

Inside the Texas Democratic Primary Driving Historic Turnout — and Deepening Party Fault Lines

by Thomas Wyatt | EIC, The Villager

(VILLAGER) - Texas is witnessing one of the most extraordinary primary seasons in decades. More than 1.25 million votes were cast in the first seven days of early voting — a number that eclipses turnout from the last two presidential cycles and nearly doubles 2022 levels. Democrats, for once, are outpacing Republicans in early ballots, a rarity in a state where the GOP has dominated statewide poli-

The most explosive moment came when a liberal content creator claimed Talarico had called former Rep. Colin Allred a “mediocre Black man.” Allred responded with a full-throated endorsement of Crockett, saying, “If you want to compliment Black women, just do it... Don’t do it while also tearing down a Black man.” Talarico insisted the remark was mischaracterized, saying he had described Allred’s campaigning as mediocre, not Allred himself. But the damage was done — and the con-

win but has repeatedly failed to crack. The historic turnout is real. The enthusiasm is real. But so are the fractures — racial, ideological, and strategic — that threaten to overshadow the numbers.

This primary is not just a contest for a nomination. It is an X-ray of a party wrestling with who it is, who it represents, and how it plans to compete in a state where every misstep is amplified and every division is weaponized. The turnout may be historic, but the stakes are even higher.



Voting signs outside the Carver Library in East Austin during early voting. Photo/Thomas Wyatt/VILLAGER

tics for more than thirty years. But beneath the surface of these historic numbers lies a far more volatile story: a primary defined by racial tension, ideological clashes, media hostility, and a party grappling with its own identity.

At the center of the storm are Rep. Jasmine Crockett and State Rep. James Talarico, two Democrats whose sharply contrasting styles have turned a routine primary into a national spectacle. The unusually high turnout is not simply enthusiasm — it is the byproduct of a race that has grown increasingly personal, increasingly racialized, and increasingly expensive.

Democratic leaders are publicly celebrating the surge. In Tarrant County — the state’s most competitive urban county — Democratic Party Chair Allison Campolo said voters “putting up bigger numbers than Republicans ... absolutely leads us into November with a really strong turnout and engagement.” But even as party officials tout momentum, the article reminds readers that Democrats have “dreamt about flipping the state for many election cycles now,” and those dreams have repeatedly collapsed under the weight of Texas’s political realities.

The Crockett–Talarico contest has become a flashpoint for those realities. Crockett has leaned into her identity as a Black woman and her reputation as a firebrand progressive. Talarico has leaned into a message that blends liberal policy with Christian language aimed at more conservative-leaning voters. What might have been a healthy ideological contrast has instead spiraled into a public feud over race, representation, and respect.

trovsky exposed a raw nerve within the party.

Crockett’s campaign has also clashed with the press in ways that have baffled longtime Democratic strategists. She called Capitol Police on a CNN journalist and removed an Atlantic reporter from one of her events — actions that would be unthinkable in a typical statewide campaign. These incidents have raised questions about transparency, media strategy, and whether the campaign’s confrontational posture is a principled stand or a self-inflicted wound.

Meanwhile, Republicans are watching the Democratic drama with amusement, not fear. GOP strategist Dave Carney dismissed the turnout surge as nothing more than the product of a rare, expensive Democratic primary, saying, “When was the last time the Democrats had a statewide primary where they spent millions of dollars? It hasn’t happened in my lifetime.” The implication is clear: Republicans believe the Democratic enthusiasm is temporary, not transformative.

The article also highlights a demographic shift that should concern Democrats: the GOP’s growing strength among Latino voters. Donald Trump’s “record inroads” into the demographic in 2024 dealt a major blow to Democratic hopes, and the trend has not reversed. Even with high early turnout, the party faces a long-term challenge in rebuilding trust with communities it once considered reliably blue.

What emerges from this reporting is not a story about two candidates, but a story about a party at a crossroads. The Texas Democratic primary has become a referendum on strategy, identity, and the future of the party in a state it desperately wants to

APD Investigating City’s 8th Homicide of the Year After Two Found Dead in South Austin

by Villager staff

(AUSTIN, TX) — The Austin Police Department is investigating the city’s eighth homicide of 2026 after a man identified as Samuel Rios and woman identified as Megan Montgomery were found dead inside a South Austin home late Saturday morning.

Officers responded around 11:30 a.m. to a welfare check at a residence on 6715 Windrift Way, where a family member let police inside. Both victims were discovered with obvious signs of trauma and were pronounced dead at the scene. Investigators believe the incident is isolated and have not identified any ongoing threat to the public.

APD has not released additional details about the circumstances surrounding the deaths, and the case remains active. Detectives are urging anyone with information to contact the department or submit an anonymous tip through Crime Stoppers.

This marks the latest in a series of early-year homicide investigations as Austin continues to track violent-crime trends across the city.



2026 BOND

Austin continues to face significant infrastructure challenges, including aging facilities, growing service demands, and affordability pressures.

Your input is important as the 2026 Bond Program team works to meet community expectations for the investments we make in our city’s future.

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Share your priorities on which projects the City should invest in to improve Austin – visit AustinTexas.gov/Bond2026

AISD 2025–2026 School Year Calendar

AUSTIN
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Austin ISD serves a large portion of students in the Austin area. For the 2025–2026 school year, the AISD calendar includes the following highlights:

- First Day of School: **August 19, 2025** (Tuesday)
- Fall Break / Thanksgiving Week: **November 24–28, 2025**
- Winter Break: **December 22, 2025 – January 2, 2026**
- Spring Break: March 16–20, 2026
- Last Day of School (Students): **May 28, 2026** (Thursday)

For the full calendar and official updates, visit the AISD Academic Calendar.

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