

# AMERICAN STRATEGIES

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To: Interested Parties

From: Joe Goode  
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## Re: **Houston Mayoral Poll Summary**

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Adrian Garcia and Sylvester Turner lead in the race for Houston mayor, but the contest remains somewhat fluid. One of these two front-runners is almost certain to capture a spot for the December runoff, but Chris Bell, Bill King and Steven Costello remain competitive. Voters are lukewarm in their support of the entire field of candidates, and with one-quarter of voters still undecided, the race could potentially break in a different direction. Time is short, however, for the second-tier candidates to change the dynamics of the campaign.

Garcia and Turner each capture 19 percent of the vote, almost twice the support of Chris Bell (10 percent), Bill King (10 percent) and Steven Costello (9 percent). Ben Hall (6 percent) and Marty McVey (1 percent) round out the crowded field, with 25 percent who are undecided.

Garcia and Turner are better known than the second tier candidates and each has strong backing from a base constituency. Overall, half of voters have a favorable opinion of Garcia (compared to 24 percent who are unfavorable) while 45 percent are favorable towards Turner (28 percent unfavorable). Garcia wins a majority (51 percent) of Hispanic voters, and also shows relatively strong backing from whites (17 percent). Garcia has more bi-partisan support than other candidates: he wins 21 percent of self-identified Democrats and 17 percent of Republicans (second only to King with 21 percent). Turner, by contrast, wins 55 percent of African-American voters and 11 percent of whites. He leads among Democrats with 32 percent, but wins just three percent of Republicans.

The front-runners have room to grow their support. For starters, their personal favorable ratings exceed their current vote. In addition, nearly one-third of those who are not currently supporting Garcia say there is a fair chance (18 percent) or small chance (12 percent) that they will vote for him – virtually identical to Turner’s numbers among those who are not currently voting for Turner (16 percent fair chance they will vote for him; 13 percent small chance).

The second tier candidates are hampered by relatively low name recognition. Bell is the best known of the three (41 percent are favorable and 20 percent unfavorable), but he lacks a core base of support. King leads among Republicans (with 21 percent) and conservatives (18 percent), but most voters have never heard of him (34 percent) or don't know enough about him to have an opinion (24 percent). Costello has marginally higher name recognition than King (33 percent are favorable towards Costello and 10 percent are unfavorable), but like Bell, Costello also lacks an identifiable base.

The composition of the undecided vote may work more to the advantage of moderate to conservative candidates. Undecided voters are disproportionately women (59 percent) and are less likely to identify as Democrats than the electorate at large. Including leaners, only 39 percent of undecided voters call themselves Democrats (compared to 50 percent of all likely voters); 20 percent are independents and 37 percent are Republicans. Four-in-ten (41 percent) identify as conservative. Two-thirds are white with 16 percent African-American and seven percent Hispanic.

The effect of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance on the mayoral contest is not clear. Just over half currently vote "For" HERO (52 percent), with 37 percent against and 10 percent undecided. Passions are high on the issue: 44 percent are very certain to vote "For" and 30 percent very certain to vote against. In the mayoral contest, by comparison, only 34 percent of voters are "very certain" of their candidate choice.

If HERO supporters turn out in greater numbers than expected, that may work to the benefit of Turner, Garcia and Bell. Turner and Garcia currently win 22 percent each among HERO supporters, while Bell attracts 14 percent. The impact of greater turnout by HERO opponents is less clear. King leads among opponents with 20 percent and would likely benefit the most, but both Turner (14 percent) and Garcia (14 percent) attract their fair share of the HERO opposition, as does Ben Hall (12 percent) and Steven Costello (9 percent).

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*American Strategies designed and administered this telephone survey conducted by professional interviewers. The survey reached 500 adults with past municipal voting history who indicated they would almost certainly or probably vote in the 2015 November elections for Houston Mayor. The survey was conducted September 21-24, 2015. Telephone numbers were generated by a random selection of registered voters within the sample frame. Thirty percent of respondents were reached on wireless phones. Regional and demographic quotas were assigned to reflect the target population. The data were not weighted. The overall margin of error associated with these results is plus or minus 4.4 percentage points.*