



## Methodology: How liberal or conservative is your state rep?

The analysis was conducted using a [Bayesian estimation procedure \(IDEAL\)](#) developed by [Stanford University professor Simon Jackman](#). All votes during the 2011 regular and special sessions in which at least 2.5% of the representatives voting were on the losing side (i.e., non-lopsided votes) are included in the analysis. In addition to plotting each representative's specific location on the Liberal-Conservative dimension (Lib-Con Score, rounded to two decimal points), ranging here from the Liberal extreme of -1.10 to the Conservative extreme of 0.84), I also include the 95% credible interval (CI) for this point estimate. Only when a representative's CI does not overlap with that of another representative can we say with any real certainty that their respective locations on the Liberal-Conservative dimension are credibly distinct.

For the 149 Texas representatives (the Speaker typically does not cast roll call votes), a [figure is provided](#), with each representative's location on the Liberal-Conservative dimension and 95% CI provided, as is [one table](#) where the members of the Houston area delegation are highlighted in red. The table provides each representative's Lib-Con Score along with each representative's rank-ordered position on the Liberal-Conservative dimension, ranging from 1 (most liberal) to 149 (most conservative).

Also provided in the table is the ideological location of the representative vis-à-vis his/her copartisans. Within each party every representative's ideological location was compared to that of his/her colleagues within the party, and then placed into one of seven mutually exclusive (albeit arbitrary) ordinal ideological categories going from left to right:

1. More Liberal/Moderate than 2/3,
2. More Liberal/Moderate than 1/2,
3. More Liberal/Moderate than 1/3,
4. Centrist,
5. More Conservative than 1/3,
6. More Conservative than 1/2,
7. More Conservative than 2/3.

For example, a representative in the "More Conservative" than 1/2 category possesses an ideological location and 95% CI, which locates them at a position that is noticeably more conservative than 1/2 of their copartisans but not than 2/3 of their copartisans (that is, they are located on the conservative side of the party's ideological distribution and their 95% CI does not overlap with more than 1/2 of the members of the party's delegation, but does overlap with more than 1/3). Following this coding methodology, therefore, a representative such as Tan Parker is coded in the More Conservative than 1/2 category because his Lib-Con Score and 95% CI results in him being significantly more conservative than 60 of his fellow

99 Republicans, a value that is greater than one-half of the delegation (i.e., 50), but less than two-thirds (i.e., 66). Similarly, a representative in the Centrist category is neither more liberal/moderate than 1/3 of his/her copartisans nor more conservative than 1/3 of his/her copartisans.

It is important to keep in mind that these comparisons are strictly focused on intra-party dynamics (i.e., within the Republican Party and within the Democratic Party), and, second, that for Republicans the term “Moderate” does not signify that the representative is a liberal, only that the representative has a voting record on the House floor that is more moderate than 1/3, 1/2, or 2/3 of his/her Republican colleagues. As the inter-party data clearly suggest, none of Republican House members can be accurately classified as being a liberal. It is for that reason that I use the term “Moderate” when discussing Republican representatives and “Liberal” when discussing Democratic representatives. By the same token, the term “Centrist” does not automatically indicate that a representative’s ideological profile is moderate; rather, it indicates only that they occupy a position within the ideological center of their respective party.

*Mark P. Jones is the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy’s Fellow in Political Science as well as the Joseph D. Jmail Chair in Latin American Studies and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Rice University.*