

Rep. Thomas D. (Tom) DeLay (R),  
Representative from Texas, District 22

District background and political analysis:

#### TWENTY-SECOND DISTRICT

Forty years ago, you didn't have to get very far southwest of downtown Houston to get to the cotton fields. Treasury Secretary James Baker can remember when his grandfather used to hunt on his property, a few miles from downtown. Out as far as Post Oak and Westheimer -- now with glitzy shopping centers, the Fifth Avenue and 57th Street of the oil kingdom -- there were fields planted in the staple which made the fortunes of the great Houston cotton traders and political operators Jesse Jones and Will Clayton. Going farther out what is now the perpetually traffic-jammed Southwest Freeway, you would quickly find yourself in utterly rural territory as you left Harris County and traveled through Fort Bend County and then down to the coastal flatness of Brazoria County. Most times of the year the sun would beat down mercilessly, the humidity would be fierce, the ground would be thick with bugs.

On this unforgiving environment was built an urban civilization that includes what is now the 22d Congressional District of Texas. It includes monuments of greater Houston's development: the high-rises airily flanking the Southwest Freeway near the Galleria, the Sharpstown shopping center and subdivision put up by a local wheeler-dealer whose financial collapse and political dealings brought down a governor in 1972, the newly-sprouted suburban towns of Sugar Land and Missouri City in Fort Bend County, the steamy Brazosport oil shipping complex around Freeport and Lake Jackson on the Gulf of Mexico. Air conditioning -- in malls, cars, homes -- has made this civilization possible; insecticides have helped; the automobile ties it together (if the traffic would ever clear up). There were fewer than 100,000 people in what now is the 22d District as World War II ended, less than 200,000 in 1960; as the Sharpstown scandal was breaking there were 300,000 and 526,000 when oil prices went over \$30 a barrel in the early 1980s. This is a heavily Republican district: you will be hard put to find many national Democrats among the people who have come from other parts of Houston and Texas, the South and North and even foreign countries, and live now in the new and affluent subdivisions of Houston or Sugar Land or in the more widely-spaced subdivisions scattered farther out in Fort Bend and Brazoria; and even in local elections the historic Democratic leanings of the rural areas are usually overwhelmed by the strong Republican allegiance of the newcomers. In the 1970s the 22d, then mostly in Houston and with more black neighborhoods, had a series of turbulent elections, in large part because of Republican Representative Ron Paul, a libertarian so pure that he was an isolationist abroad and Congress's foremost champion of the gold standard. But Paul ran for the Senate in 1984, running second behind Phil Gramm in the Republican primary, and the current congressman, Republican Tom DeLay, fits the preferences of the newcomer majority here more easily.

Even so, DeLay has an interesting background. He was born in the border town of Laredo and spent much of his childhood in Venezuela, where his father drilled oil wells. In Sugar Land the son built a pest control business -- environmentalists might not like that, but in Houston people would rather control the bugs than preserve them -- and was elected to the state legislature in 1978, the first Republican from Fort Bend County. When Paul

2025848088

retired, he easily won the Republican primary and the general election; this is a safe seat for him. DeLay's voting record is solidly conservative on practically every issue, but he seems also to have traditional political instincts. In his first term he was the freshman representative on the Republican Committee on Committees, and in his second term he got a seat on the Appropriations Committee. He is proud of helping Houston get \$64 million to build a busway on the Southwest Freeway, Rice University get \$1.6 million to study how to improve mass transit, and Freeport \$15 million for harbor development. Libertarianism may be fine as a general principle, but he is ready to use government to, in his phrase, "conquer traffic problems."

Personal: Elected 1984; Laredo; home, Sugar Land; University of Houston, B.S. 1970;

Career: Owner, Albo Pest Control; Texas House of Representatives, 1979-85.

Committees:

Committee on Appropriations (21st of 22 Republicans).

Subcommittees: Military Construction; Transportation and Related Agencies.

REDACTED

2025848089