

# Know Before You Go: TX-23 District Primer

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**In the last election, Republican Will Hurd won this district by only 3,000 votes (1%).**

That's close! With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

## About the Incumbent

**Introduction:** Republican Will Hurd promises that he's "just getting started." A 39-year-old African American who grew up in San Antonio, Hurd spent nine years in the Middle East and South Asia as an undercover CIA operative before joining Congress in 2015.

**Issues:** To increase border security, Hurd proposed considerable construction in Big Bend National Park. However, he opposes a border wall and called the Muslim travel ban an "ultimate display of mistrust" that "will erode allies' willingness to fight with us." He voted to freeze funding for Pell Grants, repeal the Affordable Care Act, and withhold funding to Planned Parenthood. He has a poor record on environmental issues. He supports small business and calls for simplifying the income tax code.

**Recent Elections:** Hurd beat incumbent Democrat Pete Gallego twice by extremely narrow margins and was re-elected despite Gallego's efforts to highlight Trump's anti-Mexican rhetoric.

**Strengths:** Hurd is a rising star in the Republican Party. In his first term he had more bills signed into law than any other member of the 114th Congress. Hurd is well funded: He outspent Gallego \$4 million to \$2.2 million. He's knowledgeable about border issues, ISIS, cybersecurity, Iran, and Russia. The Republican Party is invested in Hurd and he is frequently pictured as the face of diversity as an African-American Republican.

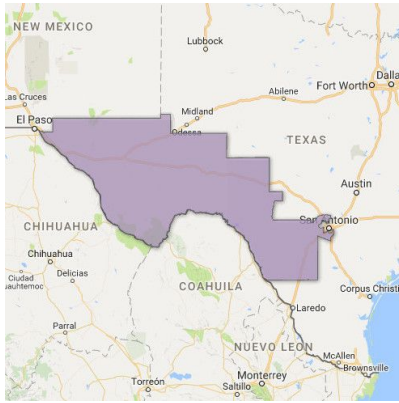
**Potential Weaknesses:** Immigration and deportation policies could hurt a Republican running in a heavily Hispanic district, and Hurd's poor environmental record could be exploited in a district that includes Big Bend. Due to his domain expertise, Hurd was very critical of mishandling of National Security for Democrats, but has been silent with current administration. Hurd has been outspoken in criticizing Trump, but has voted with party over 95% of the time while in Congress.

## About the Challenger

**Introduction:** Democrat Gina Ortiz Jones is a U.S. Air Force veteran serving as an intelligence officer in Iraq. She served as director for investment at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative Enforcement. She earned her master's and bachelor's degrees in economics and a bachelor's degree in East Asian studies all from Boston University through ROTC, and a graduate degree from the U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies. Jones was raised and currently resides in San Antonio. Jones is a first-generation Filipina and a member of the LGBTQ community.

**Issues:** Jones supports wage growth, bringing high speed internet service to close the digital divide in rural communities, and creating tax relief for small businesses. Her experience as an intelligence officer and Iraq War veteran she has first-hand experience with national security issues. Jones supports common sense gun laws. As a first-generation American, Jones supports a path to legal citizenship for Dreamers and is against building a border wall on the U.S. Mexico border. Texas continues to have the highest rate of citizens without health insurance of any state in the country - about one in every six residents.

She supports a single payer healthcare system. Jones served under the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and experienced first-hand how discrimination affects good order and discipline, as well as military readiness. Jones supports equal rights for all and protections from discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, and religion. She supports more federal funding for Texas Pre-K and elementary school programs and better access to top teacher talent. As veteran, Jones supports our veterans and their families. Jones supports the protection critical programs that many Texas seniors rely on like Social Security and Medicare.



## TX-23: Facts & Stats

### Population Centers

- San Antonio, 145,180 (partial)
- Del Rio, 35,591
- Socorro, 32,013
- Eagle Pass, 26,248
- El Paso, 16,851 (partial)
- Uvalde, 15,751

### 2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 115K (50%)
- Trump: 107K (46%)

### 2016 House Results

- Gallego (D): 108K (47%)
- Hurd (R): 111K (48%)
- Other: 11K (5%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 290K
- Eligible, not registered: 102K

### 2014 House Results

- Gallego (D): 55K (48%)
- Hurd (R): 57K (50%)
- Other: 3K (3%)

## TX-23: Better Know a District

### Geography

TX-23 is very large, with 48,000 square miles stretching from San Antonio to El Paso. It includes the majority of the Texas-Mexico border. Predominantly rural, the district is filled with wilderness, farms, and ranches. It includes 20 national and state parks, Texas Parks & Wildlife management areas, and other protected land. TX-23 is larger than 29 of the U.S. states.

### Citizenry

The district as a whole is sparsely populated. The largest population centers are Del Rio (35,591), Socorro (32,013), and parts of San Antonio and El Paso. In 2015, the population was 747,732, and 69.7% Hispanic. TX-23 is the congressional district with the seventh highest percentage of eligible Latino voters in the nation. The median household income of \$46,232 is lower than the state median of \$55,653. Likewise, the high school graduation rate is just 73%, compared with 88.3% statewide.

### Elections

The district's seat has switched parties four times since 2000. The district was redrawn in 2003, and the 2004 congressional election saw a 17.8% swing to Republicans. In 2006 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the redrawn 23rd district violated the Voting Rights Act of 1965, forcing new boundaries that removed Republican areas added in 2003 and adding a large portion of Democratic south San Antonio. A study from Rice University's Baker Institute determined that new Texas voter ID laws suppress voting in TX-23 in 2016 election due to misperception of which ID was acceptable.

### Higher Education

The district does not include any large university campuses. There are small branches of the University of Texas (UT) in El Paso and San Antonio, as well as the UT-run McDonald Observatory outside of Fort Davis. Sul Ross University is in Alpine. Other institutions include Texas A&M-San Antonio and some community colleges.

### Industries

Much of the industry in the district involves agriculture, ranching, and oil and gas extraction. Parts of the Eagle Ford shale play run through this district, which have seen a boom due to hydraulic fracturing techniques. Tourism and park recreation also bring in considerable income. Major employers in the cities include health care, restaurants and hotels, and construction.

### Tourism

Tourism is an important element of the region and could be considered a significant driver in voter behavior. The district is home to Big Bend National Park, about 118 miles of which lie along the Texas-Mexico border. The area is also home to the McDonald Observatory and the town of Marfa, a popular destination for art and music enthusiasts.