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CAMPAIGN

The Air War

By [Jackie Kucinich](#)

Ads trading barbs and accusations between Rep. Chet Edwards (D-Texas) and Republican Van Taylor have had little resonance with viewers, according to a recent survey.

Respondents to Wilson Research Strategies' questionnaire about the effectiveness of advertisements being aired in Texas's 17th Congressional District largely gave average marks. When asked whether the ad was on "an ad I would talk about," respondents gave the Taylor ad 4.3 out of a possible 10 and the Edwards ad a rating of 4.6.

The ads follow a simple formula; Taylor's accuses Edwards of voting in support of allowing illegal immigrants access to food stamps. The ad then accuses Edwards of trying to cover up his actions by participating in "double talk" about the issue.

Edwards's ad responds by showing an image of the Congressional Record and explaining that he voted against the food stamp issue. It then implies that Taylor lied; the words "Apparently Van Taylor will say anything to get elected" are projected on the screen.

The advertisements also shared average marks in the 5-6 range when respondents were asked whether the ad was effective.

Taylor's ad received the lowest marks from political activists, who gave him an average of 2.3 for effectiveness and an even lower score of 1.7 when asked whether the ad was "appealing." He received higher marks from Republicans and government relations executives, who gave the ad 6.4 and 5.7, respectively, when asked whether it was effective.

Edwards scored low marks for effectiveness from state and local government officials: an average of 3.6. Private consultants and retired respondents rated the ad as effective, giving it 6.5 and 6.4, respectively.



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Despite the mediocre marks throughout the survey, only 17 percent of respondents said that neither ad was effective. Overall, participants believed the Edwards ad was more effective.

While Edwards has held the 17th District seat for eight terms, he had tight contests in the last several election cycles. This year appears to be no exception. When asked who would win the election, 38 percent said they believed Edwards would be reelected, while 14 percent believed Taylor would win. But 49 percent indicated they were undecided as to who would be elected Nov. 7.

Working with The Hill for its Air War feature, Wilson Research Strategies e-mails campaign or issue ads to survey participants who view the ads and rate their effectiveness on several criteria.



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