

Senate Candidate James Talarico Reports Eye-Popping Fundraising Haul

It's a string of words famously uttered by Morrissey in a Smiths hit, and which should have been uttered more often by former President Joe Biden: "Stop me if you think that you've heard this one before."

In Texas, the great blue savior has arrived. His name is James Talarico, a state representative who's polling close to his Republican rivals in the U.S. Senate race and has a massive, never-before-seen fundraising haul to elect a Democrat from the Lone Star State to the upper chamber for the first time since Lloyd Bentsen's last reelection campaign in 1988.

(The senator was less successful in his other foray in electoral politics that year, running mate to tank aficionado Michael Dukakis on the Democratic ticket.)

And, as CNN said, Talarico is gearing up to do battle with a massive war chest from donors who will pour money into the race to ensure that he has the firepower to defeat whoever the Republicans nominate.

Just like that guy, Beto What's-His-Name. You know, the one who could sweat through a shirt in two seconds, got a bunch of money, and then lost to Sen. Ted Cruz despite the media giving him adoring coverage. That one!

From CNN on Wednesday:

Texas Democratic Senate candidate James Talarico announced a first-quarter fundraising haul of more than \$27 million on Wednesday, among the largest totals reported by a US Senate candidate.

Talarico, a state representative and Presbyterian seminarian, won the Democratic nomination in March over US Rep. Jasmine Crockett. His campaign said he has raised \$10 million since the March 3 primary.

Democrats are hoping Talarico will be able to put reliably red Texas in play at the statewide level as they face a tough national map for Senate control that would require them to net four seats. The Democratic state representative will face the winner of a May 26 runoff in the Republican primary between incumbent Sen. John Cornyn and state Attorney General Ken Paxton.

And, indeed, there's Lucy-holding-the-football hope that this time, voters will let tax-happy, LGBT-friendly, open-borders Charlie Brown kick the football in football-loving Texas, finally. The Republican runoff only happens on May 26, so we won't know who Talarico will face – incumbent Sen. John Cornyn, viewed as the establishment choice with all the establishment vices that come along with it, or state Attorney General Ken Paxton, who has genuine conservative bona fides but has struggled to shed character-related issues during the campaign.

The RealClearPolitics polling average shows both prospective Republicans ahead, but by slim margins – Cornyn 44, Talarico 43 versus Paxton 46, Talarico 44. Cornyn has tried to position himself as boring but electable while his opponent is flawed and beatable; Paxton has cast his opponent as a Beltway creature far removed from the average Texas voter while he represents a reason for Republicans to go out to the polls.



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However, sans the whole runoff part, this sounds awfully familiar, particularly the Trump-era midterm and the

vulnerable Republican incumbent with a hard-charging Democrat.

From NBC News, Oct. 12, 2018:

Texas Democrat Beto O'Rourke announced Friday that his Senate campaign has raised an unprecedented \$38.1 million in the last fundraising quarter, a sum that shatters records for Senate races and rivals totals from past presidential campaigns.

O'Rourke, who faces incumbent Republican Ted Cruz in November, has highlighted small donations from individuals and eschewed special interest PACs. His campaign noted Friday that more than 800,000 individuals have contributed to his campaign, which has benefited from viral moments that have enamored the young Democratic congressman to progressives nationwide.

"The people of Texas in all 254 counties are proving that when we reject PACs and come together not as Republicans or Democrats but as Texans and Americans, there's no stopping us," O'Rourke said in a statement.

Actually, there was stopping O'Rourke; despite the fact that he did surprisingly well, Beto still finished roughly three points behind, 51 to 49 percent.

It was, again, a race where the polling data showed them surprisingly close; using the same RealClearPolitics aggregate, O'Rourke's fundraising had put the seat into play, with the two separated by about 3-4 points between September and October. While Cruz opened up a lead in the polls throughout October into November – one assumes that might have been the Brett Kavanaugh effect, as voters in red states rallied around the Supreme Court nominee during the Christine Blasey Ford pillorying – the race still ended up being close.

It was also about as close as the polls indicated before Kavanaugh, and the Democrats had a huge money advantage – not to mention the fact that the media fawned over the diaphoretic charlatan O'Rourke as if he were a rock star.

There was also the fact that Beto was basically a cipher; whatever beliefs you wanted to project onto him, you could. Cruz, meanwhile, was someone the media was all too happy to cast as a villain, a fake, and a curmudgeon even when there weren't people running against him.

Talarico, both a state representative and "Presbyterian seminarian" (as he is invariably described), has a lot of receipts, and seeks to add to them.

This isn't just 2018 Beto, who was like if you fed ChatGPT the prompt, "Give me the average, unremarkable Democrat who might plausibly win a statewide upset in Texas," and the only thing it goofed on was the sweatiness. He's a real lefty with real (and really bad) ideas.

And the reason we're hearing about them right now, finally, is because Paxton and Cornyn are too busy beating each other up to focus much on Talarico, other than ensuring whoever remains undecided that they're better equipped to beat him than the other louse. Talarico doesn't have that challenge, since he cleared 50 percent of the vote in his primary against the risible Rep. Jasmine Crockett. (More's the pity, because that would have been hysterical. But I digress.)

Sometime on the night of May 26 – or, more likely, in the early morning hours of May 27 – this will promptly cease. Someone will concede, and all the negative attention of the GOP will suddenly turn, for the first time, on James Talarico. Because conservatives aren't hearing Paxton or Cornyn talk about how horrid the other is, the winner's poll numbers will go up overnight. And, unlike in 2018, the GOP establishment is hardly penurious this time around, especially compared to the

Democrats, and is willing to dump massive amounts of money into Texas to ensure that it stays red once it knows who the nominee is.

Perhaps I'm reading this on the first Tuesday in November and realizing how odd this all was. I find it significantly more likely, however, that if I'm re-reading my own stuff regarding Talarico and his fundraising hauls that day, it'll be in the vein of reminding myself that the Democrats' official motto ought to be "Those Who Do Not Learn From History Are Doomed To... What's That Last Part Again?"

Well, either that, or to listen to the Smiths' "Stop Me If You Think That You've Heard This One Before." Great song, by the way. And probably not the last time I'll have the chance to reference it in the frame of the media casting Texas fundraising totals as augury of electoral successes to come.

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