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Bud Kennedy: 'I'm all atwitter' takes on new meaning for the GOP

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Nowhere were Republicans beaten as badly in the November election as on computer and cellphone screens.

Democrats sent animated graphics and videos that made flip phones light up like a sunrise. Republicans sent stale e-mails.

Not to be out-geeked, Texas and Tarrant County Republicans are mustering a new strategy to help the party keep its 15-year grip on the Texas Capitol and the courthouse.

They want to Tweet their way to the top.

Last week, county party Chairwoman Stephanie Klick started teaching clubs the basics of computer mini-blogging, showing them how to get one-line alerts and updates by cellphone through San Francisco-based Twitter.com.

You might have read about the *Star-Telegram's* new Twitter edition at www.twitter.com/startelegram. It's basically a headline crawl, with the option to have links sent to a cellphone.

Everybody is talking about Twitter since that guy in New York sent photos of the United flight floating in the river.

Even your Republicans in Congress are now Tweeting. (That's the verb.)

Some examples from U.S. Rep. Michael Burgess ("@michaelcburgess"): "Just finished up a thrilling hour in the Rules Committee" . . . "I offered 4 amendments" . . . "I attempted to block millionaires from receiving subsidies."

OK. That's not so thrilling unless you're a policy wonk.

But imagine a cellphone Tweet alert that tells you: "Call Congress and tell them to vote 'No!' " or "Texas House voting now on bill to outlaw smoking in eight-liner halls."

Now you get the idea.

Twitter is "really opening up a whole new world," said Klick, 53, a resident of north Fort Worth and party chairwoman for four years.

Over barbecue, she told a north Fort Worth Republican club the same thing she told 80 Republican women last week: Sign up. Read up. Link up.

In the crowd was Anthony Reed, 21.

"It's all about communication," he said. "The more people you connect, the faster you can rally the troops."

Klick mentioned that Houston Republican state Sen. Dan Patrick, a former sportscaster turned conservative Christian talk show host, is luring religious conservatives to Twitter. Religious conservatives have activated phone trees to rally opposition.

"Tweets are a lot quicker," she said.

She told the group to Tweet until moderate Republicans "vote the right way."

Tennessee political writer Michael Patrick Leahy, who questioned the validity of President Barack Obama's Hawaii birth certificate, is now linking Tweeters through "Top Conservatives on Twitter" (TCOT).

"We've already had 'Operation Melt the Phones,' " he said, referring to a pressure campaign against the Senate stimulus bill. "This is a way to instantly have thousands of people call."

It'll separate the Tweets from the twits.