

Know Before You Go: TX-07 District Primer

May 2018 • Researched, summarized, and edited by Swing Left's all-volunteer research team!

In the last election, Republican John Culberson won this district by only 32,000 votes (13%). That's close! With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

About the Incumbent

Introduction: Republican John Culberson has represented TX-07 since 2001. He is an ardent fiscal and social conservative who has vocally supported President Donald Trump's travel ban. His stated goal is to "let Texans run Texas."

Issues: Culberson has promised to grow the economy through low taxes, smart and limited regulations, and robust energy production. He has vowed to repeal Obamacare, improve Houston transportation, and strengthen NASA. Culberson places high priority on securing our southern border.

Committees: Culberson serves on the House Appropriations Committee and has used this position to secure funds for projects in his district, including medical research and flood control projects.

Recent Elections: Culberson has won the district eight times, facing his first well-financed Democrat contender in 2008. In the last three election cycles, Culberson ran against Democrat James Cargas and won by wide margins. Those margins have shrunk slightly since 2012.

Strengths: Culberson's strengths include his experience in Congress, support for NASA, strong backing from the oil and gas industry, and (pleasing to conservatives) his advocacy for strong border security.

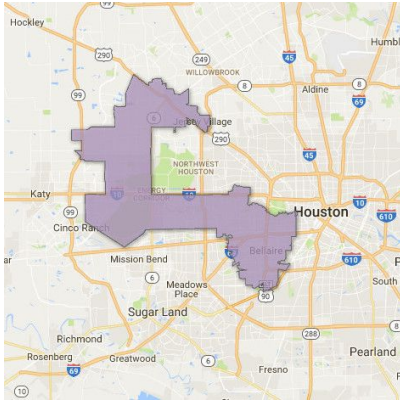
Potential Weaknesses: Culberson has been criticized for pandering to his party's base rather than representing his district. He has voted lockstep with Republicans in 2017 and stands behind Trump's policies and opinions, not all of which are popular among his constituents. He sponsored a bill inspired by Trump's birtherism and a measure to defund sanctuary cities. He is a strong supporter of repealing the ACA. He failed to meet his constituents during the February recess.

About the Challenger

Introduction: Democrat Lizzie Pannill Fletcher is a Houston-born lawyer who began her law career at Vinson & Elkins and later moved to AZA law firm where she became the first woman partner in 2015. Fletcher co-founded Planned Parenthood Young Leaders in 2000 and is also a board member of Writers in the Schools (WITS) and Open Dance Project.

Issues: She is a strong supporter of Civil Rights, believing that we must elect leaders who speak out forcefully against the hateful vision of America we have seen on display in Charlottesville and elsewhere. She believes that quality education is essential to our democracy and that good schools are the foundation for an informed community, better jobs, and a strong economy. Relative to equality and LGBTQ issues, "Our nation's laws are designed to protect against discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, and many laws regarding federal government employment provide remedies to protect vulnerable groups. These laws must be enforced and expanded to ensure that everyone is treated fairly." She would expand the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include sexual and gender identity as protected classes.

Pannill will act on the devastating epidemic of gun violence sweeping America: "But if we truly want to save lives and protect our children, we need leaders who aren't afraid to take on the corporate gun lobby." On healthcare, she believes "We have an obligation to make all citizens have access to quality healthcare by maintaining and improving the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and defending reproductive healthcare and woman's right to choose." Relative to local issues, she believes that much of Houston's future will be determined by how government and the community manage the threat of flooding and the ongoing recovery efforts from the devastating impact of Hurricane Harvey.



TX-07: Better Know a District

Geography

TX-07 is part of the Greater Houston metro area, which includes several upscale areas of western Houston, a few smaller incorporated cities such as Bellaire and West University Place, and large areas of unincorporated suburbs. The majority of the district is outside the 610 Loop, but is nonetheless a desirable location for its upper-middle-class residential areas. While the district includes some of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Houston, including River Oaks, Piney Point, and Hunter's Creek, it also includes transitional neighborhoods, especially north of I-10.

TX-07: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Houston (partial), 2.2 million
- Bellaire, 18,000
- West University Place, 15,000

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 125K (49%)
- Trump: 121K (47%)

2016 House Results

- Cargas (D): 112K (44%)
- Culberson (R): 144K (56%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 296K
- Eligible, not registered: 123K

2014 House Results

- Cargas (D): 49K (35%)
- Culberson (R): 91K (63%)
- Other: 3K (2%)

Citizenry

TX-07 is predominantly white, but about 22% of its residents are black or Asian and 31% identify as Hispanic. Its median household income is just over \$71,000, slightly higher than the Texas average. About 42% of the district's residents speak a language other than English at home and 30% are foreign-born.

Elections

TX-07 leans heavily Republican, and no Democrat has been elected to office since 1967. However, Hillary Clinton won the district in 2016 by a thin margin of 49% to Trump's 47%. By contrast, Mitt Romney carried 60% of the vote in 2012.

Higher Education

The district is home to several Houston Community College campuses, including Katy, West Loop, and Gulfton. It is also home to the Art Institute of Houston.

Industries

Houston is known as the Energy Capital of the World and is home to many oil and gas companies. While these companies have suffered with the fall of crude oil prices, the city has continued to prosper thanks to other key industries like manufacturing, healthcare, biomedical research, and aerospace. In addition, there is a growing renewable energy sector.

Tourism

Tourism is a large contributor to Houston's economy which has increased in recent years. Known for a world-class performing arts district, impressive museums, green spaces, and its proximity to NASA, Houston attracts millions of visitors per year. Considered the culinary capital of the South by some, Houston offers restaurants of all ethnic varieties and price ranges. Houston also retains strong vestiges of Texas's rural past, with the rodeo being a major cultural event and tourist attraction.