

AN ONLINE LOOK AT THE TEXAS 83RD LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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JUNE 2013



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INTRODUCTION

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Influence Opinions™ looked at social media usage during the 83rd Texas Legislature to identify trends and findings that can inform a strategy for issues management, advocacy and government affairs. We were particularly interested in how social media can support a strategy to pass (or kill) a bill in the next legislative session.

Influence Opinions™ examined:

- A timeline of how the conversations around the session played out online,
- The top hashtags used this session,
- The main topics of conversation online,
- Legislators using Twitter,
- Who legislators were following on Twitter,
- Who drove the conversation online during the session, and
- How a particular bill played out online, using House Bill 4 as an example.

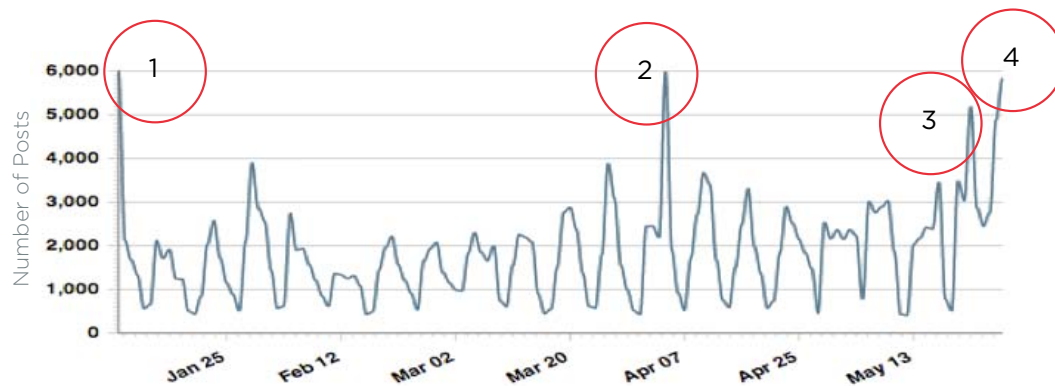
The use of social media, particularly Twitter, proved to play an essential role to rally support for or against an issue. Which, as we saw in the special session, can make a huge impact.

Social media highlights of the Texas session:

- 21 percent *more* legislators used Twitter during the 83rd Legislative Session (76 percent total) than during the 82nd Legislative Session.
- Texas legislators collectively sent 17,529 tweets during this session.
- Twitter accounted for 87 percent of the online discussion around the 83rd Legislative Session.
- Social media was also used extensively by third parties to increase the visibility of their issues with legislators, staff and reporters.



TIMELINE OF ONLINE CHATTER



1. Jan. 8 – The session commencement generated predictions and opinions of hot issues to monitor for the coming 140 days. Many expected public education to be the biggest issue of the session following the 2011 cuts of \$5.4 billion, as well as water, transportation and health care.

- KVUE – “Comptroller Estimates \$101.4 Billion For General Spending For New Lege” (252 Facebook shares, 14 reader comments and 210 tweets)
- *Texas Tribune* – “83rd Legislature Faces A New Set Of Priorities” (90 Facebook shares, 6 reader comments and 36 tweets)

2. April 4 – Texas House passed their version of the state budget drawing a hard line on education funding, as they passed an amendment to the budget that stated no money would fund private school vouchers. The Senate followed suit the next day and approved their own budget.

- *Austin American-Statesman* – “House Rejects School Vouchers As It Approved Budget Bill” (272 Facebook shares, 14 reader comments, 210 tweets)
- *Texas Tribune* – “House Oks Budget, Nixes Vouchers, Medicaid Expansion” (125 Facebook shares, 12 reader comments, 12 tweets)

3. May 22 – Both chambers approved measures critical to the state’s budget. Simultaneously, HB

1009, which creates a school marshal program whose participants would only be authorized to respond to an active shooter or other emergency situation that threatened the lives of students, was signed by the Gov. Rick Perry. Like most gun issues in Texas, it received a lot of online attention.

- *Texas Tribune* – “House And Senate Pass Measures Key To Budget Deal” (18 Facebook shares, two reader comments and 10 tweets)
- *Texas Tribune* – “School Marshal Bill Headed For Governor’s Desk” (105 Facebook shares, 17 reader comments and four tweets)

4. May 26 – Both chambers passed the most impactful bills for education of the session: SB 2, which expands the state’s charter school system, and HB 5, which changes high school testing and graduation requirements. Other bills debated in the last few hours of session included the tuition revenue bond bill.

- *Austin American-Statesman* – “Updated: Legislators Reach Agreement On Testing, Graduation Plans” (1,278 Facebook shares, 10 reader comments and 105 tweets)
- *Texas Tribune* – “Campus Construction Bond Bill Stuck At Impasse” (18 Facebook shares, two reader comments and 10 tweets)
- *Texas Tribune* – “Major Education Bills Headed To Governor’s Desk” (484 Facebook shares, 56 reader comments and 26 tweets)



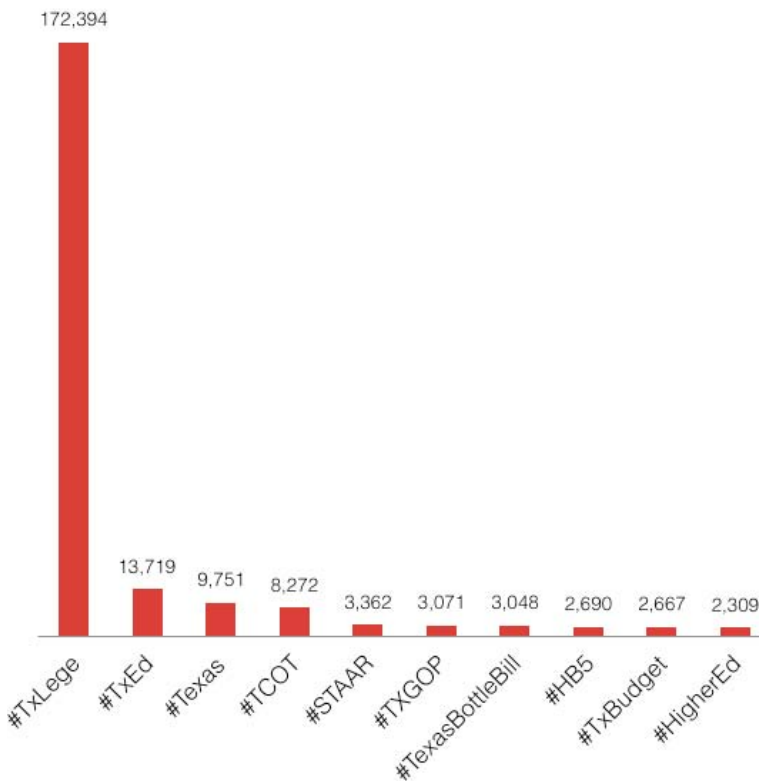
TOP HASHTAGS



**HASHTAGS WERE USED 221,283
TIMES IN TWEETS**

#TxLege alone was used 172,394 times in tweets, and, expectedly, was the most used hashtag this session.

Breakdown of Hashtags Used Most



How These Hashtags were Used

#TxLege: Relating to the session in general

#TxEd: Relating to education

#Texas: Used when relating to the state of Texas

#TCOT: (Texas Conservatives on Twitter) Used in posts geared towards conservatives

#STAAR: Used in tweets that discussed the state mandated testing system, usually with #HB5

#TXGOP: Used in tweets geared towards Republicans

#TexasBottleBill: Relating to HB 1473 on plastic container pollution in water systems

#HB5: Relating to HB 5 on standardized testing, graduation requirements

#TxBudget: Relating to the state budget

#HigherEd: Relating to higher education

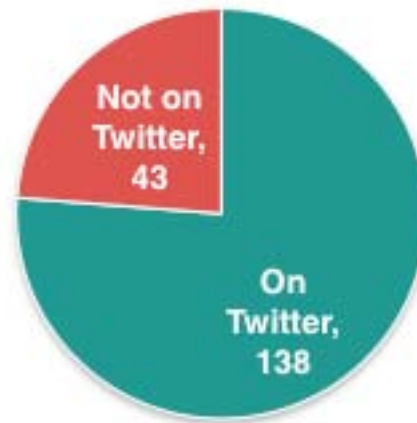


LEGISLATORS USING TWITTER

To determine how Twitter gained the interest of Texas legislators this session, Influence Opinions™ did an assessment of how legislators themselves were using the social channel.

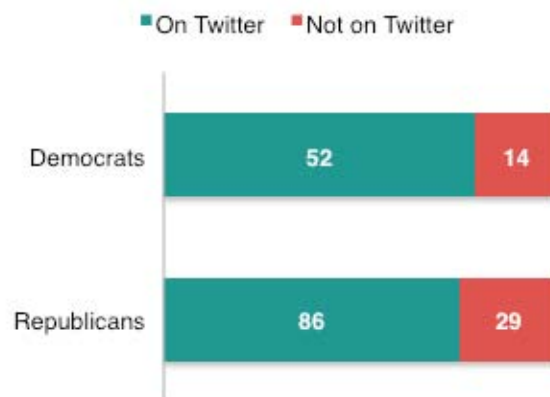
- The number of legislators using social media increased 21 percent from last session (in 2011).
- Texas legislators collectively sent 17,529 tweets during this session.
- Texas legislators follow 40,133 unique people on Twitter.

80 PERCENT OF ALL TEXAS LEGISLATORS ARE ON TWITTER, A RISE FROM LAST SESSION'S 56 PERCENT



- 25 of 31 Senators are on Twitter (80.64 percent)
- 113 of 150 Representatives are on Twitter (75.33 percent)

78 PERCENT OF DEMOCRATS AND 74 PERCENT OF REPUBLICANS ARE ON TWITTER



LEGISLATORS MOST AUTHORITATIVE ON TWITTER*

To determine which Texas Legislators were most authoritative on Twitter during the 83rd Texas Legislative session, Influence Opinions™ did an assessment of how each legislator used the social channel, including the number of times he or she tweeted during the session and what kind of reach he or she had.

MOST AUTHORITATIVE TEXAS SENATORS ON TWITTER

1. Kirk Watson @KirkPWatson
2. Leticia Van de Putte @leticiavdp
3. Rodney Ellis @RodneyEllis
4. Wendy Davis @WendyDavisTexas

MOST AUTHORITATIVE TEXAS REPRESENTATIVES ON TWITTER

1. Kenneth Sheets @RepKenSheets
2. Ryan Guillen @RyanGuillen
3. Trey Martinez Fischer @TMFTx
4. James White @James_E_White
5. Chris Turner @ChrisGTurner
6. Donna Howard @DonnaHowardTX
7. Dan Branch @TexansForDan
8. Eric Johnson @JohnsonForTexas
9. TanParker @tparker63

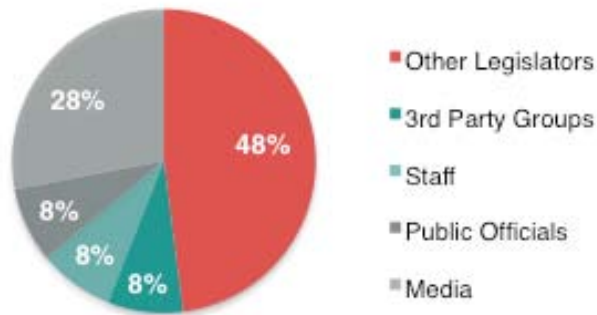
10. Jason Isaac @ISAACforTexas
11. JoeDeshotel @RepJoeDeshotel
12. Van Taylor @RepVanTaylor
13. Larry Gonzales @larrygonzales52
14. Stephanie Klick @StephanieKlick
15. Rafael Anchia @RafaelAnchia
16. Linda Harper-Brown @lhbcampaign
17. Stefani Carter @stefani_carter

** Influence Opinions™ defines authority as a score combining the number of topical tweets sent to the user's reach (following).*



WHO INFLUENCED THE LEGISLATORS ON TWITTER

TYPE OF TWITTER USER MOST INFLUENTIAL TO LEGISLATORS



TWITTER VISIBILITY

To determine which Twitter handles had the most visibility with legislators, Influence Opinions™ looked at the handles legislators followed. The 25 handles most followed by members of the Texas Legislature are below.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1. <i>Texas Tribune</i> : @TexasTribune | 10. Texas House Caucus: @TxHouseCaucus | 18. Press Secretary for Texas House Speaker, Jason Embry: @JasonEmbry |
| 2. Rep. Joe Straus: @SpeakerStraus | 11. Sen. Dan Patrick: @DanPatrick | 19. Rep. Jason Isaac: @ISAACforTexas |
| 3. <i>Quorum Report</i> : @quorumreport | 12. <i>Texas Insider</i> : @texasinsider | 20. Ross Ramsey: @rossramsey |
| 4. Gov. Rick Perry: @GovernorPerry | 13. Texas Attorney General, Greg Abbott: @GregAbbott_TX | 21. Rep. Bryan Hughes: @RepHughes |
| 5. Evan Smith: @evanasmith | 14. Texas Commissioner of Agriculture, Todd Staples: @Todd_Staples | 22. Rep. Aaron Pena: @AaronPena |
| 6. <i>Austin American-Statesman</i> : @statesman | 15. Sen. Kelly Hancock: @KHancock4TX | 23. Rep. Trey Martinez-Fischer: @TMFtx |
| 7. <i>Texas Monthly</i> : @TexasMonthly | 16. U.S. Sen. John Carona: @JohnCarona | 24. Texas Public Policy Foundation: @TPPF |
| 8. Rep. Dan Branch: @TexansForDan | 17. Texas Office of Gov. Rick Perry: @TexGov | 25. Sen. Ken Paxton: @SenKenPaxton |



INFLUENCERS LEADING THE TWITTER CONVERSATION*

To determine who had the most online visibility with the broader public around the 83rd Texas Legislative Session, Influence Opinions™ looked at who was driving the online conversations about key topics and issues. This list shows online media users with followers relevant to the Texas legislative session who generated the most traction and contributed the most to the conversations throughout the session.

Top Third Parties and Staffers

1. Planned Parenthood
2. TAKS to STAAR
3. Peggy Venable
4. Eliza Vielma
5. Michael Q. Sullivan
6. Progress Texas
7. Texas Parents Union
8. Philip Martin
9. Equality Center
10. Pat Johnson
11. Texans Advocating For Meaningful Student Assessment
12. Texas Forward
13. Texas Impact
14. Texas District & County Attorneys Association (TDCAA)
15. Conservative For Texas
16. Julia Montgomery
17. Empower Texans
18. Texas Kids Can't Wait
19. Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF)
20. Center for Public Policy Priorities
21. Raise Your Hand Texas
22. Matt Mackowiak
23. Matt Glazer
24. Equality Texas

Top Media Influencers Online

1. *Texas Monthly*
2. *Austin American-Statesman*
3. KUT Austin
4. *Austin Chronicle*
5. KTRK Houston
6. *Houston Chronicle*
7. KVUE Austin
8. *Texas Tribune*
9. Scott Braddock with *A Voice for Texas*
10. Aman Batheja with the *Texas Tribune*
11. Morgan Smith with the *Texas Tribune*
12. *Quorum Report*
13. Emily Ramshaw with the *Texas Tribune*
14. Becca Aaronson with the *Texas Tribune*
15. *Dallas Morning-News Politics*
16. Kolten Parker with MySanAntonio.com and the *Houston Chronicle*
17. *Texas Observer*
18. Reeve Hamilton with the *Texas Tribune*
19. *Austin American-Statesman's Virtual Capitol*
20. *State Impact Texas*
21. Evan Smith with the *Texas Tribune*

**This list is was built by objective data sets by a media analysis tool powered by Sysomos,*



ABOUT INFLUENCE OPINIONS™

Research + Digital/Social + Issues Management

The rise of social media and the 24/7 news cycle coupled with the diminishing traditional news model has completely changed the way decision makers, opinions leaders, influencers and the public make and consume news. At the same time, there is unprecedented access to data of all types – but little guidance as to how to effectively turn overwhelming amounts of data into action.

In this new data gathering, information-consuming world, understanding the landscape of opinions and discussions on key issues is essential to building strong, successful positioning of a cause or a brand. And having a foundation of knowledge about your existing and potential audiences, their opinions on the issue, which messages bring them to your side and which messages turn them off provides the critical foundation for success. This research is the framework for informed virtual and non-virtual understanding that then leads to Influencing Opinions™.

Turning Data Into Insight to Transform Opinion

Influence Opinions™ (IO) is a communications strategy firm that operates at the intersection of public affairs and marketing. Whether it's cause-related organizations, associations or corporations, we work with clients that have a unique public initiative – here in Texas or across the U.S. Using our diverse approach to data gathering, we deliver information that is vital in crafting successful campaigns. Meaningful insight and targeted outreach are the basis of Influence Opinions™.

We bring top-level strategic audience experience from the public affairs, non-profit management, and corporate branding fields and layer on expertise in digital issue mapping for a full view of a client's issue. This allows us to layout the best approach to transform the opinions the client wants to impact.

We analyze the data available in the digital landscape, as well as using traditional research methods that include telephone polling, interactive voice response (IVR) surveys, focus groups, online surveys and in-depth interviews (IDIs), to give our clients the decisive edge they need to reach their goals. Our engagement process often uncovers additional goals and depth of understanding of which the client may have been previously unaware. And we are continually adapting our research products that track how people consume and respond to outreach so our clients can focus on their core missions.

Turning Insight Into Action

Armed with that research, we are able to craft and execute the campaign plan, or turn it over to your team for execution. We have had extensive experience working in a client's current campaign group including outside consultants and in-house employees. IO can create your campaign collateral, including websites, videos, infographics, printed/online materials, as well as support with search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per click (PPC) and social media campaign strategies and execution, direct mail campaigns, and perform trainings for in-house teams. We can be a part of the execution team as much or as little as you need.

For more information on Influence Opinions™, visit InfluenceOpinions.com.



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