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If one of these nutjobs defeats Joe Straus for House speaker, we could be in deep doo-doo

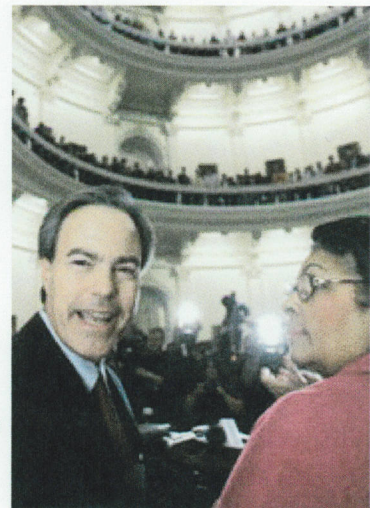
Posted on 12 Nov 2010 at 4:15pm

If Rep. Joe Straus is **ousted as speaker of the Texas House**, it's safe to say it will not be a good thing for the LGBT community. Dennis Coleman, executive director of Equality Texas, confirmed the obvious yesterday when he told us the statewide gay-rights group is sincerely hoping Straus can hang on to his post.

One of Straus' challengers, Rep. Warren Chisum of Pampa, is among the biggest homophobes in the Texas Legislature. Chisum was the primary author of Texas' 2005 constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, and he's also been behind efforts to outlaw gay foster and adoptive parents.

Another candidate for speaker, Rep. Ken Paxton of McKinney, who entered the race this week, doesn't appear to be much better than Chisum on LGBT issues. Paxton was a co-author of the marriage amendment and voted in favor of a ban on gay foster parents in 2005.

Straus, meanwhile, voted in favor of the marriage amendment — not to do so might have been political suicide — but he did not sign on as an author. **He also voted against the gay foster parent ban, which was actually killed by socially moderate Republicans like himself. Straus attends a gay-affirming synagogue that performs same-sex marriages in San Antonio. Read more about all that [here](#).**



Rep. Joe Straus is shown alongside Rep. Senfronia Thompson after being elected speaker in 2009.

But if you really want to know why we should be pulling for Straus to remain speaker, all you have to do is consider who's behind the effort to oust him. It's a who's who of nutjobs, and they've all signed an open letter posted on the

website of [Empower Texans](#). Prominent signatories include people like Kelly Shackelford, president and CEO of Plano-based Liberty Institute; Richard Ford, president of the Heritage Alliance; and Cathie Adams, founder of the anti-gay Texas Eagle Forum. Any of those names ring a bell? The list goes on and on, but the bottom line is that **if these groups are successful in ousting Straus, we'll be at much greater risk of anti-gay legislation in the 2011 session**. And with a two-thirds Republican majority in the House, our best and only defense may be distractions like redistricting and the budget shortfall.

According to its website, Empower Texans is conducting its anti-Straus campaign under the guise of fiscal conservatism. But since Straus is pretty darn fiscally conservative, we suspect there are other motives. **Surely these right-wing groups don't like the fact that Straus was elected speaker two years ago thanks to support from Democrats, which he continues to enjoy. They also don't like the fact that he's socially moderate — on abortion, immigration and yes, gay rights.**

The speaker of the House is arguably the most powerful position in state government, and right now, Joe Straus may be the LGBT community's best friend in the Texas Legislature. That being said, we aren't sure there's much the the community can do at this point to help Straus hang on to the post, except maybe pray.

— John Wright

2 Comments

Posted on November 12, 2010 at 5:04 pm

FlexSF

Texas gays need to sue for everything in federal court. Don't allow republican "christian" bigots tell you whom you marry or adopt. Give them all the middle finger, and demand legal equality in federal court. Sue for an injunction to prevent the vote from passing. You don't have anything to lose!

Posted on November 12, 2010 at 8:10 pm

CD

The term "fiscal conservative" has been bounced around so much lately that it's become an important-sounding term with very little meaning. "Fiscal conservative" can mean that they spent \$199B when they could have spent \$199.1B.

I suspect that if "normal" Republicans really looked around at who was now representing their party, they might discover their orientations are more inline with Conservative Democrats rather than mainstream Republicans . . . OR the dreaded "Republican In Name Only" designation.

Strauss needs to be re-elected to help maintain some normalcy in the Legislature, which he was noted to do well, in the face of the "New Normal" (more radical) Republicans.

Kind of amusing how many Republican incumbents got re-elected in TX!

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