



Texas Educators Vote Update

December 1, 2017

The Heat is ON – Make Your Plan, Know the Rules, Engage Your Community

The people who don't want you to vote (you know who I mean - the 6% who have been electing anti-public education leaders in recent Texas primary elections) are getting worried. From the Frisco Tea Party requesting the Attorney General check into Texas Educators Vote and asking the Commissioner of Education to rescind districts' Culture of Voting Resolutions, to the recent Watchdog article in the Dallas Morning News, it is clear that "they" are really worried that we are going to get educators to the polls. Let's prove them right by voting! The pressure is on. This is our big chance to make educators voices heard and be taken seriously at the Capitol. If we don't show up at the polls en masse, our credibility will be down the drain. **This is serious and you need to plan your district's strategy now.**

We have often cited the statistic that 90% of Texas elections are determined in the March primary. **Recent analysis of the 2016 elections shows that 97-98% of Texas elections were determined in the primary.** All but 4 out of 180 legislative seats were virtually determined in the primary – and these decisions were made for the most part in the Republican Primary. It is hard to believe, but alas, that is what gerrymandering does. These statistics highlight the fact that the election that really matters is the primary election! One bit of good news- in Texas, people can vote in either party's primary. The only caveat is that you can only vote in the runoff election of the party that you voted for in for the primary. You can vote for anyone you want in the general election, no matter which primary you voted in. **So get your students and staff registered, teach them how to educate themselves on candidates, and get them to the polls! Stop thinking you have until the November election to get yourself organized. The REAL election in Texas is sooner than you think! Early voting begins February 20<sup>th</sup>, and the deadline to register is February 5<sup>th</sup>.**

Also, since "they" are watching for us to slip up, here is a reminder of what you can and can't do. Rest assured that you are completely free (and to some extent required) to register voters, encourage a culture of voting, and make it easier for staff and students to go vote. You can also share facts about elections, candidates, and measures, but you cannot tell anyone how to vote on any candidate or measure.

**A List of Dos and Don'ts** (excerpt from *Care Enough to Vote – Guide for Educators*)

Public resources, no matter how small, cannot be used to advocate for or against an issue or candidate. Remember, a public servant commits a criminal offense if, with the intent to obtain a benefit or harm another, the public servant misapplies anything of value belonging to the government that is in their custody or possession by virtue of public office or employment. See Texas Penal Code § 39.02(a) (2). Simply stated, this means that all government property should be used for governmental purposes; not for personal or private purposes – including political campaigns.

1. Do not use a school district's email to advocate for or against an issue or candidate. *School email may be used to inform staff and patrons of elections, dates, and times for voting early and on Election Day, and to encourage a culture of participation. You may certainly use your personal email account to advocate.*
2. Do not use a school district's social networks to advocate for or against an issue or candidate. *School social networks may be used to inform staff and patrons of elections, dates and times for voting and to encourage a culture of civic participation. You may certainly use your personal social network accounts to advocate.*
3. Do not use a school district's computers, photocopiers, telephones, facsimile, electronic printer or any other machine to advocate for or against an issue or candidate. *You may use your personal equipment for this use.*
4. Do not use state or local government time or state or local government equipment to work on an individual's political campaign. See Ethics Advisory Opinion No. 172 (1993). *You may advocate for or against an issue or candidate before or after work hours.*
5. Do not use public funds in connection with a political campaign. The Texas Government Code prohibits a state agency or local government from using appropriated funds in connection with a political campaign. See Texas Government Code § 556.004.

6. Officers and employees should not use their official authority to interfere with or attempt to influence the outcome of any election. See Texas Government Code § 556.004.
7. Do not be demanding or discourteous. By local board policy, many school districts mandate that an employee's participation in community, political, or employee organization activities shall be entirely voluntary and shall not: (1) interfere with the employee's performance of assigned duties and responsibilities; (2) result in any political or social pressure being placed on students, parents, or staff; or (3) involve treading on the employee's position or title with the district.

**TO DO right now:**

- 1. Make sure your district is participating in Texas Educators Vote.**
  - a. Click [here](#) to see if your district has "signed up."
  - b. If you aren't on the list, click [here](#) and sign up now!
  - c. Check this [list](#) (scroll down) to see if your school board has adopted the [Culture of Voting Resolution](#).
  - d. If you don't see your district, ask your board to vote on adopting the resolution at the December (or January) meeting.
  - e. If you know your board adopted the resolution and you aren't on the list, email us here: [info@TexasEducatorsVote.com](mailto:info@TexasEducatorsVote.com)
- 2. Make sure every person working in your district and all eligible students are registered to vote.**
  - a. Click [here](#) to see if you are registered and register if you aren't already.
  - b. Make sure all staff and students update their addresses if they've moved so they are registered to vote in their current address.
- 3. Encourage each of the above eligible voters to take the Oath to vote and ask them to tell their friends and family to do the same.**
  - a. Click [here](#) to take the Oath
  - b. Click [here](#) for a breakdown of how many Oath's have been signed by district as of Thursday, November 30<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m.

We need a massive turnout at early voting (Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>-March 2<sup>nd</sup>) and Election Day – March 6, 2018. If educators go to the polls thinking about the 5.4 million Texas students who are counting on us to use our voices to speak up for them and their future, we will have improved the democratic process, modeled civic engagement for the next generation of voters, and we will elect strong leaders who support public education. It is hard work, but it will be worth it!

Many thanks for all that you do for students every day.

In support of your tireless efforts,

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