



## Winning Now: A Playbook for Government

**Raul Torres**

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*A paean to conservative principles, Winning Now is a passionate Texas politician's tract.*

Former member of the Texas House of Representatives Raul Torres's political manifesto *Winning Now* calls for recentering American politics on the values of personal freedom and enterprise by overhauling government bureaucracy and reducing public spending.

Drawing a direct line from the civil rights movement of the 1960s to the swell of Tea Party activism in the 2010s, *Winning Now* argues that government corruption, waste, and bad-faith politicians threaten freedom and prosperity in the US. It also claims that these forces will lead to a slow degradation of American society and that the only solutions are to institute strict budgeting methods—in particular the “zero based budget”—and cut regulations that hamper the free market. Flowcharts that explain the Texas lawmaking process and stories about the private sector improving inefficient public spending programs are tangible representations of the book's theoretical program.

Written over a decade ago, this self-styled playbook for effecting political change highlights the power of grassroots political action to alter the status quo, pointing to the elections of Senators Rand Paul in Kentucky and Ted Cruz in Texas. Still, as the book is restricted to pre-2013 events and information, blind spots and outdated information abound. This is exacerbated by the text's tendency to name-check hot-button issues of the day—ranging from the Benghazi scandal to NSA spying—without explanation or analysis.

Other topics are treated with similar abstractness. The issue of government overreach is encompassed by counting the number of laws created in Texas over a two-year period (3,500 between 2011 and 2013) without reference to any of the the particular legislative acts. As it reduces complex arguments to superficial details, the book's persuasiveness falters. Even its more specific suggestions, such as the “zero based budget,” are underdefined and undercontextualized; the book is missing practical information on how and why such changes would be beneficial.

This book's vagueness and tendency toward grand pronouncements instead of clear arguments is its ultimate undoing. Some of its comments are illuminating, as with the insight that a legislator's goal is not always to pass laws. And *Winning Now* does an able job of showing that the conservative principles of small government and conservation may require conservative lawmakers to prioritize blocking laws rather than enacting them. On the whole, though, the book is less than convincing. Even the connection that it draws between the civil rights movement and the Tea Party movement is hazy, overlooking countless political movements between the two periods to assert that “not since the Civil Right marches of the 1960's has the American public taken to the streets to protest the work of the American political leaders.” Indeed, the book's sweeping claims accumulate—including the notion that the contemporary US resembles the “tyrannical government” of King George's colonial Great Britain—to the degree that the book as a whole feels bombastic. Grammatical and spelling errors and omitted words also undermine its work, as does the fact that a full-page flow chart appears twice in five pages.

*Winning Now* is a passionate Texas politician's tract that asks audiences to reevaluate America's political and

economic systems, adapting them to better reflect conservative principles.

WILLEM MARX (March 6, 2024)

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