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Tweets Supporting Abortion Rights Came From All Over Texas

Twitter Users From Entire State Participated During Wendy Davis's Filibuster of HB2

AUSTIN, Texas (July 29, 2014) — During the period surrounding Texas Democratic Senator Wendy Davis's famous filibuster of the restrictive abortion bill House Bill 2 (HB2), Twitter users from Texas and beyond posted 1.66 million tweets, nearly all against the bill. According to a recent study by Amanda Jean Stevenson of the [Texas Policy Evaluation Project](#) (TxPEP), nearly half of these tweets came from users who live throughout Texas, representing 192 of its 254 counties. The counties included all of Texas' urban centers and the majority of its rural counties.

Approximately 115,500 accounts that tweeted about the filibuster belonged to Texans. The study collected tweets from June 19, 2013, the day before the bill's large public hearing, to July 14, 2014, the day after the bill finally passed. Stevenson reviewed and analyzed hashtags related to the bill, such as "#HB2," "#StandWithWendy" and "#SitDownWendy."

Ninety-seven percent of the tweets studied supported the filibuster of HB2. Stevenson said this high percentage may be because Twitter users who support reproductive rights were motivated to speak out because of the extremity of the restrictions in the bill. They also may have been especially impassioned by the dramatic filibuster itself. "While Texas may still be red in the election polls, the battle for Texas is not just a numbers game. It is also a matter of inspiration," said Stevenson.

"Texans from all over the state, not just the relatively liberal Austinites you would expect, used Twitter to express their outrage over HB2," said Stevenson. "If the energy of these strong, geographically diverse supporters of abortion rights is harnessed, it may influence the future direction of reproductive health politics in Texas."

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On June 25, 2013, Davis staged a lengthy filibuster in the Texas Senate to block HB2, a bill that opponents argued was designed to decrease the number of clinics providing abortion care in Texas. HB2 bans abortions after 20 weeks post-fertilization, requires all physicians providing abortion care to have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of the clinic, imposes restrictions on the use of medical (pill-based) abortion, and requires abortion facilities to meet the requirements of ambulatory surgical centers.

The filibuster, temporarily successful at blocking the bill, received abundant coverage on traditional media such as television and newspapers and notable unofficial coverage on social media. The event was covered nationally and internationally. HB2 was signed into law July 18, 2013. Current research by TxPEP has shown that the Texas state abortion rate has decreased 13 percent since passage of the bill. The bill's most stringent requirement – that all abortion facilities meet the requirements of ambulatory surgical centers – is scheduled to go into effect September 1, 2014.

Davis is currently campaigning to be governor of Texas.

About TxPEP

The [Texas Policy Evaluation Project](#) (TxPEP) is a five-year, comprehensive effort to document and analyze the impact of the measures affecting reproductive health passed by the 82nd and 83rd Texas Legislatures. The project team includes researchers from the University of Texas at Austin's Population Research Center, Ibis Reproductive Health, and the University of Alabama-Birmingham.

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If you would like to receive more information about this topic or schedule an interview with Amanda Jean Stevenson, please contact Laura Dixon at 512-788-2653 or ldixon@prc.utexas.edu.