

# Outrage Erupts as Texas House Passes Bill That 'Criminalizes Political Memes'



By [Jack Davis](#) • April 30, 2025 at 11:34am

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The Texas House has made political waves by passing a bill that says a government-approved disclosure is required when altered images or recordings are posted online as part of political campaigns.

The bill passed 106-39, according to a legislative [website](#). It will now go to the state Senate and, if it passes there, Gov. Greg Abbott.

The [bill's text](#) says that, “A person may not, with the intent to influence an election, knowingly cause to be published, distributed, or broadcast political advertising that includes an image, audio recording, or video recording of an officeholder’s or candidate’s appearance, speech, or conduct that did not occur in reality.”

The bill said online posts with “an image, audio recording, or video recording that has been altered using generative artificial intelligence technology” are banned “unless the

political advertising includes a disclosure from the person or another person on whose behalf the political advertising is published, distributed, or broadcast indicating that the image, audio recording, or video recording did not occur in reality.”

[Violators](#) could face up to a year in jail or a \$4,000 fine. The bill said the Texas Ethics Commission would decide the format for the required disclosure.

In a post on [social media platform X](#), the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression said, “The bill raises serious First Amendment concerns.”

**Should Texas Gov. Greg Abbott veto this bill if it reaches his desk?**

Yes  No

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Fort Worth attorney Tony McDonald, who takes First Amendment cases, was among those who denounced the bill, according to [Texas Scorecard](#).

[Firefly\_poll]

“It’s amazing that this ridiculous bill is the top priority of the Texas House’s most powerful committee,” he said in March as the bill was being considered. “This bill is obviously unconstitutional. It would criminalize protected speech on the basis of its content.”

In a [post on X](#), The Report [attacked](#) the bill.

“This is not ‘election integrity.’ This is an all-out war on free speech,” the post said, adding “HB 366 turns Texas into California with cowboy boots. This isn’t about protecting voters. It’s about silencing critics. It’s about punishing political mockery. It’s about narrative control. Texas was supposed to defend liberty. Instead, it’s branding speech as criminal. Welcome to the era of compelled speech. Mock the regime? You’re now a criminal.”

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The Texas House Research Organization said the bill seeks to address [AI concerns](#).

“Concerns have been raised that advances in artificial intelligence (AI) technology have made it easier to falsely represent an officeholder’s or candidate’s appearance, speech, or conduct in political advertising. Some have suggested that requiring disclosures on

artificially-modified political advertisements with accompanying enforcement mechanisms could help prevent voters from being misled,” it said on the [Texas House website](#).

But many who [weighed in](#) on the bill feel differently.

“I oppose this bill. It is a violation of my God-given right to freedom of speech according to the First Amendment of the US Constitution,” Julie Croy of China Spring, Texas, said in a comment posted to the [public comment section](#) of the website explaining the bill’s content.

“This bill flies in the face of protected political speech under both the 1st Amendment of the US Constitution and Article I, Section 8 of the Texas Constitution,” John Boligiano of

Llano, Texas, said.

“Satire and parody are powerful tools available to the people in pointing out the foibles of their presumed ‘betters.’ Any bar on the use of these tools is a danger to the political power of the people of Texas, who hold such power as an inherent right as laid out in Article I, Section 2 of the Texas Constitution,” he said.

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Jack Davis is a freelance writer who joined The Western Journal in July 2015 and chronicled the campaign that saw President Donald Trump elected. Since then, he has written extensively for The Western Journal on the Trump administration as well as foreign policy and military issues.

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By: Phelan

H.B. No. 366

Substitute the following for H.B. No. 366:

By: Darby

C.S.H.B. No. 366

## A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

## AN ACT

relating to required disclosures on certain political advertising that contains altered media; creating a criminal offense.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 255, Election Code, is amended by adding Section 255.0015 to read as follows:

Sec. 255.0015. REQUIRED DISCLOSURE ON CERTAIN POLITICAL ADVERTISING CONTAINING ALTERED MEDIA; CRIMINAL PENALTY. (a) This section applies only to a person who:

(1) is an officeholder, candidate, or political committee;

(2) makes expenditures during a reporting period that in the aggregate exceed \$100 for political advertising, other than an expense to cover the basic cost of hardware, messaging software, and bandwidth; or

(3) publishes, distributes, or broadcasts political advertising described by Subsection (b) in return for consideration.

(b) A person may not, with the intent to influence an election, knowingly cause to be published, distributed, or broadcast political advertising that includes an image, audio recording, or video recording of an officeholder's or candidate's appearance, speech, or conduct that did not occur in reality, including an image, audio recording, or video recording that has been altered using generative artificial intelligence technology, unless the political advertising includes a disclosure from the person or another person on whose behalf the political advertising is published, distributed, or broadcast indicating that the image, audio recording, or video recording did not occur in reality.

(c) The commission by rule shall prescribe the form of the disclosure required by Subsection (b), including the font, size, and color of the disclosure. The commission shall ensure that the form of the disclosure is consistent with other required disclosures on political advertising.

(d) A person commits an offense if the person violates this section. An offense under this section is a Class A misdemeanor.

(e) This section does not impose liability on any of the following persons for political advertising published, distributed, or broadcast by or at the direction of another person:

(1) an interactive computer service, as defined by 47 U.S.C. Section 230(f);

(2) an Internet service provider, cloud service provider, cybersecurity service provider, communication service provider, or telecommunications network;

(3) a radio or television broadcaster, including a cable or satellite television network operator, programmer, or producer; or

(4) the owner or operator of a commercial sign, as defined by Section 391.001, Transportation Code.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.