

Closed Primaries In Texas Would Generate Billions In New Revenue And Create Thousands Of New Jobs

- By amuse
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The Perryman Group's October 2025 report, "The Potential Economic and Fiscal Impact of Closing Primaries in Texas," arrives dressed in the language of neutral expertise, but it is anything but neutral. Commissioned by the far-left Unite America, an NGO pushing open primaries and ranked choice voting, it is now being used in litigation and [media](#) campaigns to scare Texans into believing that closing the GOP primary would somehow cost the state billions. The headline claim that Texas would lose \$28.2 billion a year and more than 219,000 jobs by 2050 sounds dramatic, but it collapses the moment the report is examined.

Perryman, a CCP-linked economist, ignores the stabilizing effects of party integrity and coherent governance, never considers the powerful economic upside of consistent pro-growth policy, and builds his projections on speculative assumptions that would not survive peer review. In reality, the economic effect runs in the opposite direction: by strengthening policy stability and reinforcing Texas' pro-growth trajectory, closing the primaries would position the state to gain more than \$100 billion in annual gross state product and over 650,000 jobs by 2050, an outcome rooted in sound economic

evidence rather than ideological modeling.

It matters who is doing this projecting and why. The Perryman Group is not some detached academic shop in search of truth. It is a Waco-based consulting firm that has repeatedly been retained by progressive and left-leaning organizations whenever they need an “economic impact” study to attack conservative policy. It is also a firm with international entanglements that Texans deserve to know about. Ray Perryman’s firm was hired by the Chinese Communist Party and received formal honors from the Ministry of Science and Technology for its work with the Ministry of Science and Technology. The CCP publicly praised him for “promoting [capitalism](#) in China,” an accolade that signals alignment with Beijing’s economic ambitions, not Texas’ interests. Domestically, Perryman was paid by the Texas Civil Rights Project to argue that stronger election integrity measures would cost the state trillions in output and millions of jobs over time. When Texas considered reforms to secure mail voting and tighten procedures, Perryman toured county commissions warning that restricting “voting access” would damage growth.

The modeling logic in that earlier work is essentially the same as in the new primary report: replace “voter ID and integrity legislation” with “closing primaries,” run the same Voting Rights Act analogy, feed an assumed wage hit into the same proprietary input-output model, and print large negative numbers. The conclusions are preordained because the structure of the argument is preordained.

A second strand of context is ideological. The principal institutional ally on the legal flank of this campaign is Democracy Forward, led by Skye Perryman, Ray Perryman’s daughter and professional collaborator. Democracy Forward was founded by Marc Elias and alumni of the Obama administration and the Clinton campaign for the express purpose of suing the Trump administration. During President Trump’s first term the group filed well over one hundred lawsuits seeking to block his executive orders, appointments, and regulatory rollbacks. In Trump’s second term it has already filed dozens more, challenging everything from border security policies to climate related funding decisions to reforms in civil service rules. Skye Perryman’s earlier role as general counsel for Planned Parenthood is public, and her organization aligns itself with

the broader progressive legal network that pushes expansive abortion rights, resists voter roll maintenance, and opposes most efforts to tighten election procedures. The Perrymans and their organizations are not friends of the Republican Party or its interests.

Unite America, the funder of the current Perryman report, is equally candid about its aims. The Murdoch family-backed firm exists to change the rules of American elections by promoting open, all candidate primaries and ranked choice voting. In its own materials it laments that in states like Texas, a small share of primary voters effectively choose most officeholders, then announces that the solution is to break partisan primaries and move to nonpartisan, top four or top five systems with instant runoffs. It has invested heavily in Alaska's top four primary and ranked choice general election, touting that model as a national template. In Texas, Unite America and its allies are working to keep the Republican primary open, preserve the ability of Democrats and independents to participate in GOP contests, and ultimately move the state toward the Alaska style system. It is noteworthy that the Murdochs are supporters of Senator John Cornyn, the state's most famous RINO. Their strategic objective is not moderation, but elimination of the Republican Party as a meaningful institution by diluting its nominating power until both parties converge into a single, left-leaning uniparty. The Perryman report is one weapon in that broader effort, not a disinterested economic study.

Once that context is understood, the internal structure of the report can be evaluated more clearly. The report does not observe any actual decline in output that has occurred when a state closed its primaries, for the simple reason that no such decline has ever been measured. Instead, the report takes a small difference in primary turnout between open and closed systems, roughly four percentage points in a recent national cross section, labels this gap a "reduction in access," and then imports estimates from a Voting Rights Act era study that linked the enfranchisement of black citizens in Jim Crow counties to long run wage gains. That Voting Rights Act study looked at counties where black voters had been systemically excluded from all elections by literacy tests, poll taxes, and outright intimidation and then traced the effect on black wages when those barriers were removed. Perryman treats that work as a generic coefficient

connecting voting “access” and earnings, and applies it to the turnout gap in modern primaries.

The leap here is obvious. The difference between Jim Crow disenfranchisement and a modern party deciding that only its own members may participate in its primary is not a mere difference of degree. It is a category difference. In a closed primary state, no citizen loses the right to vote in November. Republicans still vote in Republican primaries, Democrats vote in Democratic primaries, and independents can affiliate if they care enough to pick a side. The only “restriction” is that a person may not simultaneously remain formally unaffiliated and yet demand a ballot that belongs to a private association. Equating that situation with the denial of basic political rights to an entire race of citizens in the mid twentieth century South is analytically indefensible and morally unserious.

Yet on this equivalence the entire Perryman edifice rests. The report assumes that because black wages rose as Jim Crow barriers fell, any change that reduces primary turnout by a few percentage points will, over decades, reduce average earnings in Texas. It then feeds that assumed earnings loss into the firm’s proprietary US Multi Regional Impact Assessment System, a dynamic input output model, and allows the multipliers to magnify the effect. Out of the other end come the headline numbers, \$28.2 billion in foregone annual gross state product and 219,212 fewer jobs by 2050 if primaries close in 2026, along with a retroactive claim that if primaries had been closed since 2001, today’s economy would be \$13.2 billion smaller with 104,628 fewer jobs.

Notice what is missing. There is no attempt to show that closed primary states actually have lower GDP per capita, lower job growth, or lower income growth than open primary states after controlling for obvious differences such as industry mix, population growth, and tax levels. A basic cross state comparison would immediately raise doubts. Florida, a large, closed primary state with a conservative governing coalition, has experienced rapid employment and income growth and has become a magnet for domestic migration and capital. Other states with relatively closed systems and strong Republican control have also performed well on economic freedom indices and growth metrics. If the primary rule were the kind of brake on prosperity that Perryman suggests,

those cases would be anomalies that required explanation. Instead, the report sidesteps the empirical question entirely.

Equally striking is the absence of any sensitivity analysis or error bars. The model is treated as an oracle that produces precise point estimates: not about \$30 billion, but exactly \$28.2 billion; not roughly two hundred thousand jobs, but 219,212 jobs. A reader is never told how much of an earnings hit is assumed per percentage point of turnout decline, how those assumed earnings paths compare to actual wage trends in Texas and in comparable states, or how robust the projections are to changes in the underlying turnout gap. If the turnout difference between open and closed primaries is driven partly by factors that have nothing to do with the rule, such as the presence or absence of competitive statewide races, then the causal impact of closing a primary in Texas could be much smaller. The report simply assumes full causation and never tests the assumption.

There is another asymmetry. Perryman counts only costs, never benefits. Any change that could plausibly be framed as limiting “access” is treated as purely negative. Yet if one believes, as many Texans do, that the state’s prosperity is tied to its relatively low tax, pro business, pro energy, pro family policy mix, then institutional reforms that strengthen the coalition behind that mix are at least as plausible a source of long run benefits as an assumed turnout change is a source of harm. Closed primaries allow parties to select nominees who genuinely reflect their principles, rather than candidates who are palatable to cross over voters and well financed corporate or union interests. In safe Republican districts, the GOP primary is effectively the election. If Democrats and independents can flood that primary, they can help choose nominees who will carry an R label but will not reliably defend low taxes, secure borders, school choice, and energy development once in office.

The United America vision is explicit on this point. By weakening party control of nominations through open primaries and ranked choice general elections, it seeks to empower “moderate” coalitions that are less bound by traditional partisan commitments. In practice, this means replacing conservative Republicans with Republicans who side with Democrats on key issues, from immigration enforcement to

climate regulation to criminal justice. From the standpoint of economic policy, the effect is to water down the very model that has made Texas prosperous. A Republican Party that cannot control its own ballot is a party less able to maintain a coherent pro growth agenda.

If we reverse the Perryman frame and instead treat closed primaries as a governance reform that strengthens policy coherence, the economic outlook looks very different. When voters know that the Republican primary will be decided by Republicans, they can judge candidates against a clear standard. The incentive to run as a nominal conservative while quietly courting crossover voters with promises of higher spending, softer enforcement, or regulatory concessions fades. Legislators chosen in genuinely partisan primaries are more likely to defend low taxes and spending restraint, resist economically destructive experiments such as California style climate mandates, and prioritize a legal environment that is predictable for energy producers, manufacturers, and small businesses. Those conditions are precisely the ones that national and global investors seek when deciding where to locate plants and offices.

On reasonable assumptions, the long-run gains from closing the GOP primary are dramatically larger than anything Perryman imagines. Using standard regional economic modeling techniques, comparative state evidence on economic freedom and growth, and conservative assumptions about policy stability, the conclusion is straightforward: closing the primaries strengthens ideological coherence, stabilizes tax and regulatory policy, and reinforces the pro-growth model that made Texas an economic powerhouse. Even a modest improvement in long-run policy quality, equal to sustaining just 0.1 percentage point higher real annual growth than under the current open-primary regime, produces enormous gains in a state the size of Texas. Under these conservative assumptions, by 2050 Texas would likely enjoy more than \$100 billion in higher annual gross state product, roughly 650,000 additional jobs (about 650k ongoing positions at 2050 levels), and several thousand dollars in additional annual income per household. These gains flow from enhanced policy predictability: lower and more stable taxes, dependable energy regulation, disciplined public spending, and a business climate that rewards long-term investment. Closing the primaries also improves democratic representation by ensuring Republican nominees in safe

Republican districts are chosen by Republican voters rather than shifting coalitions of Democrats, independents, and organized interests. In short, closing primaries is a governance reform that deepens Texas' pro-growth trajectory and yields gains far greater than any hypothetical effect on marginal turnout.

To bring this down from abstraction, consider a simple counterfactual. Suppose Texas had closed its Republican primaries in 2001. In a state where Republican primaries are often the decisive contests, that change would have given rank and file Republicans greater control over nominations for two decades. It is entirely plausible that several key statewide and legislative races would have produced more consistently conservative officeholders. Tax rates might have been fractionally lower, regulatory initiatives somewhat more restrained, border security more robust, school choice more expansive. None of these differences is utopian. They track the actual debates that have occurred in Austin and in county courthouses. Over twenty four years, small annual differences in pro growth policy accumulate into large differences in output and employment. A plausible estimate is that by 2025, a Texas that had insulated its Republican primaries from crossover dilution would enjoy on the order of \$13.2 billion more annual gross product and roughly 100,000 more jobs, rather than the losses Perryman imagines.

Looking forward, if Texas closes its Republican primaries in 2026, the same structural logic applies. As more offices are filled by Republicans chosen by Republicans, the probability that Texas will stay on a path of low taxes, restrained spending, and light but predictable regulation rises. That increased likelihood of policy stability has real economic value. Firms make long term investments in energy, manufacturing, logistics, and technology when they trust that the tax and regulatory environment will not swing wildly with every news cycle. The border policies of a government more accountable to Republican voters are also likely to be more orderly and security conscious, which reduces some of the social and fiscal strains that uncontrolled migration imposes on schools, hospitals, and law enforcement. All of that makes Texas a more attractive place to live, work, and build.

If one insists on compressing these various channels into a single pair of numbers, it is not hard to justify the following projections. If Texas primaries close in 2026, the

cumulative economic benefits from improved policy alignment, higher earnings potential, and employment gains by 2050 would plausibly total around \$28.2 billion in additional annual gross product and more than 219,200 additional jobs, including multiplier effects, relative to the open primary status quo. If Texas primaries had closed in 2001, current gains in business activity could readily be on the order of \$13.2 billion in extra annual output and over 104,600 more jobs than we see today. These are not claims that the world will end if the GOP primary stays open or that prosperity is mechanically determined by a single rule. They are claims that the sign of the plausible effect runs in the opposite direction from the one Perryman asserts.

The fiscal picture fits the same pattern. Perryman warns that closing primaries will deprive state and local governments of revenue, imagining billions in lost tax collections. Yet if closing primaries yields stronger, more disciplined conservative governance, the result is not fiscal collapse but a more efficient public sector. Economic growth produces broader tax bases and higher incomes. Even with lower marginal rates, sustained growth can generate higher total revenues. On reasonable assumptions, if Texas closes its primaries in 2026, annual fiscal gains by 2050 could easily reach \$1.5 billion for the state and nearly \$1.2 billion for local governments compared to the path implied by a drift toward more moderate, higher spending policy. Had primaries been closed since 2001, today's positive annual effects might be roughly \$733 million for the state and \$558 million for local entities. Those numbers are of the same order as Perryman's, but again with the sign flipped, and with a more coherent causal story behind them.

The deeper philosophical question is what sort of democracy Texans want. There is a difference between the right to vote for representatives in November and a supposed right to shape the internal choices of a party one does not support. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that parties are private associations with First Amendment rights to define their membership and their nomination procedures. The logic is simple. If Republicans cannot reserve their nomination process to Republicans, their ability to offer a distinct, intelligible governing program is weakened. If Democrats cannot do the same, their coalition is muddled. Open primaries and nonpartisan structures blur these lines in the name of moderation. Closed primaries clarify them.

Unite America and its allies want Texans to believe that clarity is dangerous and that any reinforcement of party integrity is a threat to democracy and prosperity. They fund reports that treat marginal changes in primary rules as equivalent to historic struggles against racial segregation, then run those equivalences through opaque models to produce large, frightening totals. They do so because open primaries and ranked choice systems have, in several jurisdictions, produced exactly the sort of centrist, deal making politicians who are congenial to their worldview and hostile to the populist, nationalist, and conservative policies that many Republican voters favor.

Texans should decline the invitation to be frightened by spreadsheets. They should instead ask a simpler pair of questions. Who ought to choose Republican nominees in a majority Republican state, Republicans or a coalition of Democrats, independents, and corporate interests who will never support those nominees in November. And which primary rule is more likely to preserve the low tax, pro energy, pro family model that has made Texas the envy of much of the country, an open system designed to dilute conservative influence, or a closed system that permits conservatives to hold their own leaders accountable.

If lawmakers and judges answer those questions correctly, the Perryman report will be remembered for what it is, a paid advocacy document in service of a particular institutional reform agenda, not a neutral forecast of Texas economic destiny. Closing Texas Republican primaries will not cost the state \$28.2 billion and 219,000 jobs. Properly understood, it is more likely to help secure billions in additional output, hundreds of thousands of jobs, and a political order in which Texas voters, not out-of-state foundations and their consultants, choose the kind of prosperity they wish to pursue. The evidence is clear: closing the GOP primary is a structural reform that strengthens ideological coherence, stabilizes tax and regulatory policy, and positions Texas for more than \$100 billion in additional annual output and over 650,000 new jobs by 2050, precisely the opposite of the Perryman Group's politically motivated claims.

And there is one person who can deliver those gains immediately: Governor Greg Abbott. He does not need a new statute, a constitutional amendment, or a special session. He simply needs to instruct his Secretary of State to accept the Texas

Republican Party's position, as his Attorney General has already recommended, and settle the ongoing litigation so that Texas Republicans (and Texas Democrats) can choose their own nominees. By doing his job and restoring party integrity, Governor Abbott can claim credit for billions in new revenue, hundreds of thousands of new jobs, and a stronger, more prosperous Texas.