



INSIDE INFORMATION

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Influential Republican Organization in Houston Splits with Other Prominent Conservative Groups on 5 Races

By **Mike Hailey** Capitol Inside Editor

The political organization led by prominent GOP activist **Steven Hotze** of Houston issued endorsements Thursday to 20 Republicans in contested Texas House primary battles but disagreed with two other high-profile conservative groups on who voters should support in five of those races.

The Conservative Republicans of Texas, which also endorsed seven GOP House hopefuls who will face Democrats this fall after running unopposed in the March 2 primary election, pitched its support to **Dan Huberty** of Houston, **Jay Kleberg** of El Paso, **Jim Landtroop** of Plainview, **Barbara Nash** of Arlington and **Dianne Williams** of Houston in races in districts where the Young Conservatives of Texas or the Empower Texans PAC are backing different candidates in the first round competition.

Hotze's group, however, rallied behind seven other Republican House candidates - **Cindy Burkett** of Mesquite, **Stefani Carter** of Dallas, **Erwin Cain** of Sulphur Springs, **John Frullo** of Lubbock, **Larry Gonzales** of Round Rock and **Bill Zedler** of Arlington - who've all been endorsed by both Empower Texans and YCT.

The list of House candidates who have the support of the Conservative Republicans of Texas for primary fights this year includes four who've been endorsed by either the YCT or Empower Texans: **Fernando Herrera** of Houston, **Milton Rister** of Georgetown, **Yolanda Sotelo Garza** of Del Rio and **Holly Turner** of Austin. But the organization that Hotze founded and leads also threw its support to three GOP contenders - **George Lavender** of Texarkana, **Raul Torres** of Corpus Christi and **Bonnie Parker** of Houston - who are competing against primary rivals in House races in which neither contender has the backing of Empower Texans or YCT.

The Conservative Republicans of Texas offered only one endorsement in a contested House primary race that features an incumbent when it added State Rep. **John Davis** of Houston to the list of candidates it is supporting in next month's election. Davis faces **Mary Huls**, a tea party activist who's acknowledged that she voted in the Democratic primary election in 2008 in hopes of helping stop Barack Obama from winning it, at the polls in March in his re-election bid.

Gonzales, who's battling three Republican rivals for the party's nomination in the race for a suburban seat north of Austin that Democratic State Rep. **Diana Maldonado** is defending for the first time this year, and Carter, who faces **Geoff Bailey** in the GOP primary in a fight to see who takes on first term Democratic State Rep. **Carol Kent** this fall, are the only House hopefuls who've been endorsed by Hotze's group, YCT, Empower Texans and the Texas Association of Business' political arm known as BACPAC.

Rister, Lyne, Landtroop and Nash have the support of the state's largest business group for their House bids as well. Other groups that have significant sway with conservative voters in Texas such as the Texas Alliance for Life, the Heritage Alliance and Texas Eagle Forum haven't announced endorsements in House races at this point or have been doing so on an individual candidate basis in a process that's still under way.

The Conservative Republicans of Texas split with the Young Conservatives by supporting Huberty, Nash and Landtroop over **Addie Wiseman**, **Bill Burch** and **David Andrews** respectively in GOP primary fights for seats that Republican State Rep. **Joe Crabb** of Atascocita is giving up and Democratic State Reps. **Paula Pierson** of Arlington and **Joe Heflin** of Crosbyton are seeking again.

Hotze's group had a different opinion than Empower Texans when it endorsed Kleberg and Williams over **Dee Margo** and **Jack O'Connor** in Republican first round fights for seats that Democratic State Reps. **Joe Moody** of El Paso and **Hubert Vo** of Houston hope to win again this year.

But the YCT, Empower Texans and Conservative Republicans of Texas agreed with endorsements for Cain, Burkett and Zedler, who are competing against primary rivals in races for seats that Democratic State Reps. **Mark Homer** of Paris, **Robert Miklos** of Mesquite and **Chris Turner** of Arlington are defending in November, and Frullo, who's battling two round one foes in a bid for the seat that Republican State Rep. **Carl Isett** of Lubbock isn't seeking again in 2010.

Conservative Republicans of Texas Endorsements: House District Number and Candidate

1 George Lavender 85 Jim Landtroop 3 Erwin Cain 93 Barbara Nash 20 Milton Rister 96 Bill Zedler 33 Raul Torres 101 Cindy Burkett 34 Connie Scott 102 Stefani Carter 35 Jose Aliseda 106 Rodney Anderson 45 Jason Isaac 107 Kenneth Sheets 47 Holly Turner 127 Dan Huberty 48 Dan Neil 129 John Davis 52 Larry Gonzales 133 Jim Murphy 69 Lanham Lyne 134 Bonnie Parker 74 Yolanda Sotelo Garza 148 Fernando Herrera 78 Jay Kleberg 149 Dianne Williams