



Editorial: We recommend Veasey for the 33rd District

The 33rd Congressional District will give North Texas another voice and vote in [Congress](#). By design — and thanks to redistricting — the new representative in Washington will almost certainly be a [Democrat](#) and a minority given the demographics of the district. The seat also encompasses parts of Dallas and [Fort Worth](#), which means that the person elected will represent constituents in the region's two centers of power and influence.

Eleven Democrats are competing in the May 29 primary, a field that includes established politicians from both cities. The political drama, stated bluntly, spins at least in part on race and ethnicity. Will the region elect its second black House member, or will Latinos muster their strength in numbers to gain their first seat from North Texas?

Democrats are in the minority in the Texas delegation, a point worth noting because that reality has to be reckoned with by the new representative. So, too, does the minority status of Democrats in the U.S. House, at least as currently constituted. A novice sent to Washington from North Texas will have to navigate the divisive politics of our times, and all this implies.

Two heavyweights

Political observers predict that the race is likely to come down to a choice between Domingo García, 56, a well-known attorney and politician from Dallas, and Marc Veasey, 41, a state representative from Fort Worth. Both have power bases in their respective cities, and both have had some success in wooing support in each other's hometown. A runoff in this race is probable.

Others with experience in politics include Kathleen Hicks, 39, a city councilwoman in Fort Worth; Steve Salazar, 46, a former city councilman in Dallas; Carlos Quintanilla, 54, an activist and community leader from Dallas; and Manuel Valdez, 65, a justice of the peace in Fort Worth.

The field also includes Chrysta Castaneda, 49, an attorney from Dallas; J.R. Molina, 67, an attorney and community leader from Fort Worth; Jason Roberts, 38, an Oak Cliff-based activist; and Kyev P. Tatum Sr., 46, a Fort-Worth based pastor and civil rights activist. David Alameel, a Dallas dentist and businessman, also is running, though he neither filled out our questionnaire nor responded to our interview invitations.

The winner will face a Republican challenger in November, but given the district's political demographics, this primary, for all intents and purposes, probably *is* the general election.

Ethnicity, geography

Our recommendation in this contest weighed the merits of the candidates and also considered other important factors. The new district, for example, is 66 percent Latino. Given the growth of the Hispanic population — it is the main reason Texas received four additional congressional seats — a strong argument can be made that this should be a Latino seat. Hispanic leaders argued passionately along these lines by emphasizing the disparity between their population growth in North Texas and their lack of direct representation in Congress.

Perhaps as significant is a geographic consideration. The rivalry between the two cities is certainly not what it once was, but there is a perception that a candidate's hometown should matter to some degree. Would Dallas lose something if the winner were from Fort Worth, or vice versa? That this concern is the very definition of parochialism does not render it invalid, either. Regionalism is the loftier ambition, to be sure, but in this regard politics is like sports: The home field should have some advantage.

García a flawed candidate

In the end, however, the decision hinged on which of two candidates — García or Veasey — would best represent North Texas in Washington. García ostensibly had the advantage because we felt that the region and the state would benefit from more Latino representation in Congress. However, García's long and sometimes turbulent history in the public eye — as a city councilman, state representative, prominent attorney and community activist — provided evidence to convince us that he is not right for the job.

There is much to commend García, as his supporters invariably point out. He is intelligent, passionate, independent and generous with his time and money. He has a long and impressive commitment to civil rights and to immigration reform. Yet he has also proved to be a very divisive and controversial figure even within his own community. He is authoritarian to a fault, and stories of his machinations abound. Supporters say his detractors are consumed by envy because he has succeeded where they have failed, or because his political success has at times come at their expense.

But this is not a case of García being careless in the choice of his enemies. If it were that, we could understand. What struck us most is what García's own community says of him.

Supporters advocate for him even as they catalog faults and shortcomings that would disqualify him in the minds of reasonable voters. Detractors are torn between their aspirations that this be a Latino seat and their recognition that García is a flawed candidate.

When pressed, one initially gave greater weight to having a Hispanic in this seat. But when asked whether he would feel comfortable with García as an incumbent, this person struggled for a moment and then offered a blunt no.

Veasey is tested and ready

Our choice is made easier because Veasey is an impressive candidate in his own right. He has been vetted by seven years in Austin, and he knows the district and Washington from having worked on the staff of the former representative, [Martin Frost](#). He was recruited to be the party's floor whip and is the current House Democratic Caucus chair, which speaks to his stature among his peers and to his leadership potential.

Veasey represents a statehouse district that is 35 percent Hispanic, so he is no stranger to the issues facing the Latino community. He also recognizes that elected officials — black and white — have to adjust to the demographic changes that have altered major urban centers in Texas and across the country. A central part of that mission, he said, is figuring out how to best represent these new constituents.

A practical politician in the best sense of the term, Veasey strikes us as a consensus builder, a scarce trait in Washington. The interests of our region, and of this new district, would be well served by his election.