

Why Evangelicals Need to Pray for Texas on Tuesday

Conventional wisdom says a wildly popular senator, with the backing of his equally popular governor and lieutenant governor, should handily win his home state's presidential primary.

And, although Texas distributes its 155 Republican delegates proportionally to the candidates based on how they finish in the primary vote, the current Real Clear Politics polling average says Ted Cruz has a clear lead over national front-runner Donald Trump and fellow first-term senator Marco Rubio. But looking over the seven polls conducted during the past week, it's clear that the results are anything but conclusive.

Monmouth University and the University of Houston each have Cruz leading by 15 points. But Emerson College has it as a 1-point race, while the Survey USA poll conducted for Tegna—the former digital media arm of Gannett—shows the race is tied. And that is why evangelicals, particularly those who are hoping Cruz wins the GOP nomination, need to be praying over Texas leading up to and during its “Super Tuesday I” primary.

The Monmouth poll shows Cruz holds a 38-23 lead over Trump, while Rubio is right behind at 21 percent. The poll found 18 percent had already voted—Texas has “early voting”—and only 30 percent were completely decided ahead of Tuesday's primary. Another 30 percent said they had a strong preference.

The University of Houston poll, which has Cruz leading Trump, 35-20, and Rubio at a distant third with just 9 percent, also found 17 percent of respondents were undecided. Less than half said they “strongly” supported their candidate of choice. That poll found 53 percent of respondents identified as evangelicals.

The Emerson poll, which has Cruz leading 29-28 over Trump with Rubio at 25 percent, showed Rubio had the most favorable rating. However, he also had the lowest loyalty rating among likely voters. It also found that dissatisfaction with the federal government is the most important issue among those surveyed, followed closely by terrorism.

According to the Survey USA poll, which has Cruz and Trump tied at 32 percent and Rubio trailing distantly at 17 percent, the Texas senator leads among conservatives and evangelicals by double digits. Conservatives made up two thirds of the respondents, while evangelicals only made up about half.

The numbers show that while Cruz isn't completely winning over evangelicals in his home state, he could still do so between now and Tuesday. It also shows that evangelicals voting in unison can provide the senator with a resounding victory.