

In the running

Footnotes and sidesteps from the political races

# Bringing new life to the party

Image makeover could be one answer to Texas Democrats' slump

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For Texas Democrats — a party shut out of statewide office since 1994 — an image makeover might not be a bad idea.

That's the opinion of advertising and design experts who say the party doesn't have much to lose by shaking up its brand.

The Dems face tough odds in the GOP-heavy state. Starting with Attorney General Greg Abbott at the top of their ticket for governor, Republicans are poised to sweep all statewide races in the November election.

A revamped look could be one strategy to bounce back.

"You need to get voters to make different connections," said Lucy Atkinson, an assistant advertising professor at the University of Texas at Austin. "One way to do that is a logo or image they've never seen before."

The current Texas Democrats logo features a light blue map of the state, emblazoned with a navy star.

Atkinson said the party may want to use red, white and blue in a new concept — patriotic colors regularly found in campaign advertising.

At the national level, the Democratic Party uses a logo that has a blue "D" inside a blue circle. For years, donkeys have been a fixture in Democratic designs vs. the Republicans' elephant.

Including the donkey could be a wise move, said Gary Wilcox, a UT advertising professor. It signals what advertising experts call "brand equity."

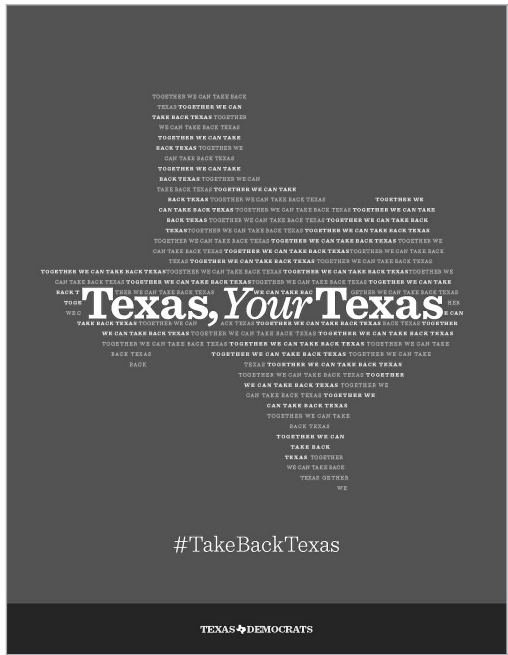
But the experts caution that a spruced-up image isn't a cure-all for the party's poor standing.

"A visual symbol won't impact that much unless you have a message that's cohesive," Wilcox said.

To get started, *The Dallas Morning News* turned to three Texas design firms to suggest a new look:

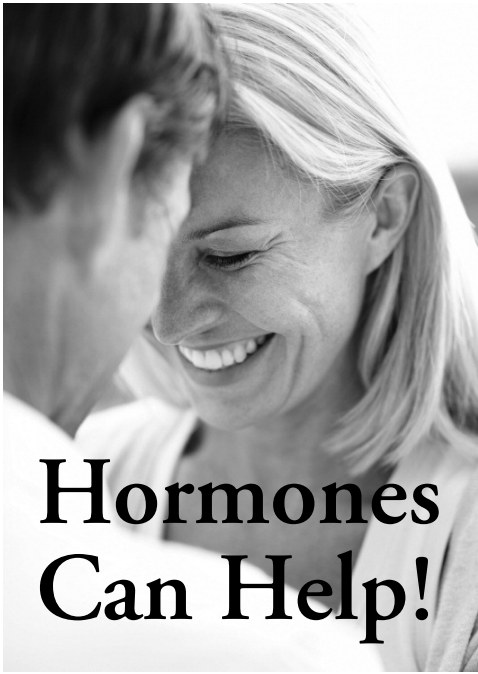


Envision Creative Group in Austin said Democrats should focus on the foundation of a prosperous Texas. Vice president Stephanie Silver said its concept shows that the economy, like a robust tree, grows from many areas — and it highlights key party issues.



The MOD Studio in Austin said the party must show voters the power they have in influencing state affairs. It does so with the tagline *Texas, Your Texas*, playing off the state song. Hashtags would further engage a young and tech-savvy crowd, launching a digital conversation, said art director Bianca Krause.

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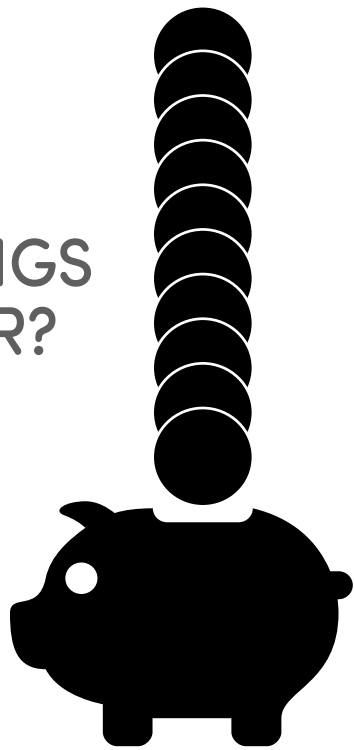
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