

REPUBLICAN PRIMARY POLL: CHRIS SPENCER LEADS GARY VANDEAVER FOR TEXAS STATE HOUSE DISTRICT 1

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P: (929) 388-6585

E: info@victory-insights.com

W: victory-insights.com

℥: @VictoryPolling

Poll conducted April 30 through May 7, 2025 among likely Republican primary voters throughout Texas's 1st State House District. Responses collected via Interactive Voice Response and Text-To-Web. Commissioned by Chris Spencer.





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Executive Summary

Hindsight is 20/20, and voters are seeing quite clearly through Rep. Gary VanDeaver (R) after he narrowly won a bitter runoff election against conservative challenger Chris Spencer last year. VanDeaver is best known for being a staunch opponent to school choice, which Republicans passed enthusiastically last month with much fanfare. When the vote tally for the bill was published, with the note that only two Republicans voted against it, even a casual observer of Texas politics could guess that Dade Phelan (the former Speaker who has experienced a dramatic fall from grace) and anti-school choice crusader Gary VanDeaver would be the two “no” votes. Such a guess would be correct.

Clearly, VanDeaver is heading in a different direction than the rest of today’s Republican Party. Our poll confirms that VanDeaver is falling out of favor with Republicans in his district, while Chris Spencer sits poised to take him out. Obviously, much could change between now and Election Day, and VanDeaver may even read the writing on the wall and decide not to run for re-election. But as things currently stand, I’d much rather be in Spencer’s shoes than VanDeaver’s going into 2026. **Read on to learn more.**

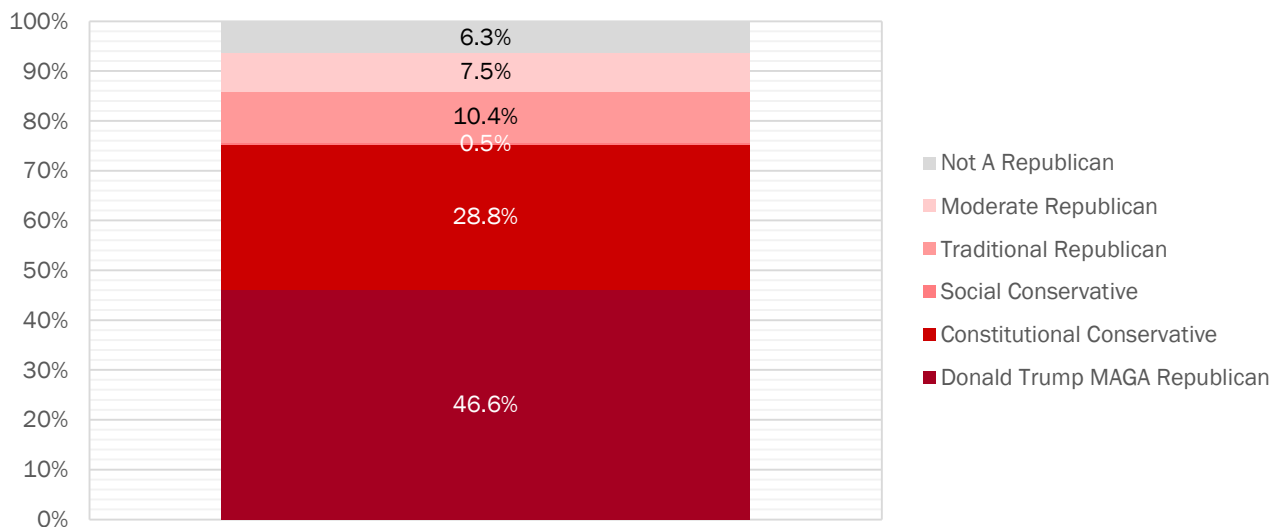
✓ **Ben Galbraith**

Senior Pollster, Victory Insights

✉ @_BenGalbraith

Electorate Ideology

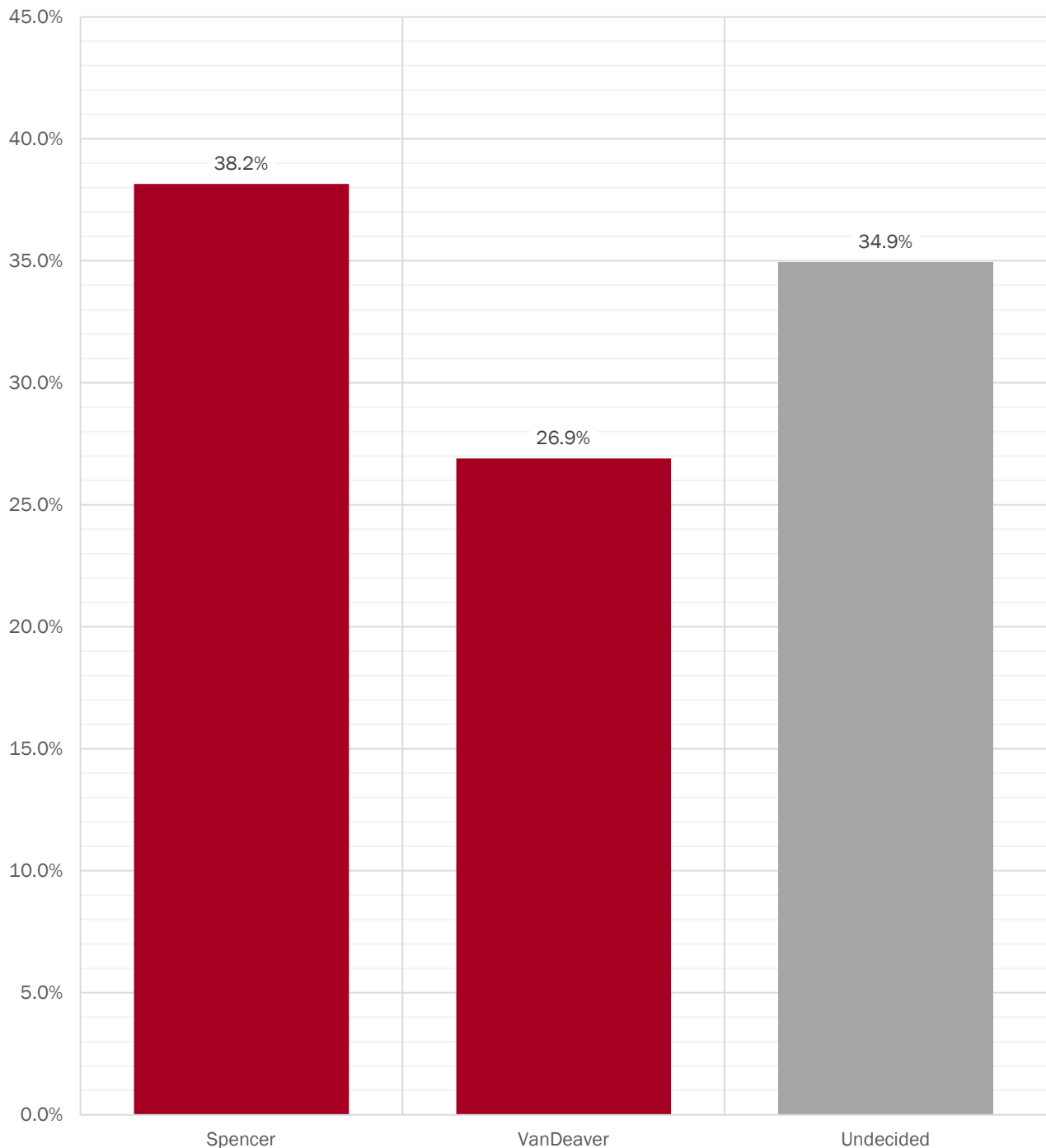
The Texas HD-1 Republican primary electorate is extremely conservative. The conservative wing of the electorate, comprised mainly of Donald Trump MAGA Republicans but also of Constitutional Conservatives and Social Conservatives, makes up 75.9% of the electorate. Meanwhile, the moderate wing, comprised of Traditional Republicans, Moderate Republicans, and Non-Republicans makes up only 24.1%.



2026 REPUBLICAN PRIMARY ELECTION

Head-to-Head Primary Ballot

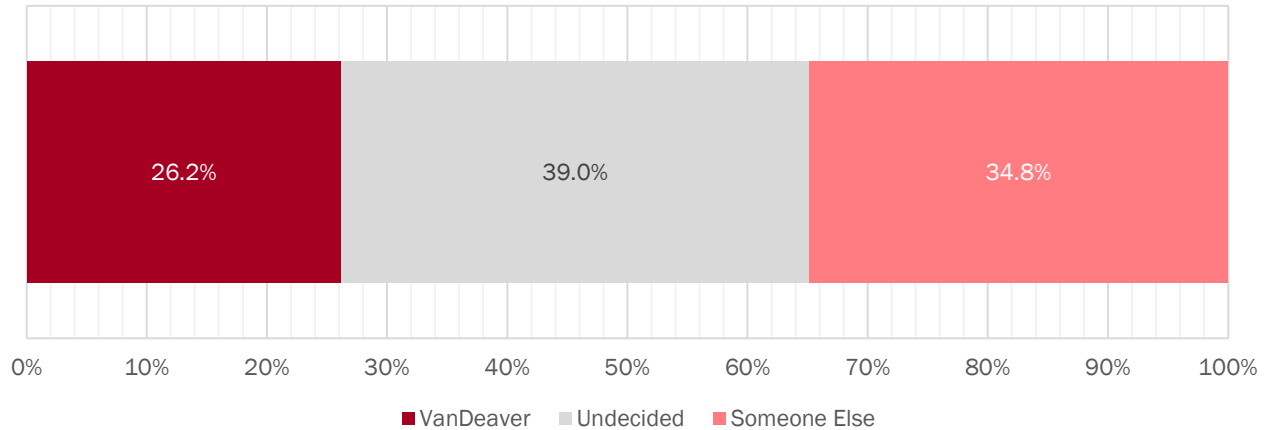
In a head-to-head matchup, Spencer leads VanDeaver by more than 11%. While Spencer is approaching 40% support, VanDeaver has the support of just over a quarter of the electorate. Simply put, these are startlingly poor numbers for an incumbent.



Generic Primary Ballots

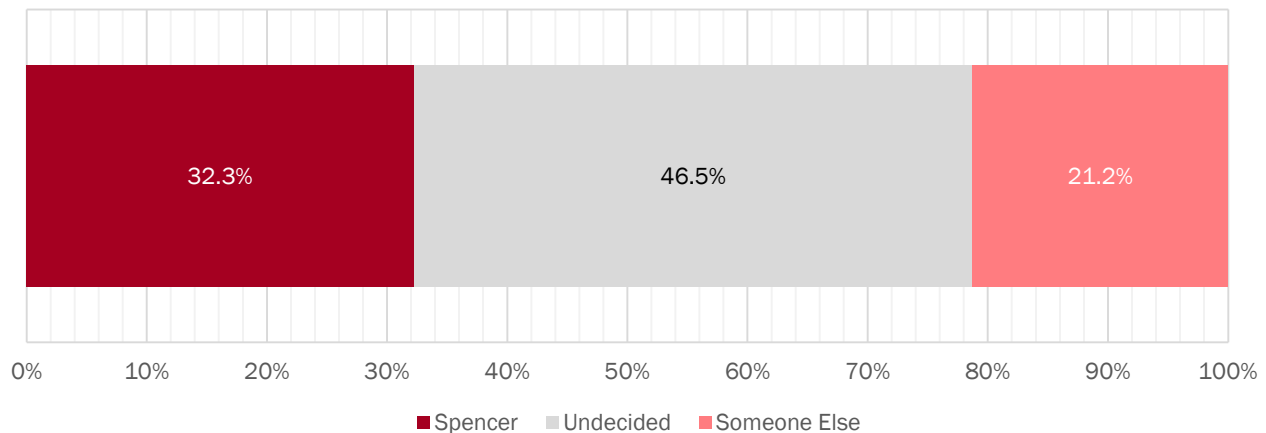
VanDeaver vs. Generic Candidate

Matched up against a generic “someone else” candidate, VanDeaver receives just over a quarter of the vote, trailing “someone else” by more than 8 points. This suggests that the Republican primary electorate in Texas HD-1 would prefer to elect a new representative rather than re-electing VanDeaver.



Spencer vs. Generic Candidate

When faced with a similar question about Spencer, voters responded quite differently. Spencer received nearly a third of the vote, while support for the “someone else” option dropped to only 21%. The weakness of the “someone else” option suggests much more mild opposition to Spencer than to VanDeaver, while the higher percentage of undecided voters likely reflects the fact that Spencer is more unknown to the average voter than VanDeaver is, so voters aren’t quite as ready to make up their minds one way or another.





THE ISSUES

The tables below show how the Texas HD-1 GOP electorate answered various questions on important issues. On DOGE, illegal immigration, and property taxes, a majority of conservatives and moderates agree; however, on school choice, conservatives lean in favor, while moderates lean in opposition.

“Do you support the Texas legislature implementing a school choice voucher system?”

	Yes	No	Undecided
All Voters	50.9%	28.2%	20.9%
Conservative Wing	60.5%	18.6%	20.9%
Moderate Wing	20.6%	58.6%	20.8%

“Do you support the Texas legislature creating a Department of Government Efficiency to identify and eliminate wasteful spending?”

	Yes	No	Undecided
All Voters	88.2%	4.7%	7.2%
Conservative Wing	95.3%	0.0%	4.7%
Moderate Wing	65.7%	19.4%	14.9%

“Compared to what they’ve done so far, do you think the Texas legislature should do more, less, or the same amount to prevent illegal immigration?”

	More	Less	Same Amount
All Voters	76.0%	2.6%	21.4%
Conservative Wing	80.3%	0.0%	19.7%
Moderate Wing	62.3%	10.9%	26.8%

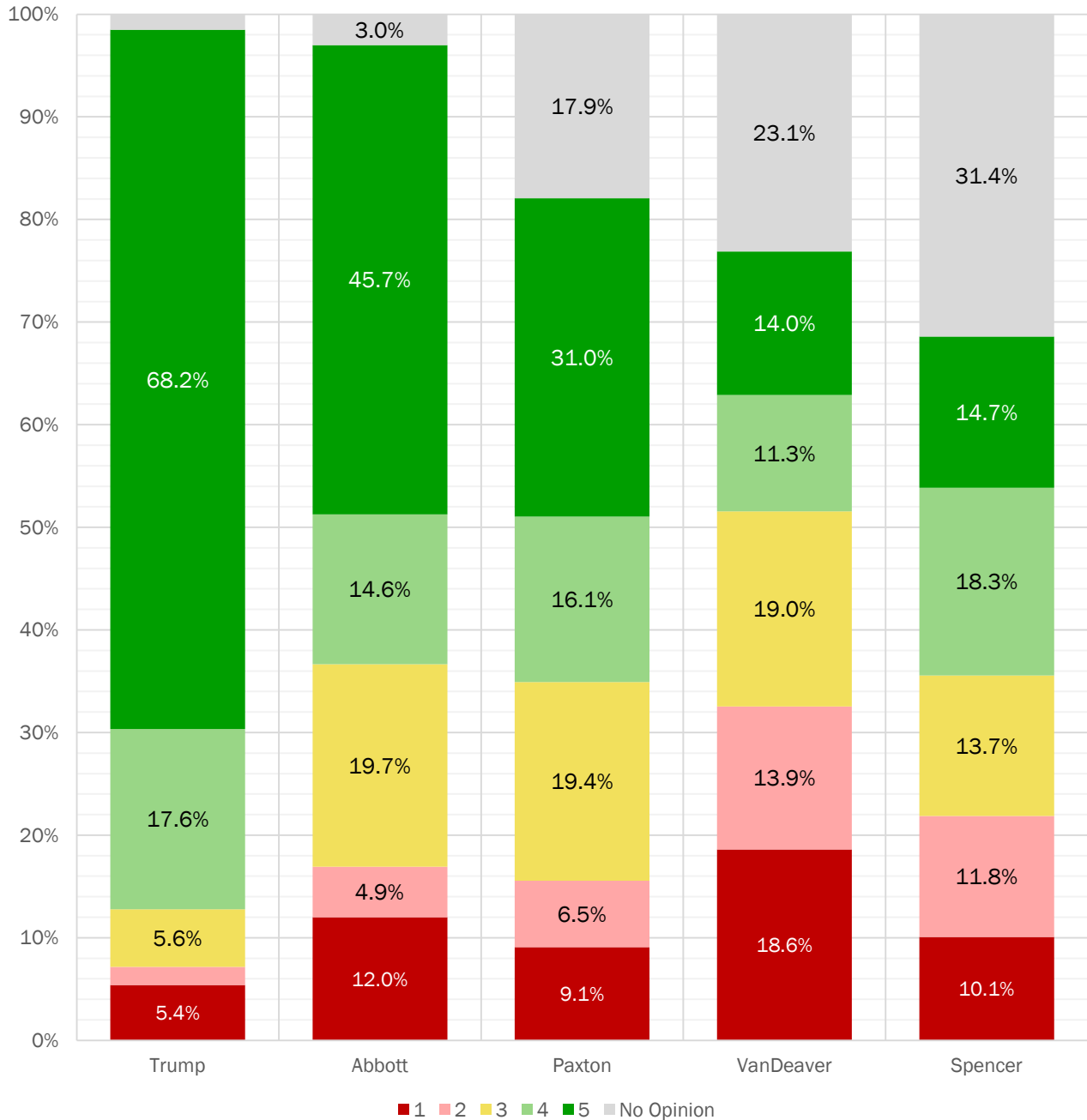
“How important do you think it is for the Texas legislature to reduce property taxes?”

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important At All
All Voters	80.8%	18.3%	0.9%
Conservative Wing	84.9%	14.6%	0.5%
Moderate Wing	67.9%	30.1%	2.0%

FAVORABILITY

Overall Favorability

Finally, voters were asked to rate five relevant Republican figures on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being extremely negative and 5 being extremely positive. Voters could also indicate that they have no opinion of each public figure. The chart below shows the overall results of these questions. We'll dive deeper into these results on the following page.



Favorability Metrics

From voters' ratings of each public figure, we calculated four different metrics which together provide a near-comprehensive explanation of the results. These four metrics, as well as their definitions, are shown in the table below. For each metric, the best result is highlighted in green, while the worst result is highlighted in red. For Average Opinionated Rating (AOR), we also broke it down by each wing of the electorate.

	Trump	Abbott	Paxton	VanDeaver	Spencer
Positive Name ID <small>% of respondents who rated the public figure "4" or "5" out of 5</small>	85.7%	60.3%	47.1%	25.3%	33.0%
Negative Name ID <small>% of respondents who rated the public figure "1" or "2" out of 5</small>	7.2%	16.9%	15.5%	32.5%	21.9%
Total Name ID <small>% of respondents who rated the public figure anything other than "No Opinion"</small>	98.5%	97.0%	82.1%	76.9%	68.6%
Avg. Opinionated Rating (AOR) <small>Average rating (1-5) given to the public figure by those who gave any numerical rating</small>	4.43	3.80	3.65	2.85	3.23
AOR Among Conservative Wing	4.74	4.17	4.04	2.56	3.56
AOR Among Moderate Wing	3.47	2.62	2.31	3.69	2.17

The first thing you'll notice is that Donald Trump sweeps almost every single metric. He is well-known and well-liked among both conservatives and moderates. Generally, Abbott is the next-most well-liked, followed by Paxton. When it comes to the two HD-1 candidates, Spencer posts the better numbers, but there's a big split depending on which wing of the electorate you're looking at. Among moderates, VanDeaver not only scores better than Spencer, but also better than Trump, Abbott, and Paxton. VanDeaver's fatal flaw is that moderates make up a small minority of his district. Among conservatives, VanDeaver craters, and Spencer soars. This results in an overall advantage for Spencer, granting him higher Positive Name ID, lower Negative Name ID, and an average rating nearly 0.4 points higher than VanDeaver's.



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