

## Republicans debate state party's makeup

Platform is approved at convention as religious links become focus of discussion  
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DALLAS — Texas Republicans argued over whether their state convention was mainstream or filled with "religious zealots" Saturday as delegates approved a party platform that called for the repeal of the state lottery, declared the United States a Christian nation and favored posting the Ten Commandments on public property.

The Republican platform also reaffirmed the state party's belief that the nation needs to "dispel the myth of the separation of church and state."

The party also added a new emphasis on fighting terrorism. The planks included a call to use "terrorist profiling" to determine who could be searched at airports; the revoking of student visas and deportation of persons from countries that have not declared themselves as allies in the war on terrorism; and the arming of airplane pilots.

The convention also approved a non-binding resolution calling on Republican members of the state House of Representatives to meet in a closed caucus to select a consensus candidate for speaker next year if the GOP gains a House majority in this year's elections.

The House has elected past speakers in a bipartisan floor vote, but supporters of the resolution say a bloc of Democrats could combine with a few Republicans to elect a speaker if the GOP members don't select a unity candidate in advance.

They fear that incumbent Democratic Speaker Pete Laney of Hale Center, or one of his Republican allies, could win election as speaker if the Republican majority in the House is small.

The harshest intraparty rhetoric of the Republican State Convention's closing day Saturday was set off by a rule change that ultimately was voted down.

The measure would have denied state party financing to Republican candidates who refused to fill out a survey on how they stand on the various planks of the party platform. The survey now is voluntary, and only a handful of hundreds of 2002 candidates statewide responded.

The proposed rule change was aimed as what some delegates called "RINOs — Republicans in Name Only."

"The RINO problem is about people who run as Republican but vote against the Republican majority," said rule's sponsor Robert X. Johnson of San Antonio.

The rule would have statewide impact, but Johnson admitted it was aimed at Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio, who opposes the party's plank on abortion.

Wentworth said he opposes the abortion plank because it would outlaw abortions even to save the mother's life.

Wentworth said the Republican convention that writes the platform is out of the mainstream for Texas and for most voting Republicans. He said 100 people may vote in a GOP primary precinct but only a few show up for the precinct caucuses that elect delegates to the state party convention.

"You're lucky to have six people of the 100 come back, and those six are typically the Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Christian Coalition religious zealots and they elect themselves delegates and then pass these resolutions of the most extreme type," Wentworth said.

Wentworth said some of those planks could drive away the suburban women who can provide the margin of victory in statewide elections.

Johnson responded that the state Republican Party organization is made up of the people who take the time to show up for the caucuses and that the platform reflects those people's beliefs.

"It is true that the majority here, probably the vast majority here, is Christian. They're pro-lifers, Christian right. You can call them by a variety of labels," Johnson said.

State Republican Chairman Susan Weddington rejected Wentworth's description of the convention.

"Many of the people here are regular Texans. They're men and women — faith is important to them, family is important to them; they want lower taxes," she said.

Weddington said the platform is meant to be a broad statement of beliefs, and that not everyone in the Republican Party will support it.