

Advertisement - scroll for more content

Customize Your Coasters. Custom Coasters Now. \$0.01

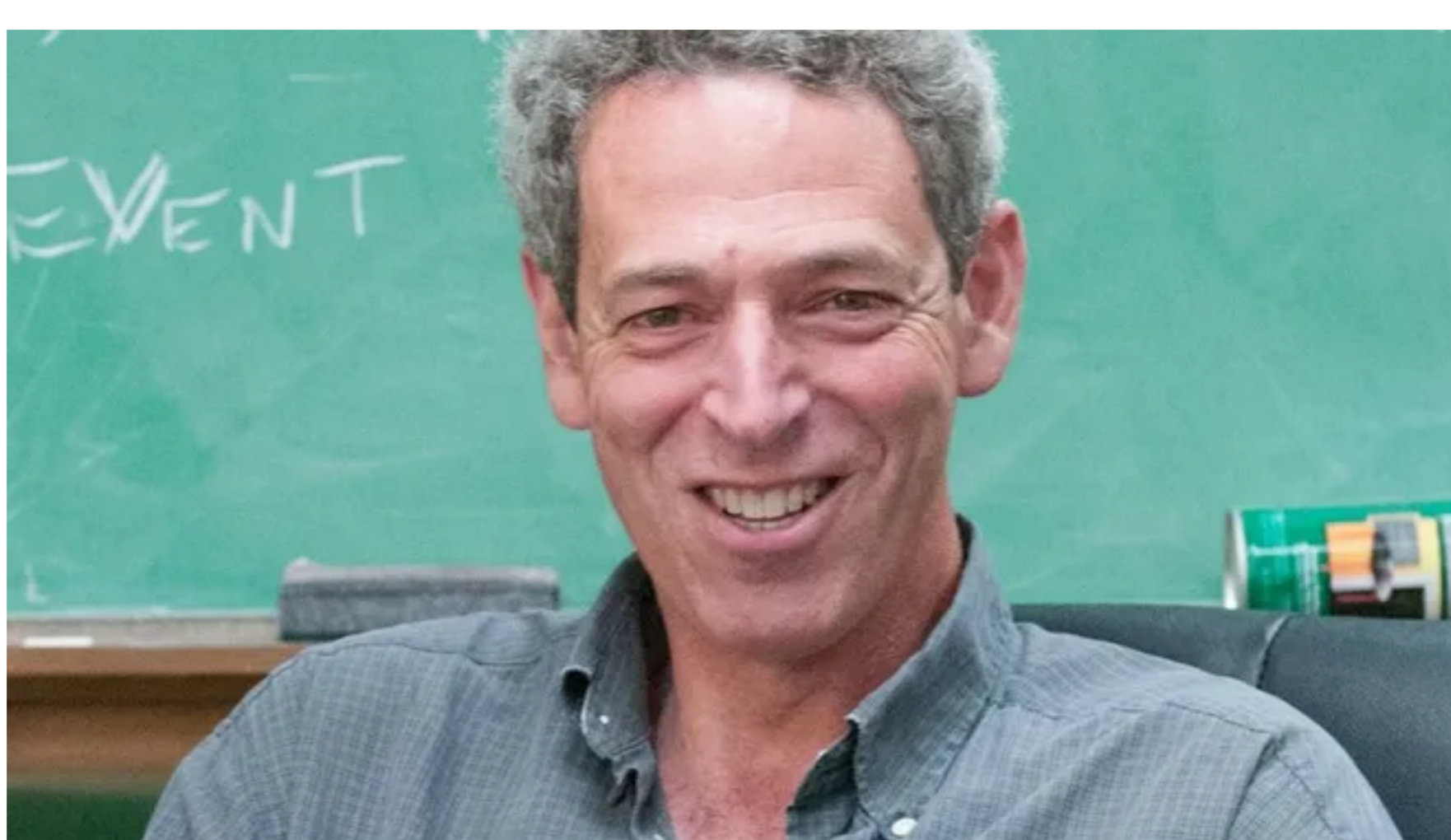
NEWS

# Stekler: The problem with a one-party state government in Texas

Paul Stekler

Published 12:01 a.m. CT Sept. 3, 2016 | Updated 9:16 a.m. CT Sept. 25, 2018

View Comments



Paul Stekler is the chair of the Radio-Television-Film Department in the Moody College of Communication at the University of Texas. "Postcards from the Great Divide" is viewable at [politicalpostcards.org](http://politicalpostcards.org). *Austin American-Statesman*

In 2004, Texas author Bill Bishop in his book "The Big Sort" described the migration of Americans inspired by lifestyle choices. In envisioning a growing divide in the country, in advance of today's political gridlock in Washington, he wrote that "we have built a country where everyone can choose the neighbors (and church and news shows) most compatible with his or her lifestyle and beliefs. And we are living with the consequences of this segregation by way of life: pockets of like-minded citizens that have become so ideologically inbred that we don't know, can't understand, and can barely conceive of 'those people' who live just a few miles away."

The political consequences? Increasingly we would live in separate worlds of news and what was recognized as facts, so that bipartisan dialogue and compromise would become impossible.

Advertisement

Advertisement

Customize Your Coasters. Custom Coasters Now. \$0.01

## More Stories

**Texas baseball highlights from Game 1 of NCAA super regional v s. ECU**  
SPORTS

**NCAA baseball: Texas Longhorns vs East Carolina scores, live updates**  
COLLEGE

**Most Affordable Camper Vans**  
All Things Au... | Sponsored Links

*We're always working to improve your experience. Let us know what you think.*

Advertisement

A decade later, it's hard not to wonder how our politics could get more dysfunctional. Congress is unable to even pass a budget. The Senate is unwilling to consider filling a Supreme Court vacancy. And voters will soon choose between the two most unpopular major party candidates for president in polling history — candidates whose only paths to victory could come against each other.

Advertisement

We are soon launching an online series of short films, "Postcards from the Great Divide," that examines aspects of our political divide in nine states. Is anyone happy in Wisconsin, where excessive gerrymandering and heightened ideological division in the Legislature has produced bitter policy fights over everything? How are African-American voters staying engaged in the face of new state restrictions to voting in Florida, a crucial swing state? What were the consequences of outside interests putting more than \$1 million into a local school board race outside of Denver?

A hint: It didn't help produce consensus.

In our Texas film, "The Giant Still Sleeps," the series examines the Latino vote. Or more correctly, the lack thereof. Latinos may pass whites in population next year, according to data from state demographers, but they made up less than 20 percent of the vote in 2014. There's no doubt that recent restrictive voter ID laws have had a negative impact on the Latino turnout. And without the protection of the Voting Rights Act, by action of the Supreme Court, gerrymandering and the redrawing of district lines to dilute the vote are harder to fight in the courts.

Advertisement

But the challenges run much deeper. There's a cultural aversion to getting involved in politics, along with a younger population who, as of yet, doesn't see the relevance of politics in their day-to-day lives. Simply put, working-class voters have not been convinced it's worth voting. Many potential voters are fearful, coming from a culture where getting politically involved was dangerous. And the lack of statewide general election competition does nothing to motivate people to go to the polls.

So why is this problem for all Texans? No matter your political preferences, the reality in our one-party state government is that we're not debating serious differences of opinion on public policy in Texas. Party-line votes in the overwhelmingly Republican Legislature are the norm when elected officials have only primary challenges to fear for re-election. Ideological purity is the test.

In the film, former U.S. Rep. Pete Gallego, currently running to regain his South Texas seat, recalls that "in the 1980s I remember a big poster that said that the '80s was the decade of the Hispanic. And then the '90s were the decade of the Hispanic. And then the 2000s. So we're still waiting for that decade."

The rationale for a two-party system is to encourage political debate. Until our soon-to-be largest ethnic group is engaged in our democracy, nothing will change to remedy what we're missing.

View Comments

taboola Feed

**Most Affordable Camper Vans**  
All Things Auto | Search Ads | Ad

**Empty Alaska Cruise Cabins Cost Almost Nothing**  
Alaska Cruise Deals | sponsor... | Ad

**Critics Are Speechless**  
You'll Never Guess How Much this Fully Loaded Hyundai Costs!  
Hyundai Deals Today | Ad

**Want to Feel Stronger at 60 than at 30? Top Expert Says Do This One Thing**  
After helping thousands of people look and feel years younger, celebrity trainer...  
Power Life | Ad [Learn More](#)

**New Toenail Clipper is A Must-Have For Seniors In Texas**  
ClipperPro is a high-quality toenail clipper that was designed by three...  
Clipperpro | Ad [Learn More](#)

**Do This Instead of Cleaning Gutters (It's Genius)**  
LeafFilter Partner | Ad



**Empty Las Vegas Suites That Overlook The Strip**  
Las Vegas Deals | sponsored searches | Ad



**Grills on Sale at Home Depot and Lowes**  
Discount Grill Liquidators | Ad [Learn More](#)

Advertisement