

TX-23 District Primer

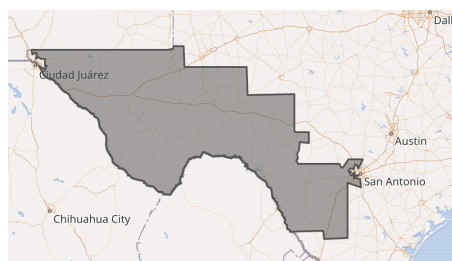
In 2024, Republican Tony Gonzales won this seat by 71,347 votes—that’s 17 votes per precinct. If we can persuade just 18 voters per precinct, we can win this year. With your help, we’re going to **FLIP** this key seat and secure a Democratic House majority in 2026.

Key dates
Filing Deadline: Dec. 8, 2025
Primary: March 3, 2026
Midterms: Nov. 3, 2026

Recent Election Results

2024 Presidential Election	2024 House Election	2022 House Election
Trump: 174,904 (57%) Harris: 127,486 (42%)	Tony Gonzales (R): 180,720 (62%) Santos Limon (D): 109,373 (38%)	Tony Gonzales (R): 116,649 (56%) John Lira (D): 80,947 (39%)

District Facts & Stats



Largest Cities

- San Antonio (parts), pop. 1.5 million
- El Paso (parts), pop. 678, 815

Geography

TX-23 is a largely rural district running from the eastern suburbs of El Paso to San Antonio and along the border with Mexico. Ciudad Juárez is just outside the district at its westernmost tip, and El Paso-Juárez—the second-largest binational metro area in the US after San Diego-Tijuana—is a major entry point for people crossing the border. The district also includes Guadalupe Mountains and Big Bend national parks, the Trans Pecos area, and much of the Permian Basin, a major oil field.

Citizenry

TX-23 has a significant Hispanic majority, with 63% Hispanic residents and 27% white. Nearly half the population (45.9%) speaks a language other than English at home, primarily Spanish. The foreign-born population is 16.2%.

In 2024, 15.1% of people in the district lacked medical insurance, 14.6% were on Medicaid, and 8.91% were on Medicare.

The Local Vibe

Fort Bliss, on the edge of El Paso, has a large immigrant detention center, with a tent camp known as Camp East Montana that holds 3,000 detainees. The camp has attracted significant criticism, as has a new ICE warehouse in Socorro, southeast of El Paso. That facility, projected to hold 8,500 detainees when converted, has been bogged down by delays and concerns from local residents. However, a 1,500-person facility in east San Antonio is due to open in September.

Residents also are concerned about data center development and the associated water use, particularly in Medina County west of San Antonio.

Mass shootings in Uvalde (2022) and nearby El Paso (2019) caused lingering trauma in the district.

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Key Issues

- **Gun safety:** Public schools employ many district residents who were deeply affected by the 2022 school shooting in Uvalde, and aftereffects linger for many residents.
- **Water supplies:** Data center development and ICE's plan to turn a Socorro warehouse into a detention facility threaten local water supplies.
- **Immigration:** Residents in major immigration entry points like TX-23 strongly supported tighter controls at the border, but the Trump administration's detention and deportation operations have created a climate of fear, especially for mixed-status families. They're also likely to cost the area millions of dollars due to a massive drop-off in immigrant tax filings.

About the Candidates

Due to the disgraced GOP incumbent's, Tony Gonzales, abrupt exit following a scandal involving sexual impropriety with an aide, this open seat may be filled in a special election before November.

Katy Padilla Stout | Democratic Candidate

Katy Padilla Stout is an attorney for children in the foster care system and a former public school teacher who was born and raised in South Texas. She's focusing her campaign on investing in working families through policies such as universal pre-K, vibrant public schools, expanded community health centers, and paid parental leave. She supports addressing the high cost of living through tax code reform, expanding Medicare, and raising the minimum wage.

Padilla Stout also favors gun safety initiatives, telling Texas Public Radio, "We live in the land of the free, and that means freedom to send your kids to school, freedom to go to the grocery store, freedom to go to a movie theater without fear of being gunned down." On immigration, she supports action to secure the border paired with humane immigration laws that include pathways to citizenship. She is against a border wall in the Big Bend region due to the environmental destruction it would cause. Padilla Stout is endorsed by Texas AFL-CIO, Texas AFT, *San Antonio Express-News*, Emily's List, and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Brandon Herrera | GOP Candidate

Trump-endorsed **Brandon Herrera**, a 30-year-old gun rights activist and YouTuber known as "The AK Guy," is also a first-time nominee. Born and raised in North Carolina, he moved to TX-23 in 2021 and owns a gun manufacturing business that sells Kalashnikov-style firearms. His MAGA platform includes far-right positions on immigration, women's rights, and guns, including letting convicted felons have a gun as soon as they're released from prison. Herrera opposes "endless wars" and says he wants to protect Social Security and Medicare, potentially putting him at odds with the Trump administration in limited cases.

Herrera has name recognition based on his unsuccessful primary run for this seat in 2024 and his YouTube channel, which has over 4 million subscribers. Not all publicity is good publicity, though: Herrera's videos include scenes of him shooting Nazi-era weapons, discussing his copy of *Mein Kampf*, and marching to a Nazi-era German war song (he described these videos, unconvincingly, to the *New York Times* as "jokes").

The contrast: As a South Texas native with a career-long focus on children and families and platform focused on making life better for working people, Padilla Stout could not contrast more strongly with Herrera, a recent arrival and an extremist who is campaigning for unfettered gun access in a district traumatized by two major mass shootings.

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