

*CBS Mornings*

05/28/26

8:01:13 a.m.

2 minutes and 49 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Texas Senate Race]

GAYLE KING: We're going to begin though with this: the closely watched Senate race. It's in Texas, they could have national implications. Republican state Attorney General that would be Ken Paxton — is facing off against Democratic state representative — that would be James Talarico. So, Paxton has spent years fighting corruption allegations and Talarico, who calls himself a progressive Christian, is now facing questions about some of his past statements. Ed O'Keefe spoke to Mr. Talarico in his first network news interview since Paxton officially became his opponent.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: James Talarico on Crucial Senate Showdown]

ED O'KEEFE: This Lone Star State showdown promises to be expensive and ugly.

TEXAS ATTORNEY GENERAL KEN PAXTON (R): My opponent is the most extreme radical that Democrats have ever nominated.

TEXAS STATE REPRESENTATIVE JAMES TALARICO (D): Ken Paxton is the most corrupt politician in America.

O'KEEFE: Ken Paxton [and] James Talarico are facing off on a race that may determine control of the Senate.

SENATOR TED CRUZ (R-TX) [on *The Verdict with Ted Cruz*, 05/27/26]: I got a message to Republicans in Texas and nationwide: Do not take this general election for granted.

O'KEEFE: Talarico promises to take on the scandal-plagued Paxton with a focus on corruption.

TALARICO: The real fight in this country is not left versus right. It's top versus bottom.

[CAMERA CUT] We're all getting screwed. None of us can't afford anything. None of us can get ahead.

O'KEEFE: Paxton calls Talarico radical, in part for comments during debate over transgender rights. [TO TALARICO] Do you still believe there are six biological sexes?

TALARICO: I know there are two sexes men and women. I also know there's a very small percentage of people who have these chromosomal abnormalities and I believe they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

O'KEEFE: And this:

TALARICO [on 10/15/21]: God is nonbinary.

O'KEEFE [TO TALARICO]: What did you mean by that?

TALARICO: I was being intentionally provocative with that statement. But what it means is that God can't be defined by human categories. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says that in Christ there is neither male nor female.

O'KEEFE [TO TALARICO]: You call it intentionally provocative. You regret describing it that way or talking about God that way?

TALARICO: I — there are some statements that I've made that I certainly regret. But Ken Paxton is intentionally clipping my cringy comments to distract from his career of corruption. Ken Paxton has a criminal record. I have a legislative record.

O'KEEFE [TO TALARICO]: The other one they keep harping on and it's perhaps the most curious of all: They say you're vegan.

TALARICO: I'm not a vegan. I'm an eighth generation Texan. I've been eating barbecue since before Ken Paxton's first indictment. And this campaign basically runs on — on Texas barbecue.

O'KEEFE: For *CBS Mornings*, I'm Ed O'Keefe in Austin, Texas.

KING: Paxton has so far declined multiple CBS news requests for an interview, but I know Ed O'Keefe will keep trying. Don't mess with beef and meat in Texas.

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Oh, don't do that at all.

ADRIANA DIAZ: They'll get offended.

KING: Not good.

DUTHIERS: Very — and more! Litigious.

KING: Yes.