

As we settle into the New Year, I hope you are spending time on things that bring you joy, peace and the fullness of what's to come in 2025. In just a few weeks, we face an unprecedented opportunity to change the fortunes of millions of Texans. **Those of us who remain uncommitted will determine who leads the Texas House of Representatives.**

I have spoken to many of you about what has transpired and what else may come in the upcoming Speaker's race. I will tell you what I know. This is solely my perspective and my perspective alone that I will share as many have asked for my assessment as a veteran member who remains uncommitted.

I know a Speaker's race is a game of math. The game is who will get to 76 first. Full stop. Every race I have participated in (2003, 2009, 2019, 2021) they have all played out the same way in terms of outcome. Each was different in certain details, but all followed the same general pattern: a candidate gets to 76, calls a press conference, releases a list, and within minutes that list grows to 100+ members. Each previous race worked this way every single time.

That didn't happen here. Instead, one candidate tried to follow the traditional script. He used his best efforts to whip, coddle, and cajole members to catch the train, but lost votes instead of gaining on both sides of the aisle. That has never happened before.

As of today, we are left with two candidates, with perhaps more to come, and we are just days from electing our next Speaker. Importantly, neither side is budging, and more notably, neither side has the votes as of now.

How do I know this is true? First, I don't know of a single Democrat on the Cook team. So, his vote count is and will remain Republican and is well short of the number needed. I know Cook has traveled the state reaching out to Democrats but he is not gaining any ground with uncommitted Democrats.

As for Burrows, he has lost support with those on his initial list. He has indicated that more have joined since then but will not produce a list. I can tell you that there are Republicans who have asked to be removed from his list and yet there have been no public statements about that. I also know there are currently-committed Democrats who have expressed frustration with the state of this race and his candidacy.

So what do we do? Moving forward all depends on where you are at. Many Democrats are with Burrows because they believe he is the best candidate.

Others joined Burrows because they were told “the train was leaving the station” and they needed to get on board—better to be # 76 than #106. If you are one of them, you should really consider joining those of us who are not committed. **As we have said for months in our opposition to vouchers, our unity is our power.**

To those of us who are not committed, we must stay the course and be measured as this race develops in early January, and more likely, on the House Floor on January 14th. It is not anyone’s place to judge or criticize our decision and we deserve the same grace we have extended to those who have made their decision to join Burrows team, regardless of whether they pledged before Saturday, December 7th.

Going forward, here are my final thoughts and observations.

We are near the end game of the Speaker’s race. I have listened to friends and colleagues who tell us that Democratic unity never works and there is the quick reference to failed efforts in 2019 to do that. Yes, they have a point, however, context matters.

Republicans were united in 2019 and in 2021 and that unity gave an incentive for 30ish Democrats to join the winning side. **That is not present today.** I have never seen this much Republican division in my 12 terms. I have never seen such strong opposition to Speaker Phelan or his would-be successor. I have never seen an incumbent Speaker step down under fire. Nor have I witnessed a Speaker’s race that had more than token opposition.

Today is much different than 2019, and pure math says that our unity will decide this race.

To be clear, one thing that doesn’t sit well with me is for any Speaker candidate who wants my vote and support to elect them to lead our chamber, but is unwilling to allow members to exercise that same deliberation when it comes to managing the legislative process of our chamber. **Personally, I have been clear for months that I will not vote for any Speaker that intends to make our Caucus voiceless and powerless, nor should any of us.**

Lets not beat around the bush. Republicans have 88 votes and they can eliminate Democratic Chairs alone—they don’t need us to help them. They just need us to elect a Speaker. If the 88 can’t produce a 76 member majority – well, then that’s on them.

And for some reason if they can’t muster a majority, I will reiterate, the Speaker’s race is a game of math.

If our power is worthy enough to elect a Speaker of the House, then our power is worthy enough to meaningfully participate as a member of the leadership team by the same manner and means that our fellow Republicans do.

Happy New Year and Hook Em!

Trey Martinez Fischer