

Post-shutdown, Cruz remains popular as ever in Texas

A poll finds that the senator's vocal opposition to the Affordable Care Act has solidified his base and made him the most popular Republican in the state.

AUSTIN — U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, whose scathing 21-hour filibuster against the Affordable Care Act prompted the recent government shutdown, remains highly popular with conservative voters in his home state of Texas, according to a poll released Tuesday.

The University of Texas/*Texas Tribune* poll of 1,200 registered voters showed that Cruz's controversial entanglement in last month's government shutdown did little to hurt his popularity among Texas conservatives: 52% of Republicans find him favorable. Among Tea Party loyalists, that number soars to 92%.

Cruz is still strongly disliked by Democrats, of whom only 9% think favorably of him. The survey, conducted Oct. 18-27, is the first of Texas voters since the 15-day shutdown beginning Oct. 1. It has a margin of error of +/- 3.3 percentage points.

While Cruz's favorability rating among Republicans is down slightly from June's 57%, he remains far and away the most popular Republican public official in Texas.

"His home base is buttoned up tight," said James Henson, co-director of the poll and head of the Texas Politics Project at the University of Texas at Austin. "As he strategizes in Washington, D.C., about his next move forward, he has nothing to worry about at home. Cruz is clearly the pre-eminent Republican in the state right now."

Compared with a similar UT/*Texas Tribune* Poll taken in June, Cruz appears better known among backers and detractors alike. His overall favorable rankings fell by 2 percentage points – from 40% to 38% -- while his unfavorable numbers rose from 31% to 37%, according to the latest poll.

"It's Democrats who have realized who Ted Cruz is, and they hate him," said Daron Shaw, a government professor at UT-Austin and co-director of the poll.

Cruz has also been widely mentioned as a potential GOP candidate in the 2016 presidential elections. Asked whom they would back in a presidential Republican primary, 32% of Texas Republicans chose Cruz as their first choice, followed by Texas Gov. Rick Perry with 10% of the vote and former Florida governor

Jeb Bush with 9%.

On the Democratic ballot, Hillary Clinton was the Lone Star favorite, with 67% of Democrats choosing her over seven other possible candidates, including Vice President Biden (7%) and Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts (5%).

Though Cruz's favorability rating is down slightly among non-Tea Party Republicans since the shutdown, his anti-Obama tirades and anti-establishment maneuvers have made him more popular in Texas than Perry and other more traditional Republicans, Henson said.

"In terms of the public face of politics in the state, Ted Cruz has taken the baton and is running with it," he said.