

Q & A: Stephen Schneck on Texas-Gov

Michael Sean Winters | Oct. 21, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

This week at Q & A, I asked the participants in last week's panel on the Catholic vote to pick a race they think is really interesting and write about it. As mentioned previously, you can find a video of that panel [here](#) [1].

Professor Stephen Schneck was not on the panel, but as the Director of the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies, he was the sponsor. Today he looks at the governor's race in Texas.

Stephen Schneck: Governor Rick Perry (R) of Texas is going for a history-making third term. It's increasingly looking like he'll succeed, with polls now showing about a ten point lead over Democratic challenger Bill White, the popular former mayor of Houston.

Perry got to this point by playing a tricky game, dancing enough with the Tea Partiers to co-opt their momentum and marginalize their fringe?but disentangling himself from their clutch in time to keep enough independent moderates and Texas Latinos in play. Only an unprecedented turnout by Latino voters could disrupt Perry's endgame at this point.

Texas Democrats have been praying for years for such a Latino awakening. Latinos represent nearly 40% of the state's population, but turnout among registered Latino voters in Texas has always been low. Even in 2008, a presidential election year with high voter enthusiasm, only 46% of registered Latinos voted. Given the polarizing implications that Arizona's immigration law has had this year, it might have been expected that Latinos would be more mobilized in Texas.

But, the reverse may be true, with the lack of progress on immigration reform turning off Latino interest in states like Texas. The Democrat's Bill White, fluent in Spanish and campaigning hard in Latino neighborhoods, will win the lion's share of those who do vote and likely garner more than 60% of the Latino vote. With Latino election turnout probably only in the low-30s, though, it's hard to see a way for White to win.

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Links:

[1] <http://ipr.cua.edu/events/religion-elections.cfm>