COMMISSION SHIFT ACTION

RAILROAD COMMISSIONER of TEXAS 2026 VOTER GUIDE

EARLY VOTING: October 19th-30th

ELECTION DAY: November 3rd

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RAILROAD COMMISSIONER of TEXAS

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The Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) is the regulatory agency that oversees oil and gas development, coal and uranium mining, and gas utility service in Texas. The RRC's decisions affect every Texan in some way, whether you live next to oil and gas development or pay a gas utility bill. Its mission is to serve Texans by its stewardship of natural resources and the environment, concern for personal and community safety, and support of enhanced development and economic vitality for the benefit of Texans, according to their website.



Members of the three-person commission are elected statewide, not regionally. One seat is up for election every two years, in even-numbered years. Commissioners serve staggered six-year terms, and there is no limit to the number of terms a commissioner can serve.

VOTING CHECKLIST

BEFORE VOTING:

Check if you are registered to vote at votetexas.gov.
Find polling places on your county election website or at VOTE411.org.
Find a sample ballot on your county election website or call your county elections division for more information.

DAY OF VOTING:

Bring a sample ballot to the polls for additional support at the booth.
Bring one type of valid photo ID.
Try to vote early, between 10 AM – 4 PM if you plan to vote on election day, or allow extra time for long lines.

VALID TYPES OF PHOTO ID:

A state driver's license (issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety).
A Texas election identification certificate (issued by DPS).
A Texas personal identification card (issued by DPS).
A Texas license to carry a handgun (issued by DPS).
A U.S. military ID card with a personal photo.
A U.S. citizenship certificate with a personal photo.
A U.S. passport.

IMPORTANT DATES

October 19th: First day of in-person early voting
October 23rd: Last day to apply for ballot by mail (received, not postmarked)
October 30th: Last day of in-person early voting
November 3rd: Last day to receive ballot by mail

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POSITION DEFINITIONS

Support: The candidate has explicitly stated their support for this policy position on the record with no ambiguity, through statements, co-sponsorship, and/or votes.
Oppose: The candidate has explicitly stated their opposition to this policy position on the record with no ambiguity, through statements and/or votes.
Unknown: The candidate has not explicitly stated their support or opposition to this policy position on the record.
Likely to Oppose or Likely to Support: In these cases, there is no explicit statement we can reference from the candidate, but the answer is based on the candidate's documented actions or related statements.
Mixed: The candidate has made conflicting statements and/or has taken conflicting votes on this policy position.

Where the candidates stand on:	Bo French Republican	Jon Rosenthal Democrat	Arthur DiBianca Libertarian
Ethics			
Limiting campaign contributions from executives tied to companies the RRC oversees.	**Unknown, likely to oppose.** Over $900,000 of French's campaign funds came from a PAC whose primary contributors are Tim Dunn and Farris Wilks, two oil and gas billionaires.[1] Several other contributions come from CEOs and PACs associated with companies the RRC oversees.[2]	**Support.** Rosenthal's campaign website says "Ban industry donations to Railroad Commissioners," and "if you're granting a company's permit, you shouldn't be cashing that company's check – full stop."[3] He stated in an interview that he takes no oil-industry PAC money.[4]	**Unknown, likely to support.** DiBianca said in an interview that we need to avoid "regulatory capture."[5]
Following recusal rules and abstaining from decisions if there is a personal financial interest or campaign contribution from a company or operator.	**Unknown, likely to oppose.** French has accepted a majority of his campaign funds from oil and gas billionaires and PACs associated with oil and gas companies – the same companies the RRC oversees.	**Support.** Rosenthal told reporters "it ought to be a law that if you are regulating the very companies that you have financial stakes in, that's a problem… They should recuse themselves from conflicts of interest."[6] Rosenthal also stated on his website that recusals should be published.[7]	**Unknown, likely to support.** DiBianca told reporters he has no personal or family connections to the oil and gas industry, and noted "what I'm trying to bring to the table for the Railroad Commission is freedom from conflict of interest."[8]

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Where the candidates stand on:	Bo French Republican	Jon Rosenthal Democrat	Arthur DiBianca Libertarian
Public Participation			
Providing guaranteed in-person and remote public comment opportunities at RRC open meetings.	**Unknown.** French did not respond to a media request for comment on the RRC ending guaranteed public comment at RRC open meetings.[9]	**Support.** Rosenthal told reporters that ending guaranteed public comment is an "egregious attack on Texans' right to address their duly elected Railroad Commissioners" and said he would seek to reverse it.[10] According to his website, he supports evening and virtual hearings,[11] and community liaisons in every region.[12]	**Unknown.**
Adopting a definition of "environmental justice" that considers disproportionate burdens and cumulative impacts on the basis of race, income, or language; and requires companies to mitigate impacts.	**Unknown, likely to oppose.** French has demonstrated that he does not feel racial equity is important. He posted a photo of students of South Asian descent cheering at a UT football game saying "I heard UT graduation this year looked like this. I didn't believe it. The problem is now obviously far worse than anyone imagined."[13] French later wrote: "Like body-cams exposed criminals, social media is exposing how many Americans have been displaced by foreigners. It's everywhere and far worse than any of us could imagine."[14]	**Unknown, likely to support.** Rosenthal's campaign website proposes "neighborhood monitoring pilots (low-cost sensors) in frontline areas with public dashboards,"[15] to "end routine flaring and venting," have modern leak-detection and repair, groundwater safeguards, and "stronger setback standards from homes, schools, and hospitals."[16] Rosenthal supports language access.	**Unknown.**

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Where the candidates stand on:	Bo French Republican	Jon Rosenthal Democrat	Arthur DiBianca Libertarian
Public Participation			
Providing language translation and interpretation at RRC open meetings and public hearings.	**Unknown, likely to oppose.** French has a track record of making racist, xenophobic,[17] anti-Semitic and islamophobic statements,[18, 19] and his campaign website includes platforms to "Stop the Islamic Invasion of Texas" and "End DEI's Stranglehold on Texas Oil." DEI stands for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. French also called for the deportation of Native Americans and American citizens.[20]	**Support.** Rosenthal's campaign website states "government should meet you where you are – after work, online, and in the language you speak," including a bullet that notes "Community liaisons in every region; evening and virtual hearings; language access (Spanish, Vietnamese, and more)."[21]	**Unknown.**
Energy Reliability and Affordability			
Adopting enforceable weatherization standards for the natural gas supply chain.	**Unknown.**	**Support.** Rosenthal's campaign website includes a platform to "Keep the Heat and Lights ON & Bring Bills Down." The platform includes "weatherization requirements for critical gas production, processing, and pipelines – with deadlines, third-party audits, and fines that actually deter violations."[22] As a state representative, Rosenthal authored a bill requiring weather emergency preparedness at gas facilities with penalties up to $1,000,000.[23]	**Unknown.**

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Where the candidates stand on:	Bo French Republican	Jon Rosenthal Democrat	Arthur DiBianca Libertarian
Energy Reliability & Affordability			
Setting rules around winter storm natural gas pricing to limit price spikes, like the ones that occurred with Winter Storm Uri.	**Unknown.**	**Support**. Rosenthal's campaign priority of Fair, Affordable Gas Utility Rates includes "hedging and storage standards to smooth volatile prices" and "stricter prudence reviews before utilities recover extraordinary costs; no recovery for preventable failures."[24]	**Unknown.**
Ensuring customers have fair representation when natural gas utility rates are decided.	**Unknown.**	**Support.** Rosenthal's campaign website calls for "bill transparency" including "line-item explanations of riders and storm charges in clear language." He also calls for consumer protection measures including requiring "prudence reviews before companies pass storm costs to customers" as well as calls to "block recovery of costs caused by negligence."[25]	**Unknown.**
Orphaned Wells			
Scrutinizing well transfers to prevent handoffs to companies who can't afford to plug their wells.	**Unknown, likely to oppose.** On his website, French suggests cutting regulations and has accepted a majority of his campaign funds from oil and gas billionaires and PACs associated with oil and gas companies — the same companies the RRC oversees.	**Support.** In an interview, Rosenthal proposed holding previous operators accountable through shared liability, and criticized operators who "dissolve their corporations to evade liability."[26] His campaign website states he would suspend new drilling/injection permits for chronic violators until they remediate.[27]	**Unknown.**

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Where the candidates stand on:	Bo French Republican	Jon Rosenthal Democrat	Arthur DiBianca Libertarian
Orphaned Wells			
Ensuring active oil and gas operators pay to plug their inactive wells in a timely manner, protecting groundwater quality.	**Mixed.** French has indicated that "plugging more abandoned wells" is a priority. He has also said he believes plugging wells would cost less if the state cut out DEI factors when selecting contractors for the required labor, which he says gives preferential treatment to women and minority-owned businesses.[28, 29] When it comes to well plugging, on his website, French suggested cutting regulations, calling them a "stranglehold on oil and gas operators."[30] He also told oil and gas industry leaders "I don't just think we ought to have no regulations. That's insane," adding that he and his friends in the oil business want to protect the land.[31]	**Support.** Rosenthal's campaign website states he would "suspend new drilling/injection permits for chronic violators until they remediate."[32] His platform on cleanup includes increasing orphaned well plugging, raising bonding requirements, and improving monitoring and enforcement.[33] In an interview, he said, "it costs a lot less to plug a well when it first becomes inactive than to let it sit."[34]	**Support**. DiBianca's website says he would "hold operators accountable for well plugging and cleanup but make compliance predictable and transparent," and "encourage bonding and insurance markets to handle environmental risks instead of taxpayer bailouts."[35] In an interview, he said "what we don't want is a situation where taxpayers are expected to foot the bill to clean up problems caused by industry action."[36, 37] He has not addressed timeliness.
Increasing bonds, fees, and surcharges to active oil and gas companies to ensure sufficient funding at the RRC for plugging orphaned wells.	**Unknown.**	**Support**. On his website, Rosenthal states he wants to "raise bonding requirements so operators – not taxpayers – pay to clean up."[38] He wants to raise surety bonds on new and egregious violators to post bonds to cover plugging costs.[39] He also proposed a per-barrel surcharge on saltwater disposal dedicated to well plugging.[40, 41]	**Support.** DiBianca's campaign website says he wants to "encourage bonding and insurance markets to handle environmental risks instead of taxpayer bailouts"; and that higher-risk companies "should pay higher insurance." DiBianca has not stated whether bonds or fees should increase.[42, 43]

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Where the candidates stand on:	Bo French Republican	Jon Rosenthal Democrat	Arthur DiBianca Libertarian
Waste Pits			
Requiring operators to get consent from landowners before disposing of oil and gas waste on their land.	**Unknown.** In a Q&A, French said he "will work with the industry and with landowners to find solutions that safeguard our land and environment while allowing energy to be produced efficiently." [44] French's campaign website also says he believes the RRC "should cut regulations rather than centralize its power in Austin and cut the stranglehold on oil and gas operators." [45]	**Support.** Rosenthal's website says he wants "advance notice & plain-language consent for landowners near proposed waste pits or injection wells" and "real appeal rights with timelines that favor the public." [46]	**Unknown.** In interviews, DiBianca said he will "increase transparency for landowners when projects interact with residents' property," [47] and that "surface-rights owners' rights must be put ahead of industry interests." [48] His campaign website supports "voluntary, market-based solutions for disputes between landowners and energy developers rather than one-size-fits-all mandates." [49, 50]
Requiring health-based setbacks between waste pits and populated areas.	**Oppose.** French's campaign website makes statements in favor of cutting regulations.	**Support.** Rosenthal calls for "stronger setback standards" from homes, schools, and hospitals (setbacks in general, not specific to waste pits). [51, 52] To the media, he said he supports returning local control over oil and gas drilling sites to cities and counties. [53, 54]	Unknown.
Requiring operators to register waste pits, for better monitoring and enforcement.	**Oppose.** French has indicated in interviews that he wants to roll back or rewrite the RRC's 2024–25 oilfield waste rules, which include pit registration. [55, 56] He also stated that requiring plastic-lined pits for waste storage is a burden on some operators. [57] On X, French called the recently updated waste pit rules "costly and unnecessary regulation." [58]	**Unknown, likely to support.** Rosenthal's website does not mention pit registration, but it does propose "tougher liners and monitoring at waste sites." [59]	**Unknown.**

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Earthquakes, sinkholes, blowouts, & disasters			
Suspending underground injection in areas where seismic events, sinkholes, or blowouts are occurring.	**Unknown.**	**Unknown, likely to support.** In an interview, Rosenthal acknowledged over-pressurized disposal "leads to the seismicity issue"[60] and has stated he would suspend new injection permits for chronic violators.[61] According to his campaign website, Rosenthal also supports "baseline and follow-up water testing around high-risk operations."[62]	**Unknown, likely to oppose.** In interviews, DiBianca has opposed "prior constraint" regulation, and has called for restitution for damage from earthquakes and wastewater leaks.[63, 64]
Reducing the number of new oil and gas drilling permits in areas demonstrating significant subsurface breakout from underground injection.	**Unknown.**	**Support.**[65]	**Unknown.**
Taking responsibility for cleaning up Lake Boehmer, which was caused by an RRC-permitted well with no active operator.	**Unknown.**	**Support.**[66]	**Unknown.**

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Where the candidates stand on:	Bo French Republican	Jon Rosenthal Democrat	Arthur DiBianca Libertarian
Produced Water Beneficial Reuse			
Requiring disclosure of trade secret chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing for better public health transparency.	**Unknown, likely to oppose.** French's campaign website features statements in support of cutting regulation.	**Unknown.**	**Unknown.**
Setting maximum chemical contaminant levels in treated produced water prior to allowing reuse.	**Unknown.**	**Unknown.** Rosenthal stated in interviews that he wants to incentivize "technologies to reclaim this water."[67, 68]	**Unknown.**
Improving data collection and reporting for spills.	**Unknown.**	**Support.** On his website, Rosenthal expressed support for requiring "site-specific emergency plans, alarms, and public notification for releases of sour gas and hazardous chemicals," as well as a complaint hotline with tracking and public timelines.[69]	**Unknown, likely to support.** In an interview, DiBianca called for full RRC transparency in general.[70]
Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)			
Updating pipeline safety regulations specific to supercritical CO2.	**Unknown, likely to oppose.** Bo French does not have a policy position on CO2 pipelines, but he does have a broad policy platform against regulation.[71]	**Unknown, likely to support.** Rosenthal's campaign website features statements in support of "pipeline safety upgrades" including "high-consequence area mapping, automatic shut-off/remote isolation valves in populated zones," and "first-responder training funded by operators."[72]	**Unknown.**

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Where the candidates stand on:	Bo French Republican	Jon Rosenthal Democrat	Arthur DiBianca Libertarian
Carbon Capture & Storage (CCS)			
Requiring collection and consideration of public comments before new CO2 pipelines are sited.	**Unknown.**	**Unknown, likely to support.** Rosenthal's campaign website says he'll"We'll "put notice, consent, and emergency preparedness back on the side of Texans — so families, ranchers, and first responders have the information and tools to stay safe."[73] It also says he'll "make it easy to be heard and to track action on your concerns" and calls for regional community liaisons, evening and virtual hearings, and language access.[74]	**Unknown.** In an interview, DiBianca said he would support moving pipeline regulation from the RRC to the Texas Department of Transportation.[75] His campaign website says he opposes eminent domain abuse.[76]
Ensuring carbon dioxide (CO2) injection well operators plug their wells in a timely manner instead of delaying plugging, increasing risk to groundwater.	**Unknown.** French does not have a policy position on CO2 injection on his website. French has a broad policy platform against regulation as stated on his website.[77]	**Unknown, likely to support.** Rosenthal's campaign website says he supports repurposing wells for CO2 storage.[78] Rosenthal said in an interview he supports giving the RRC primacy over carbon injection, because "having one agency take control of this is a good thing. But I feel like we handed them extra stuff to do and did not increase their (funding)." He also and asked" "Who is paying to monitor those facilities and ensure they're properly tested, permitted, and monitored?"[79]	**Unknown.** DiBianca does not have a policy position on CO2 injection.

Where the candidates stand on:	Bo French Republican	Jon Rosenthal Democrat	Arthur DiBianca Libertarian
Venting & Flaring			
Adopting enforceable venting and flaring rules to limit the volume and duration of gas vented and flared and eliminate routine flaring from oil wells.	**Unknown, likely to oppose.** Bo French has a broad policy platform against regulation.[80]	**Support.** Rosenthal's campaign website calls to "end routine flaring and venting," and for permitting flaring only in true emergencies with continuous monitoring and penalties.[81] As a legislator, Rosenthal authored a bill requiring the RRC to eliminate routine flaring by Dec. 31, 2031.[82] He said in an interview he supports leak detection and repair requirements.[83]	**Unknown.**
Reducing the number of flaring rule exceptions, or "permits," granted at the RRC.	**Unknown.**	**Support.** Rosenthal's campaign website says flaring should be allowed only in true emergencies. The bill Rosenthal filed in 2025 as a legislator would bar extended flaring for purposes unrelated to safety or emergencies.	**Unknown.**
Revoking flaring permits when air quality and public health impacts are observed near an operating flare stack.	**Unknown.**	**Unknown, likely to support.** Rosenthal's campaign website states "no Texan should have to choose between a paycheck and their child's health." His website includes recommendations for "stronger setback standards from homes, schools, and hospitals."[84]	**Unknown.**

METHODS

Commission Shift Action's policy team drafted a list of our policy positions in key areas and developed definitions based on the American Association of University Women Action Fund Candidate Comparison Guides. The policy team then reviewed candidates' websites and news articles, and conducted a broader search for public information regarding the candidates' positions on these policy areas using Claude Opus 5.5. All citations provided by Claude were manually reviewed by our policy team, and summaries on each position were manually edited or drafted by our policy team. Emails were sent to each candidate with a draft of the guides, giving them 48 hours to respond and verify accuracy of the positions stated below for their candidate. The Bo French and Arthur DiBianca campaigns did not respond. The Jon Rosenthal campaign did respond with edits we incorporated into two issue areas, but they informed us that they were unable to review the entire guide.

GENERATIVE AI CITATION AND DISCLOSURE

Claude. (2026). Opus 5.5 (September 28 version). https://www.anthropic.com/claude/opus

The authors declare the use of generative AI in the research and writing process. According to the GAIDeT taxonomy (2026), the following tasks were delegated to GAI tools under full human supervision:

- Literature search and systematization
- Text generation

The GAI tool used was Claude Opus 5.5.
Responsibility for the final manuscript lies entirely with the authors.
GAI tools are not listed as authors and do not bear responsibility for the final outcomes.
Declaration submitted by Julie Range, Policy Manager, Commission Shift
Additional note: Used Claude Opus 5.5 to search for and provide candidate positions on defined topics.

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