

## Hottest Texas House Primary Battles for 2010 Feature Several Incumbents and Open Seats

**By Mike Hailey**  
Capitol Inside Editor

Dallas attorney Eric Johnson is a first-time Texas House candidate who's approaching his campaign like a full-fledged bid for statewide office with ongoing announcements about record fundraising, volunteer organization, endorsements and the professional team of advisers he's hired for his debut political race.

In the event that State Rep. Terri Hodge is cleared on bribery charges in connection with a city hall corruption scandal and eligible to run as a result for another House term, Johnson is doing everything he can now to make the incumbent think twice about a re-election bid with the campaign he's mounting for the seat she holds.

That's why the battle for the Democratic nomination for the House District 101 post if Hodge is qualified to run and not scared away by Johnson is shaping up at this point to be one of the top 10 primary races for the Legislature's lower chamber to watch when Texas voters cast ballots in March in round one of the 2010 elections. And Hodge so far has said nothing about stepping down on her own will if she's exonerated in the pending criminal case.

Like the potential Democratic showdown in Hodge's district that stretches through central Dallas from the city limits on the west and east sides, three other first round fights on the initial *Capitol Inside Texas* House Races to Watch list in 2010 feature incumbents who've drawn primary foes in campaigns for re-election.

The list of current House members who appear to be on track for contested primary battles in March races to watch includes Republican State Reps. Leo Berman of Tyler and Delwin Jones of Lubbock along with Democratic State Rep. Tara Rios Ybarra of South Padre Island. Across the rotunda, the Republican and Democratic primary fights for seats that State Senator Steve Ogden of Bryan and Eliot Shapleigh of El Paso are giving up respectively without re-election bids will be worth the price of front row tickets as well as the two hottest first round contests on the Senate battleground next year.

The Democratic primary showdown that's developed between Rios Ybarra and Kingsville restaurant franchise owner J.M. Lozano is currently the top ranked race to watch in round one of the competition for House seats next year in light of revelations about the first-term lawmaker's relationship with her largest campaign contributor and subsequent divorce cases that it's spawned. Rios Ybarra won the HD 43 seat in 2008 after knocking off then-incumbent Juan Escobar in the Democratic primary. The HD 43 race is particularly intriguing as a battle between the island residents at the south end of the district and their northern counterparts at the same time it pits tort reform advocates who backed Rios Ybarra last year against their trial lawyer rivals.

Berman, who entered the lower chamber 10 years ago, had indicated that he planned to run for governor in 2010 when former Tyler Mayor Joey Seeber entered the race for HD 6. While Seeber said at the time that he planned to seek the House seat regardless of whether the incumbent ran again for it or continued the statewide quest, there's been speculation that Seeber might postpone his HD 6 campaign until Berman decides to step down on his own.

Jones - a moderate lawmaker who's served in the House as a Republican since 1989 after a previous nine-year stint in the lower chamber as a Democrat - faces a GOP primary challenger who appears to have the potential to be a more formidable foe than the opponents on both sides of the aisle who the incumbent has easily defeated in recent elections. Jones' primary opponent - Lubbock attorney Zach Brady - has a resume that features experience as a former aide to State Senator Robert Duncan along with early endorsements from the Texas Cattle Feeders Association and the Texas Cotton Ginners

Association. While Jones will be viewed as the favorite to win the GOP nomination in his re-election bid until proven otherwise, the endorsements should give Brady a boost in a House district where agriculture is one of the most important industries.

The primary contests for the seats that Rios Ybarra, Hodge, Berman and Jones are defending as incumbents in 2010 are ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively on the first races to watch list for next year's elections.

Three of the hottest primary races to watch on the state House battlefield in the early stages of the unfolding competition are for seats that incumbents aren't seeking again in the Rio Grande Valley, the Central Texas suburbs north of Austin and a suburban area northeast of Houston. The state House members who aren't running for re-election in those particular districts are Republican State Reps. Dan Gattis of Georgetown and Joe Crabb of Atascocita along with Democratic State Rep. Kino Flores of Palmview.

Four Republicans are competing for the HD 20 seat that Gattis is giving up so he can run for an opening in the Texas Senate instead. Four Republicans also are competing to replace Crabb in the HD 127 from which he's stepping down when his term ends after next year's elections. Two Democrats - the son of a former state representative and the candidate who Flores beat in one of the most hotly contested House primary battles in 2008 - are dueling for the vacancy that the incumbent is creating in HD 36 so he concentrate on a fight against criminal charges stemming from disclosure-related allegations in indictments that were issued this summer by a Travis County grand jury.

The first round battles for the seats that Gattis, Crabb and Flores are giving up are ranked 5th, 6th and 7th respectively on the initial House primary races to watch list for 2010.

Three of the initial primary races to watch are for the opposing parties' nominations in battles for House seats that incumbents plan to defend next year including one in another Williamson County suburb north of Austin and two in suburban districts on both sides of Dallas. Four Republicans are competing for the right to challenge freshman State Rep. Diana Maldonado of Round Rock in HD 52 while four GOP candidates have lined up to do battle for the HD 101 seat that first-term State Rep. Robert Miklos of Mesquite is seeking again in 2010. Miklos and Maldonado are both Democrats. The GOP primary battles for the seats that the incumbents are seeking again in HD 101 and HD 52 are rated 8th and 9th respectively on the first races to watch list for next year's March primary election.

The 10th ranked primary race to watch next year features a pair of Democrats who are competing for their party's nomination for a HD 105 seat that Republican State Rep. Linda Harper-Brown is seeking again after winning re-election by a 20-vote margin in a battle with a Democratic opponent last year.

Two more Republican primary races involving incumbents and former primary challengers have the potential to move on to the top 10 races to watch list for 2010 if they materialize with former House member Corbin Van Arsdale and ex-gubernatorial aide Jon Cole seriously considering rematch bids against State Rep. Allen Fletcher of Houston and Jerry Madden of Plano. Another incumbent who could encounter primary opposition in a bid for re-election next year is Republican State Rep. Fred Brown, who's facing a first round challenge from Buddy Winn, the Brazos County tax assessor-collector for 30 years before retiring in 2007.

The House races to watch list will be updated and revised as needed between now and the March 2 primary election. The filing deadline for next year's elections is January 4.

**PRIMARY RACES TO WATCH IN 2010 - TEXAS HOUSE**

**1**

**House District 43 - Democrats**

Democrat Tara Rios Ybarra Plans to Seek Re-Election

**Tara Rios Ybarra**

South Padre Island Democrat  
Dentist

**Experience:** Texas House 2009-  
Present, Ex-City Council Member

**J.M. Lozano**

Kingsville Democrat  
Restaurant Franchise Owner

**Experience:** Former Congressional  
Aide

**2**

**House District 100 - Democrats**

Democrat Terri Hodge Plans to Seek Re-Election

**Terri Hodge**

Dallas Democrat  
Retired Southwestern Bell Employee

**Experience:** Texas House 1997-  
Present

**Eric Johnson**

Dallas Democrat  
Attorney

**Experience:** Former Texas House  
Aide, Harvard Graduate

**3**

**House District 146 - Democrats**

Democrat Al Edwards Plans to Seek Re-Election

**Al Edwards**

Houston Democrat  
Businessman

**Experience:** Texas House 1979-  
2007, Texas House 2009-Present

**Billy Briscoe**

Houston Democrat  
Attorney

**Experience:** Former State House Aide,  
Ex-Statewide Campaign Staffer

**4**

**House District 83 - Republicans**

Republican Delwin Jones Plans to Seek Re-Election

**Delwin Jones**

Lubbock Republican  
Businessman

**Experience:** Texas House 1964-1973  
(Democrat), 1989-Present

**Zach Brady**

Lubbock Republican  
Attorney

**Experience:** Former State Senate  
Aide

**5**

**House District 20 - Republicans**

Republican Dan Gattis Plans to Run for Texas Senate

**Milton Rister**

Georgetown Republican  
Consultant

**Experience:** Ex-Texas Legislative  
Council Director, Ex-Legislative Aide

**Charles Schwertner**

Georgetown Republican  
Surgeon

**Experience:** First-Time Candidate for  
Legislature

**Stephen Thomas**  
Cedar Park Republican  
Texas Facilities Commission Director  
**Experience:** Former City Council Member

**Jarrod Weaver**  
Georgetown Republican  
Real Estate Broker  
**Experience:** First-Time Candidate for Legislature

**6 House District 127 - Republicans**  
Republican Joe Crabb Not Running for Re-Election

**Martin Basaldua**  
Kingwood Republican  
Physician  
**Experience:** Ex-Texas House and Senate Candidate

**Susan Curling**  
Humble Republican  
Physician  
**Experience:** Former Congressional Aide

**Dan Huberty**  
Humble Republican  
Energy Company Executive  
**Experience:** Humble School Board President

**Addie Wiseman**  
Kingwood Republican  
Real Estate  
**Experience:** Ex-Houston City Council Member

**7 House District 36 - Democrats**  
Democrat Kino Flores Not Running for Re-Election

**Sergio Muñoz Jr.**  
Palmview Democrat  
Attorney  
**Experience:** Municipal Judge, Son of Former State Representative

**Sandra Rodriguez**  
Mission Democrat  
School Counselor  
**Experience:** Ex-School Board Member, Ex-Texas House Candidate

**8 House District 101 - Republicans**  
Democrat Robert Miklos Plans to Seek Re-Election

**Cindy Burkett**  
Mesquite Republican  
Restaurant Company Executive  
**Experience:** Former State Senate Aide

**Thomas Latham**  
Sunnyvale Republican  
Retired Police Officer  
**Experience:** Texas House 2007-2009, Ex-City Council Member

**Greg Noschese**  
Mesquite Republican  
Attorney  
**Experience:** Ex-Mayor Pro Tem, Ex-City Council Member

**Jim Phaup**  
Sunnyvale Republican  
Automotive Parts Company Executive  
**Experience:** Ex-Mayor, Ex-School Board Member

**9 House District 52 - Republicans**  
Democrat Diana Maldonado Plans to Seek Re-Election

**Stephen Casey**

Round Rock Republican  
Attorney

**Experience:** First-Time Candidate for  
Legislature

**Larry D. Gonzales**

Round Rock Republican  
Businessman

**Experience:** Ex-Legislative Aide,  
Direct Mail Consultant

**John Gordon**

Round Rock Republican  
Engineer

**Experience:** Ex-GOP County Chair, Ex-  
SREC Member, Ex-Legislative Aide

**Ralph Pina**

Round Rock Republican  
Small Business Owner

**Experience:** Former Congressional  
Aide

**10****House District 105 - Democrats**

Republican Linda Harper-Brown Plans to Seek Re-Election

**Loretta Haldenwang**

Irving Democrat  
Chamber of Commerce Executive

**Experience:** Former Texas House  
Aide

**Kim Limberg**

Irving Democrat  
TxDOT Engineer

**Experience:** Ex-Precint Judge, Ex-  
Gubernatorial Campaign Aide