for deriving the most enjoyment from the feast of election returns.

[1] The National Political Climate. The outcomes of midterm elections are influenced, in part, by the national political climate and whether this climate is favorable or unfavorable to the party controlling the White House. The history of midterm elections provides numerous examples. As U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War deepened in 1966, the Democrats, under Lyndon Johnson, lost 47 seats in the House. Following the resignation of Richard Nixon and his subsequent pardon by Gerald Ford, Republicans lost 43 House seats in the election of 1974. In the wake of the Whitewater scandal and the failure of his national health care initiative, Bill Clinton and the Democrats faced a "tidal wave" in 1994 when they lost 53 House seats and control of the chamber to the Republicans. While few analysts expect turnover to reach these levels, the national political climate favors the Democrats. Public approval of President Bush stands at 37%; a majority of Americans regard the war in Iraq as a mistake; the "Abramoff affair" which led to the resignation of Majority Leader Tom DeLay and the indictment of Congressman Bob Ney is not regarded as helpful to the Republican cause. Voter reaction to the resignation of Congressman Mark Foley is another worry for the Republicans.

[2] The Congressional Arithmetic of 2006. At stake here is which party - Democratic or Republican - will control the 110th Congress. In the House of Representatives, the "magic number" is 16 seats. If the Republicans lose less than 16, they retain control of the House. A loss of 16 or more seats gives control to the Democrats. The "magic number" for the Senate is 6. Republican losses of six or more seats will yield control to the Democrats.

[3] Prospects for the U.S. House of Representatives. The most essential characteristic of elections to the U.S. House is that most incumbents, be they Democrat or Republican, win easily. As of late October, for example, none of our local representatives (Pete Sessions, Sam Johnson, Michael Burgess, Eddie Bernice Johnson, Joe Barton, Ralph Hall) is involved in a highly competitive race. Nationally, attention focuses on 47 "hot" races that will determine party control of the House. The advantage in these races belongs to the Democrats. Only four Democrat incumbents find themselves in a "hot" race; 43 of these 47 contests involve Republican incumbents or "open districts" with an outgoing Republican incumbent. Geographically, these key races cluster in Connecticut (3), New York (4), Pennsylvania (4), Ohio (4), and Indiana (3). In House races then, Republicans are playing defense and the Democrats are on the Republican side of the field.

*Dr. Simon is a professor of political science.*

## Professor tells why Kinky lost his vote

by Dr. Edward Countryman

Kinky Friedman came campaigning to SMU not long ago. I'd been thinking of voting for him. Why the hell not? But he lost my vote as soon as he opened his mouth. After he'd talked for a few moments, I walked out.

That's sad. I'd regarded him as a joke at first. But I began to look at the positions he was taking on a lot of issues that are important to Texas. I didn't agree with everything he said, but I was willing to find out more. I'd avoided voting in my party's primary so I could sign his nominating petition.

Finally I found a person with the petition, and I signed it. I found that person at Mockingbird Station on a hot morning last spring. I was wearing a white tee-shirt, and along with about 500,000 other people I was on my way to the immigrant rally.

How ironic, because the first thing that Kinky said after his introduction by some human boom-box was that he would put 10,000 troops along the border. He went on. Under a Friedman government, any employer who hired an undocumented migrant would face a \$25,000 fine.

Then the would-be governor started in about the murder of a Houston policeman by somebody who had made his way across the Mexican border not once but twice. I'd been growing annoyed, but now I took offense.

I have a policeman son. Born in New Zealand, he works in London. He does a difficult and dangerous job. That Houston policeman should not have been killed, but tying his killing to migration says nothing about the very real issue of American armed violence. That's when I left. I didn't want to hear any more.

Let me be clear. There is a real migration issue to confront, and the United States is not the only country that must confront it. That issue is the huge contrast between the world's islands of prosperity and everybody else who is outside, looking in.

Spain and Italy face the issue looking south, toward Africa. The European Community faces it, looking east. Booming China faces the issue, within itself. The issue is global. It's not going to go away. It's not going to be resolved by fences across land that looks the same on both sides, or by ten thousand troops on the Rio Grande. Kinky wasn't addressing that issue, at all. He was pandering to people's fears.

Thinking as an American historian, I conjured up how my deeply Protestant New England ancestors must have loathed my intensely Catholic Irish ancestors pushing their way into nineteenth-century New York. I thought about the infamous Madison Grant, whose early twentieth-century book *The Passing of the Great Race* played on fears of Italians, Russians, or (yes, Mr. Friedman), Jews. Hitler loved that book. I thought about a sign I'd seen at the May rally: "The First Illegal Immigrants Came on the Mayflower." I recalled a tee-shirt with Native American faces and the slogan "Fighting Terrorism for Five Hundred Years." The would-be musician-governor was singing a very old song, and he wasn't even singing it very well.

Do I have a better answer? Not necessarily. But think

see KINKY on page 5

## Carole Keeton Strayhorn offers voters the chance to say no to typical Austin politics

by Andrea Allen

Not long ago, I listened to a radio preacher who exhorted his faithful listeners that it was God's command to be a single-issue voter on the subject of abortion. He reminded his flock that it was their responsibility to vote for the pro-life candidate, whether they were a man, an 18-year-old virgin, a mother who has had a hysterectomy, or grandparents past the age of fertility. To him, the rhetoric was much more important in determining who they should vote for than how the candidate's decisions on practical matters would actually affect them.

Most partisan politics today are based on rhetoric, and elections are decided on issues that do not directly affect most Texans. We vocally oppose or support the funding of stem-cell research, a science in its infancy, while sick Texans have inadequate or no health insurance. Our elected officials debate whether or not to allow vibrators to be sold in the state of Texas, but they allow our educational system to continue its downward spiral.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn, former mayor of Austin, Texas Railroad Commissioner and currently state Comptroller, has seen the inefficiencies of government at every level, and promises to shake up the system so the money goes where it is truly needed. Her "Texas First" agenda is a comprehensive plan for Texas, covering everything from education to energy, and proposes radical changes in every area. As comptroller, she insists that the money is already there; it is simply being spent unwisely on grants to campaign contributors and projects such as the Trans-Texas Corridor, which hands over a large swath of Texas land to a Spanish corporation's oversight.

The focal point of Strayhorn's campaigning is education. She proposes sweeping changes to Texas public education, including making the TAKS test a diagnostic exam instead of a reward and punishment tool, raising teacher salaries across the board, and implementing a plan to make it easier for all students to obtain higher education. Strayhorn also supports tuition locks, which guarantee that a student will pay the same tuition throughout four years of college, and making textbooks tax-free purchases. The Comptroller justifies these expenses again with the bottom line; citing statistics that dropouts are 7.6 times more likely to end up in prison than high school graduates, she insists that she would "rather spend \$2,500 a year educating a young Texan than \$16,000 incarcerating that young Texan."

Most of the media's attention is focused on national elections this week in November, but the changes that will affect us the most directly are almost always effected at the state and local levels. If you are looking for change, support Strayhorn for governor. She will be an agent of change for the real needs of real Texans, and promises to put taxpayers' money where Texans need it most without dealing in dirty partisan politics.

But please, no matter which candidate you support, go vote on Tuesday. Remember that the candidates you choose for your local and state governments will be making decisions that affect you directly. If you don't use your right to vote, you lose your right to complain.

*Andrea Allen directs the SMU Foreign Language Teaching Technology Center.*

## Vote for the candidate with the interests of Texans at heart: Democrat Chris Bell

by Samantha Urban

First and foremost, I encourage every student to go vote on Tuesday, November 7th. But I also encourage you to think about which candidate you feel has your interests at heart. It may not be the most popular candidate, or the candidate who is funny, or even the candidate who is most like you. But think about what is best for you, what is best for Texans, and what is best for Texas. Democrat Chris Bell has shown that he truly has Texas' interests at heart and would therefore make an incredible governor of the state of Texas.

Chris Bell is a rock solid candidate. Bell is serious about his campaign and even more serious about fighting for Texas.

The Supreme Court has ruled that the public school system in Texas doesn't meet the minimum standards that our state constitution calls for. In addition, the dropout rate in Texas public schools is now at nearly 40%. What Rick Perry has done to fix this can be likened to filling up hundreds of individual potholes in a single road. Chris Bell wants to repave the road by creating a Bipartisan Commission on Public Education to find feasible solutions for our public schools. Bell also plans to eliminate the TAKS test (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills). He wants kids to learn

more useful skills than how to fill out a scantron. Bell also acknowledges that to attract quality teachers, we have to pay them what they're worth. He plans to raise teacher salaries at least to the national average.

Another important issue to Texans is illegal immigration. Chris Bell supports the deployment of the National Guard to the border. In fact, Bell had actually called for Texas to take this step several months before President Bush did the same. Bell also aims to reform immigration itself, as well as come down much harder than Perry on companies that hire illegal immigrants. It's only through these steps that we can solve this huge problem facing Texas.

Speaking of a (literally) huge problem facing Texans, one of Bell's first acts as governor would be to shut down the plan to build the massive Trans Texas Corridor, a toll road plan (that was recommended by Carole Strayhorn and passed by Rick Perry) that will pave over nearly 1.5 million acres of farmland as well as snatch over 150 square miles of privately owned property from Texas landowners. It doesn't make sense to destroy a good portion of the rich, fertile farmland of Texas, and it makes much less to steal private lands to give to a huge corporation.

Making sense is a big theme with Chris Bell's stance on many issues. Bell intends to do away with the deep-seated corruption in Texas politics by appealing to common sense.

see BELL on page 5



## Kinky Friedman means that Texans finally have a choice that isn't the lesser of two evils

As a child, I had faith in civic leaders. Every speech seemed sincere and every action seemed noble. Presidents, Governors, Senators, and Representatives of the House: I thought of them as gods and fathers, the grand figures within an honorable protectorate. But, like most children, I was idealistic, lacking wisdom, but overflowing with compassion and innocent opinions. Naivety and hopefulness—they wither under the penumbra of experience within the modern age. Now, at the still young age of 20, I am politically disheartened – jaded by the hypocrisy and patronization of my alleged representatives, the past kings of my youthful empire of idealisms, who now seem like insincere demagogues.

In short, I've become cynical; I do not believe that I am alone in my estrangement from politics. Many from my generation express similar concerns. Many are equally pained by the hollow rhetoric and calculated slogans of political candidates. Many hear the words that echo from soapboxes and believe nothing, imagine nothing, and feel even less. The results have come in from all districts and I've concluded that modern politicians have defected. They are no longer of us, for us.

This is the mood I'm carrying as we all head face-forward into another gubernatorial race. Except 2006 is a strange year in Texas politics. In one of the most notorious "red states," we have not one, but two independent candidates



in the mix. Strange, indeed. Prepare yourselves for a parade of political pugilism. In one corner, we have the successor to George Dubbya, evangelical pandering Rick Perry. And, in the other corner, we have Carole "grandma" Keeton-Strayhorn, Richard "Kinky" Friedman, and Chris "I'm too stodgy to have a nickname" Bell.

In most elections, I vote for the lesser of two evils, because most elections are between two politicians. However, Richard "Kinky" Friedman is not a politician, just ask him. In fact, most who have met the man know well enough never to use the P-word in reference to him. Although this might seem strange, the idea of a self-proclaimed non-politician (if not anti-politician) seems more than novel, it seems appropriate. The Behemoth of modern politics thrives more on marketing, round-about press releases, and shifty campaign funding than good ideas. It seems that quite often sensible solutions are pushed aside to make room for flashy programs that are ineffective at best. Do I need to mention the infamous No Child Left Behind plan? TAKS testing?

Inept politicians cause harm, and it seems that the Texas Education system sustains most of the damage. Despite an enormous potential for providing revenue, Texas pays its public school teachers \$4,000 less than the national average, according to Rick Perry's administration estimates. **Tip see 2006 on page 5**

## He may not be the ideal candidate, but Rick Perry is the best candidate in Texas this year

In tomorrow's Texas gubernatorial election there are four main candidates from which to choose, but only one has the credentials to actually accomplish something in Austin. Sure, Strayhorn has served as state comptroller and Bell has served in the US House (Kinky has served as an entertainer?), but only Perry has the experience and political savvy to be effective in a position that is defined by political facility.

Unlike most state governments, the governor of Texas has arguably one of the weakest jobs in the executive branch. However, this is by design. After the Union won the Civil War and Texas was forced to draft a new state constitution before being readmitted to the Union, the convention delegates in charge of this task decided to "stick one" to their Northern oppressors, and created a stronger Lieutenant Governor position, knowing that the Governorship would be occupied by a hand-selected Republican carpetbagger from the North. Thus, to circumvent Northern control of state politics during Reconstruction, Texas established one of the weakest (if not the weakest) governorship in the nation.

But what does this have to do with the 2006 election, you ask? Essentially, my point is this—if the governor of Texas hopes to be productive, despite the deficiencies and limitations of the gubernatorial office as defined by the Texas Constitution, he or she is going to have to be politically talented enough to achieve an agenda through powers outside the governor's office. In fact, a careful review of past gov-

ernorships in Texas shows that those that have achieved the most (i.e. kept campaign promises, passed legislation, retained relatively high approval ratings) are those who have been able to work not only within their party, but those who have been able to balance and appease the variety of political voices that continuously bombard Austin. Thus, the governor needs to be a person of high political respect, and one that has deep political networks and roots. Authority and power is so decentralized and fragmented in the Texas political system that compromise, cooperation, and bilateralism is necessary to achieve working legislation.

Of course, the next question on your mind is this: why does that mean Perry should be elected governor? And to be completely honest, I think there are many people that could fill this position with better vision than Perry. However, political elections are not about choosing the perfect man or woman for the job; they are about choosing the better man or woman for the job, and considering the choices, Perry is that man.

And here's why: If Kinky Friedman were elected, he would serve largely without any real influence. Since he has neither respect from other politicians nor the political know-how to unite all of the different competing groups in Austin, his term would expire with relatively little impact on Texas. If Chris Bell were to win the election, he would be almost immedi-

**see PERRY on page 6**

*by Lance Webb*

*by Todd Baty*

## 2006 election gives Texas a chance to elect a governor who isn't even a politician: Kinky

continued from page 4

of the iceberg. For example, despite the implementation of George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind plan, the drop-out rate in Texas is staggering. Although State reports boast a 1% drop-out rate, a close look at any district will provide a view of some extremely "fuzzy math." Voilà! An unpleasant statistic shifts into a candidates boasting, all thanks to a bit of tinkering with the numbers. It's sad, but that's the nature of modern politics; if you can't ignore the problem, apply a thick layer of gloss. To that, I say, sure, the sheen is attractive, but the wood still rots underneath.

## Bell is the right choice for Texas

continued from page 3

He plans to make the system more accountable and transparent, in addition to applying the ethics structure of right and wrong.

In light of his other campaign issues including raising environmental standards, drastically reforming the abysmal health care system, and putting an end to tuition deregulation, it is blatantly obvious that Chris Bell is serious about Texas. He has Texans on his mind and in his heart. In short, it just makes sense to vote for Democrat Chris Bell.

*Samantha Urban is a sophomore journalism major.*

## Voting is both a right and a responsibility

continued from page 1

electorate that votes for candidates about whom it knows almost nothing, an electorate that pays little attention to what those candidates do once they are elected. I wonder what he would think about an American public that has slept while its government gave itself the power to spy unchecked on citizens, to listen to their telephone calls and monitor their bank accounts. Perhaps he would think, as I do, that the people are foolish, that terrorists don't discuss their plans in telephone conversations, and they don't send money to personal bank accounts (would that they did).

I wonder what he would make of the fact that Congress passes bills it has never read, that it holds votes open until lawmakers are threatened into voting a certain way, that it takes money from corporations so that the pharmaceutical industry dictates our laws on medicine, the banking industry authors the laws on personal finance, the energy industry dictates our energy policy, and defense contractors write our foreign policy? I wonder what he would make of the fact that the American public seems either ignorant or indifferent to all of this?

Voting is the least of our responsibilities as citizens in this democracy. We are charged with much more. We are charged with voting in an informed and responsible manner, with questioning the government on a regular basis, with monitoring our elected officials and what they do, and with removing them from office when they undermine the security and stability of the nation, particularly when they do so for reasons of greed or ambition. We are failing miserably at these tasks. If he were alive today, perhaps Jefferson would wonder, as I do, why we worry so much that foreign terrorists might take away our freedoms and endanger our democracy while we ignore the fact that we are giving both away daily.

*Dr. Oscherwitz is a professor of foreign languages.*

However, Kinky Friedman, having the succinct advantage of not being a politician, presents a few very good ideas clearly. First, Kinky admits that the state of public education in Texas is in a crisis, most politicians would fall apart there. Then, he offers a very plausible method of subsidization for public education. Friedman proposes that we use our budget surplus, estimated to be about \$10 billion or more, while also bringing in taxable revenue by legalizing casino gambling in Texas. In regards to the TAKS test, Friedman claims that if teachers are required to "teach to the test, kids will learn the test - but not much else." Anyone who has recently graduated from a public school will most likely agree with that statement.

Kinky Friedman recognizes the need for change. However, for change to occur, we must do the same. Step away from party affiliations. They mean nothing at this point. Vote independently. Vote Kinky.

*Lance Webb is a sophomore philosophy and political science major.*

## Kinky visit fails to impress SMU professor

continued from page 2

about the real situation at the U.S./Mexican border. Since NAFTA came into effect, money has flowed freely north and south across it. So have goods: genetically-modified Kansas corn to swamp the Mexican market; the products of factories along the Rio Grande, where non-union Mexican workers face conditions that even Wal-Mart might hesitate to inflict.

Think further. To the extent that goods and capital flow freely, NAFTA is like the European Community. But in Europe people move freely too, Portuguese to Great Britain, Britons to Spain, Italians to Germany. There were fears at first, and there is tension now. But within the Community, at least, there is not the loathing, the outright hatred, on which Kinky was playing with his talk of soldiers and fines.

As I left his meeting in Hughes-Trigg, I reflected on what I had seen last spring. I was immersed that day in a huge crowd of hard-working people. Almost all were wearing white, and most had U.S. flags to wave. I saw no condemnation among them of this country. Instead I saw the classic pattern of American dissent. The issue was not "tear the thing down," but rather "I can earn a rightful place." I saw American-born children who were honoring what their parents had endured. I felt immensely proud of the people of Dallas, Hispanic and non-Hispanic alike, for turning out that day.

Is there an issue? Yes, of course. But it's not an issue that is going to be resolved by lines of barbed wire, by posting troops. It's not going to be resolved by Kinky Friedman pandering to the worst among people who already are here, or conjuring up the same demons that his own immigrant ancestors provoked once upon a not-so-long time ago.

I signed your petition, Kinky. I don't regret it, because the democratic process should be open. But you are not getting my vote.

*Dr. Countryman is a professor of history.*

## Playing fantasy congress: How to get the best stats out of your Senators and Representatives

This time of year people across the country are watching the news, reading periodicals and journals, and researching on the internet for hours trying to become better informed. They talk with their friends, family, and coworkers about current events and projections for the future. They put in countless hours studying, making adjustments, and finalizing decisions in order to be as educated as they can be before making their choice. Unfortunately, all this work is not for the upcoming elections; it is for fantasy football.

In looking for someone to write an article on one of the gubernatorial candidates here in Texas, I kept getting replies that they did not feel like they were informed enough to feel comfortable writing an article supporting the candidate. However, I bet if I asked them who they would be willing to trade for Larry Johnson or the Bears defense, I could get a more straightforward answer, or at least a stronger opinion. This is not to deprecate the level of political interest here on campus. Fantasy football is much more entertaining than politics for most people, and it is easy to see why. Players are (or at least are given the impression that they are) involved, that something is at stake every week, and competition is always fun. Maybe politics are not supposed to be any of those things. The political process is much more serious than sports. But can't it both be serious work and interesting enough for the public to follow regularly with interest?

A group of four students at Claremont McKenna College in Southern California thinks it can. Taking the drafting and scoring systems of fantasy football and applying it to the nation's largest legislative body, Fantasy Congress gives players the opportunity to draft four senators and twelve representatives after the November 7th elections. At [www.fantasycongress.us](http://www.fantasycongress.us),



people can sign up for free to play in a league with friends and coworkers or any of the already 16,000 people who have signed up to play. Players score points if their legislators introduce a bill or an amendment (5 points) and score increasing numbers of points as that legislation moves up the legislative process.

It is interesting to wonder if reporters are going to start following this points system seriously. For example, Jeremy Cogan, the press secretary for Representative Grace F. Napolitano, Democrat of California and tied for last place in House points, has already made a public statement saying that, "There's so much more that impacts how a member of Congress can push their agenda forward than just one simple metric." It seems promising that this game could have the dual effects of making people more interested and informed about the political process and allowing the public to hold their representatives accountable for the amount of work they are doing in Washington. People might not be interested in the intricacies of the legislation their representatives put forth, but knowing what type of legislation they are working on at all is more than what most of the voting public knows about their representatives today.

Being informed and holding our elected officials accountable for the work they do is the most important job we, as citizens, have in the political process. Fantasy Congress is a way to do both those things in a fun, competitive, and informative way, and I hope anyone who is even somewhat intrigued by the idea will check out the website: [www.fantasycongress.us](http://www.fantasycongress.us).

*Carter Twitty is a senior English major.*

## Perry is the only candidate in Texas with the resources and attributes needed to get things done

continued from page 4

ately politically immobilized by a Republican controlled legislature. His term would be distinguished by the increased political clout of Lt. Governor David Dewhurst and House Speaker Tom Craddick. And finally, if "One Tough Grandma" were elected as governor, it would be difficult for her to achieve anything, since she has no political allies in the Republican or Democratic party. In fact, there might be real resentment among Austin politicians if Strayhorn were elected, since she

filed a legal suit against the state when she was comptroller, an act that is still hotly debated.

So, when you head to the polls tomorrow and weigh your options, pick a candidate that is not going merely to occupy an office. Pick a candidate that has the resources and attributes to make something of his or her term. And in this gubernatorial election, the only person to choose is Perry.

*Todd Baty is a junior music and history major.*

### Hilltopics Staff

Douglas Hill: Editor-in-Chief  
Mark McDowell: Managing Editor  
Todd Baty: Business Manager  
Jenny Simon: Submissions Manager  
Sterling Morriss: Distribution Manager  
Monica Chavez: Copy Editor  
Clare Taylor: Copy Editor  
Amanda Wall: Copy Editor  
Janet Arnold: Graphics Editor  
Carter Twitty: Senior Writer

Hilltopics is published each Monday. It is sponsored by the University Honors Program and the Students' Association.

### Are you boring?

(if so, ignore this ad)

We're always looking for interesting submissions.

Send your commentary, proposal, letter, editorial or cartoon to [hilltopics@hotmail.com](mailto:hilltopics@hotmail.com).

All pieces become property of Hilltopics upon submission.