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File: Texas
Election

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Monday November 17 2:12 PM EST

Democrat Mauro to Run for Governor of Texas

HOUSTON (Reuters) - State Comptroller Garry Mauro said Monday he would run to be the Democratic candidate against popular Republican Gov. George W. Bush next year.

Mauro, 49, told supporters at a rally he would eliminate the sales tax on motor vehicles and raise teacher salaries by \$5,000 a year in a program he called "Texas Families First."

He said he would pay for the changes by hiking taxes on cigarettes and liquor and freezing state spending.

Mauro has been state comptroller since 1982. He is a longtime friend and political ally of President Clinton and ran his presidential campaigns in Texas in 1992 and 1996.

Newspaper polls this year have shown him trailing Bush by a large margin, but the election is nearly a year away. No other Democrat has entered the race.

"Why do I seek this office? It's not because George Bush is not a nice man. He is. It's simply because he and I have a different vision of what's important for this great state," Mauro said.

Bush, son of former President George Bush, is considered a possible candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 2000, but has said he will run for a second term as governor.

Mauro said he would also seek laws giving people more say about their medical care under health maintenance organizations and a state ban on taxes on food and prescription drugs. He also called for a \$2 billion investment in schools and a "war" on street gangs.

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TEXAS: Bush's 52 Points Of Lead

A Scripps Howard Texas poll, conducted 10/27-11/7 surveyed 1,000 adult Texans; margin of error +/- 3%. Subsample: 793 regis. voters; +/- 4% (release, 11/15). Tested: Gov. George W. Bush (R) and Land Commis. Gary Mauro (D).

General Election Matchup		If Reelected, Should	
RVs		Bush Run For WH 2000?	
Bush	68%	All	
Mauro	16	Yes	51%
Undecided	14	No	31

Bush Job							Why Do Approve of Bush	
Rvs Dem GOP Ind Men Wom							Like His Ideas 23% (RVs only)	
Approve	71%	54%	86%	71%	72%	68%	Don't Know	10
Disapprove	25	38	13	25	25	25	He's Sincere	9
How Are Race Relations In Texas?							Heard Nthng Bad	9
Excel/Good 25%							His Character	8

Fair		Affirm. Action Prgrms	
Poor		Favor/Oppose.	
Don't Know 3		Favor	48%
		Oppose	42

Affirmative Action Programs		Additional Effrt Needed	
Fair/Unfair.		For Workplace Equality?	
Fair	33%	Yes	23%
Unfair	56	No	72

Do Illegal Immigrants Steal Jobs Or Take Jobs Nobody Wants?		Should U.S. Use Military To Patrol The Borders?	
Steal Jobs	36%	Favor/Strongly Favor	52%
Jobs Nodody Wants	53	Oppose	43

When ex-Gov. Ann Richards (D) ran in '90, "she never trailed Republican Clayton Williams by more than" 15 points, even "in the darkest days" (Ratcliffe, Houston Chronicle, 11/15). Mauro says, TX politics "is full of come-from-behind" wins: "I could give you a whole scenario where Dolph Briscoe was unbeatable, Bill Clements was unbeatable, Clayton Williams was unbeatable [and] Ann Richards was unbeatable. And now George Bush is unbeatable" (Wallace, Waco Tribune-Herald, 11/17).

Dallas Morning News' Slater reports, Bush points to his first-term record as why he should be reelected, saying "he's succeeded" in "improving education, curbing juvenile crime, limiting lawsuits, reforming welfare and significantly reducing property taxes."

Critics say he "appropriated issues" led by legis. leaders and "failed once he stepped out on his own," with a "high-profile" push for a 40% cut in school property taxes. Bush, "disappointed his proposal failed," said the compromise he got as a result led "amounted to the largest tax cut in state history" (11/16).

That's What Friends Are For

Mauro, who worked with Pres. Clinton and HRC on the '72 George McGovern campaign in TX, has drawn support from the Clintons for his bid. HRC hosted a DC fundraiser and "plans to follow it later this month" in CA, and Clinton pollster Mark Penn "has signed on to the race." Why? "Friendship for one thing. ... But friendship will take you only so far in politics." With "handicappers" forecasting Bush v. Gore for WH 2000, the WH "camp figures it couldn't hurt to prick" Bush in '98 or "to road-test campaign tactics that Gore might want to use two years later" (Tumulty, Time, 11/24 issue). (Back to Contents)