

TRANS FREEDOM ALLIANCE

The Theology Test

Trans, Faith, and the Opening of the Texas Senate Race

May 25–27, 2026 | Trans Rhetoric Dashboard

105 posts | 5.6M engagements | 11 platforms

Bottom line: Ken Paxton’s May 26 primary-runoff win over John Cornyn converted overnight into a general-election attack built almost entirely on trans identity and religion — “God is nonbinary,” “six genders,” “loves trans kids.” The right owned the volume nine-to-one and consolidated fast behind Paxton, with sitting U.S. senators and Scott Jennings all running the same lines. But the two single highest-engagement posts in the entire conversation were anti-Paxton dunks that simply quoted his mockery back at him. The opening tells us how Republicans intend to litigate a Democrat’s faith — and that the left, so far, has viral reaction but no sustained counter-message of its own.

Background

On Tuesday, May 26, 2026, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton defeated incumbent Senator John Cornyn in the Republican U.S. Senate primary runoff. Paxton, endorsed by President Trump, had spent the cycle running to Cornyn’s right; the runoff result was treated across the right as a Trump-backed purge of an establishment “RINO.” Within hours, the Republican field — sitting senators, the Trump operation, and the broader MAGA media ecosystem — consolidated behind Paxton for the general election.

Paxton’s opponent in November is Democrat James Talarico, a state representative, former public-school teacher, and seminary student who has built a national profile on faith-grounded progressive messaging. That profile is precisely what Paxton chose to attack. Rather than open on the economy, the border, or crime, Paxton’s victory speech and the surrounding right-wing coverage made Talarico’s religious and gender views the center of the race — casting his theology as proof that he is too strange and too radical for Texas.

This memo covers the social-media conversation from May 25–27, 2026 — the eve of the runoff through the first 36 hours of the general-election matchup. It captures how the trans-and-faith attack was launched, who carried it, and how (and whether) the left answered.

1. The Shape of the Conversation

105 posts generated 5.6M total engagements across 11 platforms. The conversation barely existed before the runoff and then detonated: trace activity on May 25, a build on runoff day (May 26), and a 4.9M-engagement surge on May 27 as Paxton’s victory-speech attacks circulated.

Political Lean	Posts	Engagements	Avg Score
Right-Leaning	91	3.5M	1.94
Left-Leaning	10	2.1M	4.05
Unclassified	4	39K	1.04

The split is the story. The right ran nine posts for every one on the left and set the entire frame — Talarico is defined, in this conversation, almost exclusively through how Republicans describe his views on gender and God. Yet the left’s handful of posts averaged more than double the performance score (4.05 vs. 1.94). That number needs a caveat: roughly 1.96M of the left’s 2.1M came from just two posts. This is not a left-wing messaging operation — it is two viral dunks. The right has an apparatus; the left has reaction.

A Twitter Fight, Almost Entirely

The conversation is overwhelmingly a Twitter/X event — 93% of all engagement. Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram registered the spillover but none became a second front. Whatever happens here happens on the platform where the right’s framing is strongest and least contested.

Platform	Posts	Engagements	Note
Twitter / X	68	5.2M	93% of all engagement
Facebook	11	231K	Reel + endorsement spillover
YouTube	2	103K	Long-form commentary
Instagram	4	69K	Breitbart / Paxton clips
Telegram	5	9K	MAGA aggregators
Bluesky	3	3K	Left intra-party thread

2. The Right's Attack Architecture

Paxton's opening was not a policy argument. It was a portrait of Talarico as a figure whose faith and gender views place him outside Texas — delivered through nicknames, religious framing, and a fast endorsement cascade. Four narrative threads carried it.

The Anchor: “God Is Nonbinary”

The single most-repeated line, traceable to Paxton's victory speech, was that Talarico “is a vegan who thinks God is nonbinary” and believes there are “six biological sexes.” The religious frame — not a sports or healthcare policy frame — was the spine of the attack. It was picked up verbatim by sitting senators and amplified by CNN's Scott Jennings, whose riff (“I don't know any Texans who believe in six genders other than Talarico”) became its own viral object.

- [Overton](#) (Twitter, 537K, 7.9 score) — Scott Jennings shutting down a DNC surrogate by invoking Talarico's “values” and “which state he was running in.” The highest-engagement right-wing post of the conversation.
- [Sen. Mike Lee](#) (Twitter, 278K) — “There is no interpretation of the Bible that can support the Gospel of James Talarico... God isn't gender nonbinary.” A sitting senator litigating the Democrat's theology directly.
- [Defiant L's](#) (Twitter, 293K) — Clipping Jennings: “Don't know any Texans who... say God is non-binary.”
- [Steve Guest](#) (Twitter, 142K) — Jennings again, fusing the gender attack to out-of-state money: “California, New York and Massachusetts donors ... pushing ‘God is non-binary.’”

The Smear: “Loves Trans Kids”

A second thread weaponized an unearthed clip in which Talarico, asked what he loved outside family and friends, answered “trans kids.” The right recut this as evidence of fixation. The framing slid quickly from political to insinuating — “who daydreams about trans kids?” — a deliberate move from disagreement to disgust.

- [Brandon Gill](#) (Twitter, 391K; Facebook reel 199K) — “Who daydreams about trans kids? James Talarico, apparently.” The highest-reach version of the insinuation frame.
- [Eric Daugherty](#) (Twitter, 153K) — “When asked what he loved... his first answer was ‘trans kids.’... He's a VEGAN who thinks God is nonbinary.” Bundling both anchors into one post.

The Sneer: “Tofu Talarico” / Too California for Texas

Paxton's own coinages — “Tofu Talarico,” “Six Gender Jimmy,” “Low-T Talarico” — ran a cultural-belonging attack alongside the theological one: a coastal vegan who doesn't fit a beef-producing state. The mockery is doing identity work, marking Talarico as foreign to Texas rather than merely wrong on policy.

- [Rep. Ronny Jackson](#) (Twitter, 473K) — “A VEGAN who thinks God is NONBINARY is NOT RIGHT for Texas!!” Highest-engagement individual GOP-officeholder post.

The Consolidation: A Party Falling In Line

The fourth thread was less an argument than a show of force: within hours, sitting senators and the Trump operation endorsed Paxton and adopted the same characterization of Talarico as a “far-left freak” / “Beto 2.0.” The trans-and-faith frame was the shared vocabulary of the consolidation.

- [Sen. Bernie Moreno](#) (Twitter, 166K) — “Beto 2.0... a far left freak who supports... trans ideology.”
- [Sen. John Barrasso](#) (Twitter, 104K) — Endorsement: “far-left extremist... men playing in women’s sports... too radical for Texas.”

3. The Left’s Response — Reaction Without a Plan

The left’s footprint was tiny in volume (10 posts) but produced the two biggest posts of the entire conversation. Both succeeded by doing the same thing: getting out of the way and letting Paxton’s own words carry the indictment. Neither defended Talarico’s trans positions on the merits.

What Worked

- [CALL TO ACTIVISM](#) (Twitter, 1.13M, 26.0 score) — The highest-engagement post in the conversation, on either side. “UNHINGED: Ken Paxton calls James Talarico ‘Tofu Talarico,’ ‘Six Gender Jimmy,’ and ‘Low T Talarico’ while ranting about vegans, trans kids... This is what happens when a corrupt extremist has no policy to run on.” The move: reframe the mockery as evidence of Paxton’s emptiness, not Talarico’s weirdness.
- [Aaron Rugar](#) (Twitter, 831K, 7.6 score) — A bare, captionless quote: “He’s a vegan who thinks God is nonbinary.” No argument, no defense — just Paxton’s words held up to an audience that finds them absurd. Cross-posted to Bluesky and Substack.

The lesson is consistent with prior periods: against a self-caricaturing opponent, amplification of his own words outperforms earnest rebuttal. The left’s wins here were reactive jiu-jitsu, not message discipline.

What’s Missing

- No affirmative defense of Talarico’s faith framing reached scale. The right spent the window defining what Talarico believes about God; no comparable left-wing post re-stated those beliefs in his own, sympathetic terms.
- No sustained operation. Two viral posts from national accounts (Call to Activism, Rugar) carried 93% of the left’s engagement. Strip them out and the left is nearly absent from a race the right treated as a launch.
- The faith ground was ceded. Talarico’s strongest natural asset — a seminarian who can contest scripture directly — went unused in the social conversation during the very window the attack was set.

4. Strategic Read for Campaigns

Two things are worth a Democratic campaign’s attention, framed as live questions rather than settled answers.

A natural experiment is underway: lean in vs. triangulate

In 2024, Texas Senate Democrat Colin Allred ran away from trans issues — using anti-trans language on “boys in girls’ sports” — and lost by nine points. A thin but pointed intra-left thread this period (Oliver Willis and others) drew the contrast explicitly: Talarico is running the opposite play, embracing trans-affirming, faith-rooted language rather than distancing. The race becomes an unusually clean test of whether the lean-in approach travels in a red state. Worth watching, not yet worth concluding.

The opponent supplies the counter-message

The data’s clearest finding is tactical: Paxton’s mockery is his own liability when surfaced to a general audience. The two posts that beat everything the right produced did nothing but quote him. A campaign

that wants to contest this conversation has a cheap, repeatable play — clip Paxton’s nicknames and “six biological sexes” riffs and let them travel — that demonstrably outperforms the right’s own material.

But mind the scoreboard

Performance score is not market share. The right ran 91 posts to the left’s 10 and owns the definitional frame: in this window, most people who encountered the Texas Senate race encountered it as “the Democrat who thinks God is nonbinary.” Two viral dunks do not offset a nine-to-one volume advantage sustained by senators, a presidential operation, and CNN’s most-clipped pundit. The opening went to Paxton. The question is whether anyone contests the second move.

[DEVELOPING]

- Watch whether Talarico himself enters the social conversation on faith — the one front the right would least like to fight on, and the one the left left empty this window.
- Watch for the “loves trans kids” clip to migrate from Twitter into paid media; the insinuation frame is the most dangerous and the least answered.

Data: Trans Rhetoric Social Media Dashboard | 75K+ accounts, 11 platforms this window | May 25–27, 2026

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