

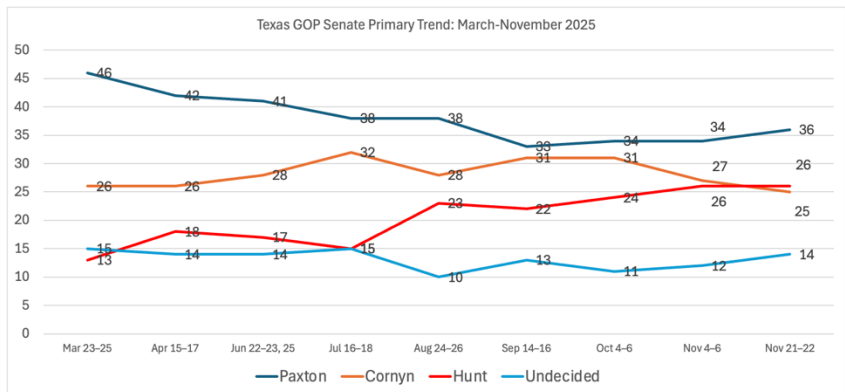


STRATUS INTELLIGENCE

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Christopher S. Wilson
DATE: November 23, 2025
RE: Late November Texas GOP Senate Primary: Cornyn's Position Continues to Deteriorate

Key Takeaways

- John Cornyn's standing with Texas Republican primary voters continues to erode. His image has collapsed and he is now sixteen points underwater (**35% favorable / 51% unfavorable**), with **28% of voters having a "very unfavorable" view of Cornyn**.
- On the **three-way ballot**, Cornyn has slipped into third while Paxton and Hunt hold steady: **Paxton 36%, Hunt 26%, Cornyn 25%, Undecided 14%**.
 - After more than **\$40 million in spending on his behalf**, Cornyn is now running last in a race for an office he has held since 2002.
- In **head-to-head tests**, Cornyn is non-competitive:
 - **Paxton 51% – Cornyn 34%**.
 - **Hunt 52% – Cornyn 29%**.
- Even **with a hypothetical Trump endorsement, Cornyn cannot be rescued**:
 - Paxton still leads a **Trump-endorsed Cornyn by three points, 44%–41%**.
 - By contrast, a **Trump-endorsed Hunt defeats Paxton 51%–31%**.
- The **information environment is driving Cornyn down while lifting Hunt, despite 7-figures+ of negative advertising against Hunt** by pro Cornyn groups since our last survey in early November:
 - For Hunt, **31% say recent campaign exposure made them more favorable, only 12% less favorable**.
 - For Cornyn, the pattern reverses: **47% say recent content made them less favorable vs. just 23% more favorable**—a two-to-one negative flow.



Taken together, these data indicate that John Cornyn's support is collapsing: as voters become aware of his negatives, his costly attempts at rebranding quickly unravel. The more voters see of him, the worse he performs. Even an endorsement from President Trump – the strongest possible external intervention in a Republican primary anywhere – fails to put him on safe ground.

Ballot and Trend: Cornyn Now a Weak Third and Fading

On our late November three-way ballot, Paxton leads with **36%**, Hunt holds **26%**, and Cornyn has dropped to **25%** with **14% undecided**.

Compared to early November:

- Despite spending \$4.5 million just on television over the last three weeks Cornyn has continued to lose ground. Continued massive spending on his behalf will not change the fundamentals of the race.
- Hunt and Paxton are locking in support despite millions being spent against them; they have built core bases of support while the incumbent's support erodes.

In the **two-way matchups**, Cornyn's weakness becomes even clearer:

- **Paxton vs. Cornyn:** Paxton 51%, Cornyn 34%.
- **Hunt vs. Cornyn:** Hunt 52%, Cornyn 29%.

In other words, even if Paxton or Hunt were to drop out, Cornyn would still lose a head-to-head race against either. As the race consolidates, **Cornyn is the worst-positioned of the three major candidates**. His path to an outright win is effectively closed. Even if he makes a runoff, he begins it at an extreme disadvantage. Cornyn is now chiefly acting as a spoiler, facilitating a Paxton primary win and subsequent general election defeat.

Image and Ideology: Cornyn Is Out of Step with the Electorate

John Cornyn's image has moved from fragile to toxic:

- **At 35% favorable/51% unfavorable** overall, for a **net -16 rating**, Cornyn's already wounded image has entered a tailspin. He has lost 17 net points in favorability since our early November poll, which had him at 44% favorable / 43% unfavorable. He has lost a net 40% since Wesley Hunt entered the race, collapsing from +24% to -16% net favorability.
- The intensity of voter hostility is growing. Cornyn is now viewed as **"very unfavorable" by 28%** of the electorate, up from 22% at the beginning of the month. If present trends continue, **more Texas Republicans will view him very unfavorably than at all positively by the December 8 filing deadline**.
- Among self-identified conservatives, **a majority now view him unfavorably**, with very unfavorable ratings concentrated among the most ideologically committed voters. Cornyn is increasingly pigeonholed as the **liberal/moderate** option in a primary electorate that overwhelmingly self-identifies as conservative.

By contrast, Congressman Wesley Hunt maintains a strongly positive but still "open" profile:

- Hunt's favorability is **net +32**, with more than four in ten voters favorable and only one in ten unfavorable. He is viewed ten points more favorably than Paxton and nearly fifty points more favorably than Cornyn.
- Wesley enjoys this lead despite trailing Paxton and Cornyn in overall name-ID, leaving a large persuadable bloc of potential support.

Ideologically, Paxton occupies the most conservative lane, but Hunt is steadily consolidating the conservative vote as more voters learn who he is. By contrast, Cornyn is ideologically mismatched with the electorate, a structural problem that cannot be solved with messaging tweaks.

Trump Endorsement Scenarios: Cornyn Still Loses

Would additional extraordinary intervention – beyond the already unprecedented \$40 million spent on Cornyn’s behalf during this off year – save his candidacy? The Trump endorsement is universally recognized as the most powerful intervention possible in a Republican primary. Would an endorsement from President Trump stabilize Cornyn and guarantee a win for the incumbent?

The data say **no**.

1. Trump-Endorsed Cornyn vs. Paxton

- Paxton 44% – Cornyn 41%.
 - Despite putting the full weight of a hypothetical endorsement behind him, Cornyn still **trails** Paxton. The endorsement narrows the margin but does not change the fundamental dynamic: Paxton remains the preferred option for a majority of Trump-oriented GOP voters. This despite considerable spending by Team Cornyn over the last several months.

2. Trump-Endorsed Hunt vs. Paxton

- Hunt 51% – Paxton 31%.
 - By contrast, when President Trump’s support goes to Hunt instead, the race flips completely. Hunt opens a **20-point lead**, consolidating both the pro-Trump base and a substantial share of soft Paxton and Cornyn voters.

3. Baseline Two-Ways

- Without any endorsement overlay, Paxton and Hunt are effectively tied (**41%–40%**) in a head-to-head. Both men crush Cornyn roughly twenty points head-to-head.

The implication is straightforward: **John Cornyn is so toxic that even President Trump’s incredible brand does not guarantee a Cornyn lead, let alone a Cornyn win.** This is not a messaging problem. Texas voters have already made up their minds. They do not want to renominate John Cornyn.

Message Environment: Hunt Rising, Cornyn Bleeding Out

The “information flow” metrics show why the \$40 million pro-Cornyn effort is failing.

Wesley Hunt

- **31%** of voters say what they’ve seen or heard recently about Hunt made them **more favorable**, only **12% less favorable**. This despite pro-Cornyn groups spending three times as much attacking Hunt as the Hunt campaign has spent on positive ads this month.
- Among those who have seen him on TV or online, the balance is even more positive—his military service, alignment with Trump, and contrast with Cornyn’s record all resonate.

John Cornyn

- For Cornyn, the pattern is inverted: **47% say recent content made them less favorable versus just 23% more favorable**. This despite pro-Cornyn groups spending \$4.5 million on television this month compared to an estimated \$1 million in ads spent by anti-Cornyn groups.
- The more voters are exposed to Cornyn’s ads and news coverage, the more likely they are to move *against* him. Negative recall centers on immigration and “amnesty,” perceived inconsistency with Trump, and questions about his record. The attempt to rebrand John Cornyn as a border hawk despite his record has undermined his credibility with primary voters, negating the value of his massive spending.

This is the definition of a **self-defeating media program**: every additional dollar of Cornyn broadcast appears to be accelerating his decline rather than repairing it. Voters know Cornyn is moderate on immigration. Pretending he that is not constitutes an act of self-sabotage.

Meanwhile, Hunt's program is still in a growth phase—each incremental voter reached is more likely to move into his column, especially when the contrast is drawn directly against Cornyn.

Strategic Implications

1. **Cornyn cannot be “saved” with more spending.**

The campaign has already consumed roughly **\$40 million** – ten times what the other candidates in the race have spent – and Cornyn's numbers have only worsened. His net favorability is negative, his “very unfavorable” share is spiking, his support within the conservative wing is shrinking, and his ideological positioning is terrible.

2. **A Trump endorsement is not a rescue plan.**

In the most optimistic scenario—President Trump endorsing Cornyn early and unequivocally—Cornyn still **trails Paxton** and remains deeply vulnerable to Hunt. However, that same endorsement would **decisively elect Hunt** and neutralize Paxton, all but guaranteeing Republican victory in Texas next November.

3. **Hunt is the only candidate who can unify the coalition.**

Hunt is:

- Competitive with Paxton in a straight head-to-head.
- Overwhelmingly favored against Cornyn.
- The clear beneficiary of a Trump endorsement.
- Well-positioned ideologically with conservatives.
- Drawing support from all parts of the party as he becomes better known.

4. **Continuing to prop up Cornyn risks delivering the nomination to Paxton.**

So long as Cornyn remains in the race, he functions primarily as a spoiler whose vote share comes disproportionately from voters who would otherwise consolidate behind Hunt.

Conclusion

The late November survey confirms what earlier waves already signaled: **John Cornyn's position in the Texas GOP primary has moved past the point of recovery.** His image is underwater, his negatives are hardening, his campaign communications are backfiring, and even the strongest possible intervention, a full Trump endorsement, does not put him in a winning position.

Continued investment in Cornyn at this stage is not just inefficient—it is counter-productive. It imperils Republican control of the seat and of the Senate majority. Spending in Texas is already coming at the expense of critical GOP Senate races like Maine, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, New Hampshire, and North Carolina. Propping up a spoiler who only makes a doomed Paxton nomination more likely is the height of folly.

Methodology

*Stratus Intelligence conducted a survey of 857 likely Republican primary voters in Texas November 21–22, 2025. Interviews were completed using a blended methodology of SMS-to-web and live telephone interviews to cell and landline phones. Results were weighted to match the expected 2026 Republican primary electorate on region, age, gender, and vote history. The theoretical margin of sampling error for the full sample is approximately **±3.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level**; margins are higher for subgroups.*