



November 10, 2010

Dear Members and Members-Elect,

I write to you on behalf of Young Conservatives of Texas (YCT). YCT is the largest and most active conservative youth organization in the state of Texas. We are composed of hundreds of members at campuses across the state and thousands of alumni, all dedicated to advancing the conservative movement.

Recently, YCT signed-on to a letter released by dozens of grassroots conservative leaders calling for new conservative leadership in the Texas House of Representatives. Our new 99-seat Republican majority in the Texas House provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pass a number of conservative reforms. However, the successful passage of a robust conservative agenda is put at risk by the leadership of Speaker Joe Straus.

To illustrate this point, I wanted to share with you the comparison of committee chairs that YCT included in our ratings of the 81st Texas Legislature, released in December of 2009. It contains a listing of committee chairs from the 80th and 81st Legislatures, with their ratings from the 80th and 81st Legislatures, respectively. The scores were drawn from YCT's Legislative Ratings, which are measured on a 100-point scale and determined by a selection of approximately 30 up-or-down votes deemed to offer a clear conservative/liberal policy choice. As I wrote in the ratings, one of the most telling ways to evaluate a Speaker is to evaluate who he appointed as committee chairs because these people truly dominate the legislative process. And one of the most telling ways to evaluate a member is to evaluate their voting record.

The results of the comparison were disappointing. The average score of committee chairs appointed by Speaker Straus was a 42, a drop of 25 from the previous session. Straus's appointments were drawn primarily from the coalition of 85 Democrats and liberal-to-moderate Republicans who elected him. Because of this, only two of Straus's standing committee chairmen scored better than an 80 on YCT's Legislative Ratings. By comparison, during the 80th Legislature, 11 committee chairs scored 80 points or more on our ratings.

As Chair of Calendars—the second most powerful official in the house with regards to legislation—Speaker Straus appointed Representative Brian McCall. McCall was the most liberal Republican during the 81st Texas Legislature, earning a score of 27 on YCT's Legislative Ratings. As Chairman of Calendars, McCall delayed bills supported by the grassroots and blocked bills authored by certain conservative legislators completely from the floor.

If reelected, will Speaker Straus again appoint the most liberal Republican to replace McCall in control of the House's legislative agenda? If so, a vote for Straus amounts to a vote to block conservative legislators out of the legislative process.

Also astonishing was Straus's appointment of Democrat Rene Oliveira, who earned a 15 during the 81st Legislature, to chair Ways and Means. As Chair of the committee, Oliveira controlled the success or failure of bills aimed at reforming Texas's flawed property tax system. Oliveira exhibited highly partisan leadership, refusing to allow any bill to exit his committee that was not authored or co-authored by a Democrat. As one would assume, this policy was devastating to various conservative bills aimed at reforming our tax system and cutting taxes.

If Speaker Straus is reelected, will Oliveira remain as Ways and Means Chairman? If so, a vote for Straus amounts to a vote against tax reform.

Please look at the attached chart and see the comparisons for yourself. These committee appointments are illustrative, but they are only one example of Speaker Straus's liberal leadership. I urge you to listen to the grassroots who elected you, and who you have committed to represent. They know that if Straus remains as Speaker, the conservative agenda is put in serious danger. I urge you to listen to their concerns. I urge you to reject the flawed leadership of Joe Straus and elect a true conservative as Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony McDonald". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tony McDonald
Senior Vice Chairman, Young Conservatives of Texas

Change in Ratings by Standing Committee Chairmen 80th to 81st Legislature

Standing Committee	Committee Chair	Score
81st: Agriculture & Livestock	<i>Gonzalez-Tourelles</i>	23
80th: Agriculture & Livestock	<i>Miller, Sid</i>	84
81st: Appropriations	<i>Pitts, Jim</i>	41
80th: Appropriations	<i>Chisum, Warren</i>	81
81st: Border & Intergovernmental Affairs	<i>Gonzales, Veronica</i>	10
80th: Border & International Affairs	<i>King, Tracy</i>	42
81st: Business & Industry	<i>Deshotel, Joe</i>	26
80th: Business & Industry	<i>Giddings, Helen</i>	27
81st: Calendars	<i>McCall, Brian</i>	27
80th: Calendars	<i>Woolley, Beverly</i>	77
81st: Corrections	<i>McReynolds, Jim</i>	39
80th: Corrections	<i>Madden, Jerry</i>	69
81st: County Affairs	<i>Coleman, Garnet</i>	10
80th: County Affairs	<i>Smith, Wayne</i>	89
81st: Criminal Jurisprudence	<i>Gallego, Pete</i>	16
80th: Criminal Jurisprudence	<i>Pena, Aaron</i>	44
80th: Juvenile Justice & Family Issues	<i>Dutton, Harold</i>	12
81st: Culture, Recreation & Tourism	<i>Homer, Mark</i>	41
80th: Culture, Recreation & Tourism	<i>Hilderbran, Harvey</i>	77
81st: Defense & Veterans' Affairs	<i>Corte, Frank</i>	70
80th: Defense Aff. & State-Fed. Relations	<i>Corte, Frank</i>	85
81st: Elections	<i>Smith, Todd</i>	58
80th: Elections	<i>Berman, Leo</i>	89
81st: Energy Resources	<i>Keffer, Jim</i>	55
80th: Energy Resources	<i>Hardcastle, Rick</i>	73
81st: Environmental Regulations	<i>Cook, Byron</i>	74
80th: Environmental Regulations	<i>Bonnen, Dennis</i>	76
81st: General Investigations & Ethics	<i>Hopson, Chuck</i>	35
80th: General Investigations & Ethics	<i>Philips, Larry</i>	92
81st: Higher Education	<i>Branch, Dan</i>	61
80th: Higher Education	<i>Morrison, Geanie</i>	72
81st: House Administration	<i>Geran, Charlie</i>	59
80th: House Administration	<i>Goalsby, Tony</i>	58
81st: Human Services	<i>Rose, Patrick</i>	29
80th: Human Services	<i>Rose, Patrick</i>	46
81st: Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence	<i>Hunter, Todd</i>	68
80th: Civil Practices	<i>Cook, Byron</i>	77
80th: Judiciary	<i>Hartnett, Will</i>	77

Standing Committee	Committee Chair	Score
81st: Insurance	<i>Smithee, John</i>	87
80th: Insurance	<i>Smithee, John</i>	76
81st: Land & Resource Management	<i>Bonnen, Dennis</i>	81
80th: Land & Resource Management	<i>Mowery, Anna</i>	52
81st: Licensing & Admin Procedures	<i>Kuempel, Edmund</i>	57
80th: Licensing & Admin Procedures	<i>Flores, Kino</i>	39
81st: Local & Consent Calendars	<i>Thompson, Senfronia</i>	13
80th: Local & Consent Calendars	<i>Howard, Charlie</i>	92
81st: Natural Resources	<i>Ritter, Allan</i>	13
80th: Natural Resources	<i>Puente, Robert</i>	19
81st: Pensions, Investments & Fin. Services	<i>Truitt, Vicki</i>	74
80th: Financial Institutions	<i>Solomons, Burt</i>	73
80th: Pensions & Investments	<i>Truitt, Vicki</i>	81
81st: Public Education	<i>Eissler, Rob</i>	61
80th: Public Education	<i>Eissler, Rob</i>	85
81st: Public Health	<i>Kolkhorst, Lois</i>	74
80th: Public Health	<i>D. White-Delisi</i>	77
81st: Public Safety	<i>Merritt, Tommy</i>	48
80th: Law Enforcement	<i>Driver, Joe</i>	73
81st: Redistricting	<i>Jones, Delwin</i>	52
80th: Redistricting	<i>Crabb, Joe</i>	92
81st: Rules & Resolutions	<i>McClendon, Ruth</i>	16
80th: Rules & Resolutions	<i>McClendon, Ruth</i>	32
81st: State Affairs	<i>Solomons, Burt</i>	70
80th: Government Reform	<i>Callegari, Bill</i>	84
80th: Regulated Industries	<i>King, Phil</i>	75
80th: State Affairs	<i>Swinford, David</i>	73
81st: Tech, Economic Dev. & Workforce	<i>Strama, Mark</i>	3
80th: Economic Development	<i>Deshotel, Joe</i>	35
81st: Transportation	<i>Pickett, Joe</i>	17
80th: Transportation	<i>Krusee, Mike</i>	72
81st: Urban Affairs	<i>Davis, Yvonne</i>	13
80th: Urban Affairs	<i>Bailey, Kevin</i>	32
81st: Ways & Means	<i>Oliveira, Rene</i>	15
80th: Local Gov. Ways & Means	<i>Hill, Fred</i>	77
80th: Ways & Means	<i>Keffer, Jim</i>	78

Average Committee Chair Rating	
81st:	42
80th:	67
Change:	-25

Each legislator's score and the votes used to calculate them can be found in YCT's Ratings of the 81st Texas Legislature.

The Ratings are available at www.YCT.org/Ratings.