LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF TEXAS

NONPARTISAN

VOTERS GUIDE

TEXAS MIDTERM ELECTION ★ NOVEMBER 3, 2026

U.S. Senate ★ Governor ★ Lieutenant Governor ★ Attorney General ★ Comptroller of Public Accounts ★ Commissioner of General Land Office ★ Commissioner of Agriculture ★ Railroad Commissioner ★ Texas Supreme Court ★ Texas Court of Criminal Appeals ★ State Board of Education ★ Court of Appeals

EARLY VOTING: October 19–October 30 ★
ELECTION DAY: November 3. Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

EMPOWERING VOTERS. DEFENDING DEMOCRACY.

★ ABOUT THIS *VOTERS GUIDE*

This *Voters Guide* is funded and published by the League of Women Voters of Texas. The League never supports or opposes political candidates or political parties.

★ SIGN UP FOR VOTING REMINDERS!

To get voting reminders on your phone, text VOTERINFO to 512-595-3755.

★ *VOTERS GUIDE* KEY

The following abbreviations are used throughout the *Voters Guide* to designate each candidate's political party or candidate status:

R = Republican **D** = Democratic
L = Libertarian **G** = Green **WI** = Write-in

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U.S. SENATOR

Six-year term. One of two members of the U.S. Senate from Texas. With the U.S. House, the Senate makes laws; raises revenues, appropriates federal funds and manages the federal debt; regulates commerce among states and with other nations; declares war and maintains and regulates the military; establishes the federal court system and defines federal crimes; and directs the census every ten years. The Senate has the exclusive power to advise and consent on presidential nominations to executive and judicial offices, to ratify U.S. treaties, and to try impeachments. Current annual salary: $174,000

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Economy: What policies would you support to reduce income inequality and expand economic opportunity?

Balance of Power: What specific actions would you take to protect the Constitution's system of checks and balances?

Healthcare: What specific steps would you take to make healthcare more affordable for American families?

Voting Rights: What voting rights legislation would you support to ensure voters' ability to participate in our democratic processes?



★ Ken Paxton (R)

Qualifications: Prior to Attorney General, I was a legislator and business owner. As a dad to three amazing daughters and a great son, I know politics has real consequences. So I lead with Texans at the forefront.

Economy: The American Dream is slowly slipping away, and with it, economic opportunity. That's why my "Protecting the Texas Promise" plan will help Americans as costs continue to skyrocket. My plan will provide the largest tax relief in a generation and put thousands of dollars back in Texans' pockets to buy a home, raise a family, and live a healthy lifestyle without struggling.

Balance of Power: As your next Senator from Texas, I look forward to voting to confirm judges who will strictly uphold the Constitution and the rule of law, not legislate from the federal bench. Further, one of the most sacred check-and-balances we have as Americans is our election system. That's why I look forward to working to protect our democracy and our elections.

Healthcare: While chronic illness continues to rise, corporations continue to profit. America continues to spend more than any other nation on healthcare, and the results do not align. That's why as Attorney General, I repeatedly took on Big Pharma for their deceptive practices, and as Senator I look forward to continuing to fight for healthier outcomes, transparency, and accountability in healthcare.

Voting Rights: Every citizen in the U.S. has the right to vote and to know that their vote counts. When a criminal illegal alien commits voter fraud, every citizen's vote is disenfranchised. That's why I look forward to working to pass the Save America Act that will require voter ID for federal elections; because it will preserve the faith and trust in our electoral process that every citizen deserves.

Campaign Website: KenPaxton.com

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U.S. SENATOR | *(continued)*



★ James Talarico (D)

Qualifications: I'm a former middle school teacher, Presbyterian seminarian, and Texas State Representative. I've passed bipartisan bills to lower the cost of prescription drugs, child care, and housing.

Economy: We need a government that serves working people instead of giant corporations by: closing tax loopholes that billionaires and corporations exploit, raising the corporate tax, raising the tax on corporate stock buybacks, passing a cost-of-living tax cut, and incentivizing raising wages by creating a tax on corporations that pay their top executives more than 250 times their median worker's salary.

Balance of Power: I will prioritize legislation to cap campaign contributions at every level of government, ban dark money groups and super PACs, and ban partisan gerrymandering so that every American has an equal say in our politics and our policymaking. I will outlaw Congressional stock trading and impose term limits on Supreme Court Justices and Members of Congress — and hold them to high ethical standards.

Healthcare: In the legislature, I capped insulin at $25 and imported cheaper drugs into the US. As Senator, I'll ensure every American can access a public healthcare option, cap copays for more prescription drugs, protect reproductive care, save rural hospitals, and break up the healthcare monopolies driving up prices. I'll protect Medicaid, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act and fully fund the VA.

Voting Rights: In the Legislature, I broke quorum twice to fight back against gerrymandering and defend the freedom to vote. In the Senate, I will cap campaign contributions, ban dark money groups and super PACs, and ban partisan gerrymandering so that every American has an equal say in our politics and our policymaking. We must also pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to protect our right to vote.

Campaign Website: jamestalarico.com



★ Ted Brown (L)

Qualifications: I've been an activist for liberty my entire adult life, promoting personal freedom, economic freedom, and an anti-war foreign policy. My professional experience has been in the insurance industry.

Economy: More economic opportunity will lead to reduced income inequality. I strongly support small business and entrepreneurship and want people to be able to easily start their own businesses without all kinds of licensing and red tape to hold them back. We need to encourage job creation with lower taxes and less business regulation. We need to encourage more young people to learn high-paying trades.

Balance of Power: Congress needs to re-assert their constitutional role as the legislative branch. I oppose presidents governing by executive order, since this violates the Constitution. Executive orders should need congressional approval to go into effect. Congress has abdicated their warmaking powers, and presidents ignore any oversight. Congress must cut off war funding to rein in the President.

Healthcare: We need less government in healthcare, since that involvement drives up costs. Obamacare should be repealed. Insurance companies should be able to offer different types of policies, like catastrophic care. Consumers should be able to buy drugs from other countries. Open up medical training to more students to become doctors to allow more competition. Less red tape and regulation is needed.

Voting Rights: Voter choice is limited by laws that make it hard for alternative party candidates to run for office. I would make it easier to run. It should be easier to vote, both in person or by mail. I reject Republican voter fraud paranoia and see no evidence that ineligible people have been voting. I oppose the SAVE Act, since there's no reason to make it hard for people to register to vote.

Campaign Website: tedbrown.org

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U.S. SENATOR | *(continued)*

★ Avery Ayers (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

★ Bradford "Brad" Hall (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

★ Zul Mohamed (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

★ Jade Simmons (Independent) (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

VOTERS GUIDE POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

- For the races covered in the *Voters Guide*, all candidates on the ballot with opponents on the ballot are invited to participate. For races in which a candidate on the ballot has only write-in opponents, the League attempts to reach out to all candidates in that race so their responses can be published on **VOTE411.org** only (not in the printed guide).
- Candidate replies are printed without editing or verification. The League assumes no responsibility for the content of the candidate responses.
- Negative references to opponents, including officeholders, or specific persons are not allowed.
- If a response does not meet the criteria listed in this Voters Guide, in place of a response or portion of a response that does not meet the criteria, the Voters Guide will state "Response removed; does not meet criteria" or "Portion of response removed; does not meet criteria".
- The Voters Guide is organized by office, with candidates listed by party. For general elections, candidates are listed in ballot order.

For the complete LWV Texas Voters Guide policy, see **lwvtexas.org**.

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GOVERNOR

Four-year term. The governor is the chief executive of the state. They appoint members to boards and commissions; appoint statewide executive officials, state judges and district attorneys when vacancies occur; declare special elections to fill vacancies in certain elected offices; deliver the State of the State address; provide guidance to the legislature; call special sessions of the legislature and set the agenda; and serve as commander-in-chief of the state's military forces. The governor can veto legislation (including a line-item veto on appropriations), sign legislation, or allow it to become law without their signature. Current annual salary: $153,750

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Healthcare: What would you do to make health care more affordable for Texans?

Immigration: How would you address immigration issues affecting our state while ensuring all individuals within our borders have access to due process protections?

Education: What would you do to ensure that public schools are adequately and reliably funded?

Elections: As Governor, how would you empower voters to participate in democracy?

★ Greg Abbott (R)

No response received



★ Gina Hinojosa (D)

Qualifications: I'm running for governor to build opportunity, not division. As a civil rights attorney, public education advocate, and legislator, I've spent my career delivering for working Texans.

Healthcare: Every Texan deserves affordable, high-quality health care. I'll deliver billions for local health systems and will expand coverage, insure every Texas child, and rein in insurers that profit from bad-faith denials and prior authorization red tape. We need transparency and accountability so families get the care they already paid for.

Immigration: We can secure the border while treating immigrants humanely and protecting due process. Longtime, law-abiding residents should have a path to legal status. Fear-driven crackdowns that separate law abiding families and deter witnesses from cooperating with law enforcement make communities less safe, not more.

Education: I've fought Abbott's voucher scheme and for real, reliable funding for neighborhood public schools. As governor, I'll wipe clean the corrupt vendor contracts to raise teacher pay, end the voucher scam, and ensure Texans' taxpayer dollars go where they belong: into the neighborhood schools families depend on.

Elections: I've filed and supported dozens of bills to expand voting access, including online voter registration and better ballot access for students. I led the 2021 quorum break to protect Sunday voting and oppose barriers targeting eligible voters. I also support an independent redistricting commission so politicians can't pick their voters.

Campaign Website: www.ginafortexas.com

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★ Pat Dixon (L)

Qualifications: Twice elected to city council Served 10 years as chair of Libertarian Party of Texas Have held executive positions in political, nonprofit, and industry https://www.linkedin.com/in/dixonpatrick/
Healthcare: The governor has leverage over healthcare affordability, but many of the biggest changes require the Legislature, and some require cooperation from the federal government. Allowing more choice and competition will lower prices. While restrictions to new hospitals and health care have been reduced, I defend the free market. Open the market to new competitors and lower cost providers.
Immigration: If you are peaceful and productive, welcome Trump has dramatically reduced border crossings, but the ends don't justify the means. Praising Trump for these results while killing and harassing people is like being happy if crime was eliminated by putting everyone in prison. https://patdixon.org/the-border/
Education: Ideally, I would like a statewide scholarship. Every child would be given the same amount of money to follow them to any school. This would resolve the Robin Hood (Chapter 41) disputes and remove politically motivated testing mandates. https://patdixon.org/parent-teacher-empowerment/
Elections: When you can only choose one candidate on the ballot, the incentive is for candidates to attack each other. There is no incentive for common ground. I favor Approval Voting, where you can vote for any candidate you approve of. https://patdixon.org/non-partisan-redistricting/ https://patdixon.org/approval-voting/ https://patdixon.org/election-integrity/

Campaign Website: patdixon.org/

★ Edward Earl Giles (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

★ Jenn Mack (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

★ Jinghpaw Majoishingra (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

★ Mike Miller (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

EMPOWERING VOTERS. DEFENDING DEMOCRACY.

The LWV is a nonpartisan political organization and is one of America's most trusted grassroots organizations! We aim to:

- Achieve a free and fair democracy
- Increase participation in government
- Expand voter participation in Texas
- Create a League that is diverse, equitable & inclusive.

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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Four-year term. The lieutenant governor is powerful because of their position as president of the Texas Senate, where they appoint the chairs and vice-chairs of committees; appoint senators to committees; assign bills to committees; and control the Senate's agenda. They are also a member of several commissions and boards, and serve as governor in the governor's absence. Current annual salary: $7,200 plus $221 for every day the Legislature is in session, including any special sessions.

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Women's Health: What changes need to be made to Texas abortion laws to ensure women have access to proper medical care in the event of pregnancy complications?

Water: What legislation would you support to address the electricity and water demands of data centers while maintaining reliability and affordability for Texans?

Education: What would you do to ensure that public schools are adequately and reliably funded?

Elections: What election legislation would you bring to the floor?

★ Dan Patrick (R)

No response received



★ Vikki Goodwin (D)

Qualifications: I've served 8 years in the TX Legislature and have worked across the aisle to pass meaningful laws. I'm a small business owner, mom, wife, involved community leader, graduate of UT & the LBJ School.

Women's Health: Too many women are dying in Texas due to pregnancy complications. Texas has the highest number of deaths in the US due to pregnancy/postpartum issues. Women need to be able to make their own personal, private healthcare decisions in consultation with their doctors, and doctors need to be able to practice their full scope of medicine without fear of losing their license or going to prison.

Water: Legislation should: 1) require data center developers to provide information about how much water and energy they will use and where it will come from, 2) ensure costs for new transmission are not pushed onto household ratepayers, 3) end all data center sales tax exemptions, 4) allow counties land use authority and strengthen in cities, 5) ensure energy and water needs don't exceed capacity.

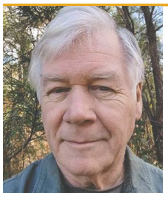
Education: The Texas Constitution calls for the provision of a free public education, not private education. I would end the voucher program in order to better fund our public schools. We must catch up to inflation; increase the basic allotment to at least $7500/student with a provision to keep up with inflation through automatic adjustments. Simplify the formula, and base it on enrollment not attendance.

Elections: I would bring: 1) online voter registration, 2) improvements to vote by mail: no numbers required on the back of the envelope, online mail-in ballot request processing, 3) college student IDs accepted as forms of identification, and 4) improved high school civics classes. Given the recent attempts to decrease the number of polling locations in some counties, better polling location requirements.

Campaign Website: Goodwin4Texas.com

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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | *(continued)*



★ Kevin McCormick (G)

Qualifications: I have a degree in Political Science and a Law degree. I have practiced law, worked in agriculture, managed small business, and taught high school math. I am familiar with all the regions of Texas.

Women's Health: I have a detailed proposal on public health. I favor expansion of FQHC clinics, taking full advantage of Medicaid, and expanding access. I would seek to repeal laws that discourage specializing in women's care or single out providers who offer abortion related services. I believe abortion is primarily the choice of the woman up to about 24 weeks. Also, it should be easier to have children.

Water: I am opposed to tax breaks or incentives to data centers and they should pay for any increased capacity they require. Water use should be strictly limited and pollution forbidden. I am skeptical of the business case for data centers. I believe they are part of the AI bubble and an example of Wall Street mal-investment and of how our monetary system is not appropriate for the future.

Education: The state wastes a lot of money with high-stakes testing and excessive bureaucracy, which should be spent on teacher and parent resources and the well being of students. The voucher program is a threat to public education funding and should be repealed or at least means tested. I would consider the state acquiring school district bond debt and collecting only the principal, waiving interest.

Elections: I have a detailed election code reform proposal. I propose ranked-choice voting, a statewide primary for four parties and independents, reduced candidate filing fees, more polling places with better access, and a constitutional amendment with rules for electoral districts to eliminate gerrymandering. The voters' power in democracy must be restored.

Campaign Website: kmm2026.org

★ Anthony Cristo (L)

No response received

★ Arturo Espinosa (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

★ Stephen Samuelson (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

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ATTORNEY GENERAL

Four-year term. The attorney general is the chief law enforcement officer of the state; represents the state and state officials in legal matters; issues opinions; oversees collection of child support; administers the crime victims compensation fund; enforces the open records/open meetings acts; approves public bond issues; and enforces consumer regulations. Current annual salary: $153,750

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Elections: How would you protect Texans' voting rights while maintaining election security?

Immigration: How would you address immigration issues affecting our state while ensuring all individuals in Texas have access to due process protections?

Ethics: How would you increase public trust that the office is acting fairly and ethically?

Litigation: What is your position on legal actions against other states that provide abortion medications?

★ Mayes Middleton (R)

No response received



★ Nathan Johnson (D)

Qualifications: As a Texas state senator, I passed more than 100 bills affecting virtually every policy space; built coalitions and led with independence and political judgment; commercial litigation practice.

Elections: Enforce existing election security laws without bias or political motive. Work closely with counties to ensure all rules are followed, election workers are not harassed, and voters are not intimidated. Challenge federal overreach in court (example: attempt to immediately block mail-in voting).

Immigration: Immigration concerns the AG related to public safety, individual constitutional rights, and separation of powers. Where appropriate I will work with federal authorities, but will not re-direct the AG's office away from its constitutional and statutory obligations. I will use investigative powers to counter threats from border activity and ensure that federal officers respect constitutional rights.

Ethics: It took time to lose the public trust; restoring it will take time also. I will end the culture of corruption and politically-motivated investigations and lawsuits, and direct the office toward functions it was intended to serve: consumer protection, fair market enforcement, investigating and fighting corruption, assisting law enforcement, upholding the rule of law and preserving individual rights

Litigation: Texas law does not have extra-territorial jurisdiction.

Campaign Website: www.nathanfortexas.com

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ATTORNEY GENERAL | *(continued)*



★ Tom Oxford (L)

Qualifications: With over 40 years of trial experience, including almost 20 years in management positions, I am fully qualified to both represent the state and manage the office.

Elections: Every citizen has a right to vote. I will take all steps necessary to enforce that right. That will include using the power of the AG's office to block any efforts to intimidate voters at the polling locations. I also support easy voter access with more polling locations and secure mail in voting.

Immigration: Due process applies to all of our neighbors, regardless of their legal status. It is a fundamental right recognized and protected by both the U.S. and Texas Constitutions. We can protect our borders without walking away from our founding principles. To the extent possible, I will use the powers of the AG's office to protect and promote due process.

Ethics: Limited only by the obligation of attorney/client confidentiality, my office will be completely open and transparent. The days of back room deals and false narratives will end.

Litigation: These efforts will be ended on my first day in office. The state should have no involvement in decisions about our personal health.

ALL TEXAS VOTERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO VOTE IN THE GENERAL ELECTION!

Use this trusted, nonpartisan *Voters Guide* to avoid misinformation and disinformation. The League of Women Voters of Texas provides this guide for voters to hear directly from candidates about the issues that matter most to them, compare candidates, and make informed decisions based on firsthand information rather than rumors or misleading claims.

The November 3, 2026, election in Texas is expected to focus on major issues shaping the state's future which will have an impact on the lives of all Texans.

This election will determine who:

- represents Texans in Congress,
- leads Texas at the state level,
- rules on important civil and criminal cases,
- oversees the state finances,
- manages usage of state lands,
- keeps our communities safe,
- enforces environmental regulations,
- administers programs related to school nutrition, rural communities, and disaster relief,
- and sets the Texas school curriculum

Regardless of the party's primary election or convention in which you participated, you may vote for candidates of any party in the November General Election.

Please remember to check your Congressional voting district, as some district boundaries have changed over the past year. Also, be sure to verify your Early Voting and Election Day polling locations before you vote. You can find personalized voting information, including your district, polling places, and US House of Representatives candidate responses at VOTE411.org.

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COMPTROLLER OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Four-year term. The comptroller is the chief financial officer of the state; collects state taxes and fees; pays the state's bills; provides revenue estimates to the legislature; certifies the budget; reports the condition of the state's finances; and provides economic development assistance to local governments and private businesses. Current annual salary: $153,750

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Budget Surplus: How do you think Texas should use its Budget Surplus?

Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs): What oversight measures will you support to ensure that ESAs (school vouchers) are funded and administered transparently?

Budget Management: How will you ensure budget transparency so taxpayers can easily see how their money is allocated and spent?

Efficiency: What changes would you make, if any, to the office of the comptroller?

★ Don Huffines (R)

No response received



★ Sarah Eckhardt (D)

Qualifications: Lawyer; Master in Public Affairs; State Senator; Travis County Judge; etc - two decades of experience on and managing professional teams, budgets, tax rates, purchasing and contracts.

Budget Surplus: The state has enjoyed two bienniums with historic budget surpluses The Rainy Day Fund is projected to hit $28B. I would tap the fund immediately to assist low income Texans with health insurance costs in the first year after loss of ACA tax credits. I would also advise the Legislature on the cost avoidance and economic benefits of 1-time Fund investments in water infrastructure, statewide extreme

Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs): I will honestly audit the voucher program, showing who benefits most, least or not at all. I will also show how publicly subsidizing exclusive private schools is gutting public schools, which must accept any Texas child and are closing at an alarming rate due to underfunding and overregulation. I will also vigorously review the $50M Odyssey contract to administer the program.

Budget Management: To build public trust, I will pursue modernization in the Comptroller's office to enhance transparency and increase accessibility. There should be a web-based dashboard providing easy-to-navigate overview of revenue and expenditures, supported by clear textual and graphic explanations that make it easy for the average Texan to understand how public funds are invested and performing.

Efficiency: I will immediately rebuild the nonpartisan tax and audit expertise that has either fled or been fired since my opponent's appointment. I will follow the law and follow the money, refocusing the office on fair and efficient tax collection, revenue estimation and economic forecasting and away from punitive & duplicative oversight of public schools and politically motivated investigations.

Campaign Website: saraheckhardt.com

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COMPTROLLER OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (*continued*)



★ Shehla Faizi (G)

Qualifications: I'm a Texas mom sick of big political donors buying influence on our schools and government. My activism focuses on social and economic justice via my podcast, "I'm a Muslim (And That's Okay!)"

Budget Surplus: Let's invest in Texas, not in foreign countries. We must divest from Texas' $280 million in Israel bonds – no more Texas taxpayer money for ANY foreign bonds. I support using the budget surplus for programs that serve Texans, like public schools, healthcare, and affordable housing. I don't take PAC money, so I work for Texans, not donors. No more tax breaks or handouts to big donors!

Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs): The school voucher program drains money out of our public schools and gives handouts to private schools and education vendors. As Comptroller I would use all legal means and public pressure to end this program and focus on equitable funding for our public schools. Every Texas child should have equal access to an excellent free public school education.

Budget Management: The Comptroller office's website should be much more user-friendly and accessible. It should have clear infographics and charts. There should be an English AND Spanish version of the website. Just like TxDOT has billboards about safe driving, the Comptroller's office should sponsor billboards about the state budget. Most Texans would be surprised to see our state's budget priorities.

Efficiency: The Comptroller's office should be run with honesty, straightforwardness and dedication to the betterment of Texans. Audits must be done without bias. Let's depoliticize Texas taxes, spending, and investments. The Comptroller's office should decline to enforce unconstitutional laws, like the Anti-Boycott of Israel Law and the Anti-Fossil Fuel Boycott Law.

Campaign Website: www.faizifortexas.com

★ V. Alonzo Echavarria-Garza (L)

No response received

SUPPORT THE *VOTERS GUIDE*

Help us fund the cost of this valuable resource for Texas voters by making a secure donation online at **lwvtexas.org**, or by mailing the payment to the League of Women Voters of Texas, 1212 Guadalupe #107, Austin, TX 78701.

VOTE411

The online, interactive version of the *Voters Guide* is at **VOTE411.org**. By entering your address, you can view races and candidates on your ballot, compare candidate responses to unbiased questions posed by the League and create a print-out of your choices to take to the polls. If there is a local League in your community, you will also find information on any local races.

VOTE 411
ELECTION INFORMATION YOU NEED

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COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

Four-year term. As head of the General Land Office, the commissioner manages state lands, including oil and gas properties (which supply funds to the Permanent School Fund) and the Alamo. The commissioner chairs the Veterans Land Board, which administers programs for Texas veterans, and is responsible for environmental protection of Texas' coast. Other state boards chaired include the School Land Board and the Coastal Coordination Advisory Committee. Current annual salary: $140, 938

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Disaster Recovery: What measures should the state take to respond quickly and effectively to disasters?

Veterans: What new initiatives or programs would you support to help veterans?

Flood Plain Management: What strategies would you support to reduce flooding risk and strengthen long-term community resilience and disaster recovery.

Education Funding: What role should the General Land Office play in making sure that state lands generate long-term financial benefits for Texas public schools?



★ Dawn Buckingham (R)

Qualifications: As a wife, mom, surgeon, small-business owner, former state senator, and Texas' first female Land Commissioner, I bring real-world experience and a proven record of delivering results for Texans.

Disaster Recovery: Texas must prepare before disaster strikes and act decisively afterward. I will continue to invest in mitigation, resilient infrastructure, and flood planning; strengthen state, local and federal coordination; and cut red tape so aid reaches families faster. Recovery must help Texans return home, reopen businesses and rebuild stronger. Planning saves lives, property, and tax dollars.

Veterans: Texas is home to millions of Veterans, and we must help them thrive after service. As Veterans Land Board chair, I delivered nearly $2 billion in loans to over 7,200 Veterans and their families, raised the home-loan limit, expanded land loans and stewarded 10 Veterans Homes and 5 Veterans Cemeteries. I will keep expanding access to homeownership, employment, healthcare, and long-term care.

Flood Plain Management: The GLO has delivered billions in flood mitigation during my tenure. I will continue investing in drainage and mitigation projects, improve floodplain planning, strengthen critical infrastructure and help communities prepare before storms arrive. The GLO will direct resources toward projects that protect homes, businesses, roads, and schools. Investments today will better protect Texans tomorrow.

Education Funding: The GLO must maximize the long-term value of state lands for Texas schoolchildren. I have generated over $6 billion for public education without raising taxes. We will responsibly develop oil, gas, rare earth minerals, geothermal and nuclear energy, and other emerging resources while protecting Texas energy jobs and pursuing opportunities that strengthen our economic engine to benefit all Texans.

Campaign Website: www.dawnbuckingham.com

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COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE (*continued*)



★ Benjamin Flores (D)

Qualifications: I've spent almost thirty years in cybersecurity and risk management, and I served on the Bay City City Council. I raise heritage pigs in Matagorda County, so I know land and livestock.

Disaster Recovery: Texans shouldn't wait until disaster strikes to get organized. I'll have recovery vendors vetted and under contract before hurricane season, not after. I'll build recovery teams inside the regional councils of governments so local officials aren't starting from scratch. And I'll publish where every dollar goes and how long each step should take.

Veterans: Most veterans I meet have never heard of the Veterans Land Board. So I'd take it to them. I'll put VLB outreach teams in rural and South Texas counties, working alongside county service officers, instead of waiting for applications to show up in Austin. I'll set a published deadline for every loan decision. And I'll keep pushing for a full VA hospital in the Valley.

Flood Plain Management: I live in Matagorda County. Down here, we're getting priced out by insurance long before the next storm shows up. Any home rebuilt with GLO money will meet current flood maps and use stronger roofs and elevation, because that's what brings premiums down. I'll protect the dunes, wetlands and drainage that take the first hit for us.

Education Funding: This is the whole reason the office exists. The Permanent School Fund is worth over $60 billion, and it should be earning from solar, wind and geothermal, not just oil and gas. I'll responsibly lease state land for every dollar it can honestly return, publish what each acre earns, and send more of it to classrooms. That money belongs to schoolkids, not to politics.

Campaign Website: letsgowithben.com



★ Neill Snider (L)

Qualifications: I have been a Mechanical Contractor for 33 years.
I would bring knowledge from my industry to assist the General Land office in all aspects of construction,

Disaster Recovery: Work with local and national food and construction material suppliers to get everything to everybody in storm affected areas. Get money directly to the people in need.

Veterans: I wouldn't create any new programs.
I would ensure existing Texas veterans are being well taken care of. If it doesn't already exist, possibly issue a debit card for them to receive treatments at any medical facility in Texas.

Flood Plain Management: Work with nature and not against it. Make changes to areas that might be frequently damaged from storms and hurricanes. Nature eventually wins regardless of what we attempt.

Education Funding: Revenue from the General Land Office goes into the Permanent School fund. Open the Permanent school fund to all Texas school children and not only Public school children. Include Private school and Homeschool children. Let's support all Texas school children.

Campaign Website: voteneillsnider.com

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COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE

Four-year term. The agriculture commissioner's principal job is promoting Texas' agricultural products. In that capacity, the commissioner facilitates trade and marketing of agricultural products; regulates weights and measures; regulates pesticide use and application; certifies organically produced products; administers the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs; provides financial help to farmers; and helps solve issues related to natural disasters. Current annual salary: $140,938

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Food Assistance for Children and Schools: How would you ensure the nutritional needs of Texas children are met year-round?

Health: In what ways can the Texas commission work to improve nutrition and public health outcomes?

Protecting Herds and Crops: What would you do to protect Texas ranches and farms from invasive pests (such as the New World Screwworm) and disease?

Water: What policies would you support to balance water usage between the needs of farmers and the development of data centers?



★ Nate Sheets (R)

Qualifications: I'm a Navy veteran and ag entrepreneur who built America's #1 honey brand from one backyard beehive. I know how to create jobs, grow businesses, and help Texas producers sell more to more customers.

Food Assistance for Children and Schools: Texas ranks 44th in school lunches under current leadership. Texans should feed Texans year-round. I'll prioritize Texas-grown meat, produce, and whole foods over ultra-processed options, giving our children better nutrition while creating dependable revenue for Texas farmers and ranchers. Better food means healthier kids and a stronger Texas. Food should make our children healthier, not sicker.

Health: What we eat impacts our health, and agriculture is at the tip of the spear. From day one, my campaign mantra has been "Grow Food Better, Grow Better Food." Ultra-processed foods now make up 57% of the average American's calories, this must change. I'll champion cleaner, more nutrient-dense food, greater transparency, and Texas agriculture that helps build healthier Texans.

Protecting Herds and Crops: Biosecurity is national security. Texas must detect threats early, respond quickly, and work closely with federal and state animal-health experts. On New World Screwworm, we need proven solutions, not publicity stunts. I'll strengthen surveillance, coordinate with USDA, and make sure ranchers and farmers have the information and resources to protect their operations.

Water: I'm very concerned about data centers. Growth must work for Texans, not against them. Farmers and ranchers cannot be expected to sacrifice the water that produces our food to private development. Data centers must have responsible plans for water and electricity use, invest in needed infrastructure, protect local communities, and certainly should not receive tax subsidies.

Campaign Website: NateSheets.com

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COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE (*continued*)



★ Clayton Tucker (D)

Qualifications: I grew up working on my family ranch, researched water and agriculture policy, and serve as the Texas Farmers Union Secretary. I know agriculture from the pasture to public policy.

Food Assistance for Children and Schools: I will fight for free school meals for every child and defend summer food assistance. I will work to replace ultra-processed school foods with healthy meals sourced from Texas farmers and expand school community gardens. I will also allow qualified nonprofits to use school kitchens to prepare meals for children when school is out.

Health: I will use the Texas Department of Agriculture to improve the food Texans eat by strengthening food safety, removing harmful chemicals and highly processed foods from school meals, and rebuilding local food systems. I will also use the State Office of Rural Health to expand access to affordable healthcare in rural communities.

Protecting Herds and Crops: I will use every proven tool available to protect Texas agriculture from invasive pests and disease. For New World Screwworm, I support combining sterile flies with SWASS rather than relying on one method alone. I will also push to maintain permanent response capacity so Texas can act quickly when the next biological threat emerges.

Water: I will put Texas agriculture and our water supply ahead of irresponsible data center development. Data centers should not compete with farmers, ranchers, or families for drinking water. I support requiring sustainable water plans, protecting farmland and aquifers, and using brackish or other non-drinking water for responsible projects.

Campaign Website: www.claytontuckertx.com

★ **Austin R. Kelly (L)** No response received

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2025 TEXAS REDISTRICTING

The 2025 redrawing of the U.S. Congressional map affected the following U.S. House districts: 9, 18, and 29 (Houston); 20, 21, 27, 35, and 37 (Austin/Hays County); 28 (Laredo); 30 and 33 (Dallas); and 34 (Rio Grande Valley).

If you previously lived in one of these districts, please check your voter registration at **VoteTexas.gov** to confirm whether your voting district has changed.

You can view an interactive version of this map at **dvr.capitol.texas.gov/Congress/89/PLANC2333**.

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RAILROAD COMMISSIONER

Six-year term. The Railroad Commissioner is one of the three-member Texas Railroad Commission. The commission regulates the oil and gas industry, gas utilities, pipeline safety, safety in the liquefied petroleum gas industry and surface coal and uranium mining. It has no regulatory authority concerning railroads. Current annual salary: $140,937

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Environmental and Public Safety: What would you do about uncapped abandoned oil, gas, and injection wells across the state?

Data Centers: How should Texas prepare its energy infrastructure for increasing demand from data centers and population growth?

Monitoring and Enforcement: How would you ensure that the Commission is able to provide adequate monitoring and enforcement to the oil, gas, and mining sectors?

New Energy: What energy technologies should be promoted to support a reliable way to meet energy demands?



★ Bo French (R)

Qualifications: I have personally been in the industry for decades. I also have extensive business expertise and am a rancher and mineral owner. I understand each perspective involved in Commission business.

Environmental and Public Safety: There are enforcement mechanisms that push operators to handle plugging of wells. Despite this, the Commission ends up having to plug many of them. I believe there are several inefficiencies at the Commission which, if addressed, will allow it to plug many more wells with the money appropriated for this purpose, and thus dramatically cut down on abandoned wells. This is just the beginning.

Data Centers: I am interested in finding any solution we can find that will seriously and adequately address this issue. I will hear out any effective solution and work to make it happen. As far as energy generation is concerned, particularly in places like the Permian Basin, I believe increasing natural gas electricity generation is one solution that will help address this issue.

Monitoring and Enforcement: Technology has allowed businesses to do things we couldn't have dreamt of a few decades ago. It's no secret that the Commission is painfully behind on adoption of technology. I intend to bring the Commission into the 21st century, which will allow it not only to monitor and enforce regulations far better than before, but will make it much more transparent and responsive to citizens as well.

New Energy: Energy demand is skyrocketing. The Commission should work alongside industry, which spends massive resources developing new technologies to solve issues like this. We should ensure that they are able to develop and effectively deploy whatever innovations will allow Texas to meet our increasing demand. That's what I will do if elected.

Campaign Website: bofrench.com

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★ Jon Rosenthal (D)

Qualifications: I worked 25 years in oil & gas as a project manager and engineer, leading billion-dollar projects worldwide. Also, four terms in the Texas House, including serving on the Energy Resources Committee.

Environmental and Public Safety: Lobby for increased RRC funding to ramp up well plugging. Incentivize responsible operators with lower costs and streamlined permitting; repeat violators get fined and face tougher permitting requirements. This will accelerate well plugging while discouraging bad operators. Update plugging best practices, monitoring, and evaluation requirements so the RRC can keep pace with the growing problem.

Data Centers: We need statewide guardrails for systems that protect communities while enabling growth. Require resource management plans for water and power before construction, prohibit sites near homes, and coordinate plans with local governments. Preserve local input while avoiding a patchwork of regulations, ensuring communities are protected and industry provides sufficient justification and incentives.

Monitoring and Enforcement: I'd advocate for the RRC to get the resources it needs to enforce our current laws. Good operators ought to be expedited, bad operators disincentivized, and the RRC should help actors comply with the law. I'd also lobby for heavier fines and bonding for bad operators, third-party audits, site-level compliance reporting, public dashboards, and real-time complaint tracking.

New Energy: I support an "all-of-the-above" approach to our energy strategy. Natural gas, along with wind, solar, and nuclear, is doing a decent job keeping the lights on. We should incentivize new power generation startups of all types, across the board, to promote a healthy energy portfolio for Texas.

Campaign Website: jonrosenthaltx.com



★ Arthur DiBianca (L)

Qualifications: I have no personal connections to the oil and gas industry. I have no conflicts of interest, and there is no risk of "regulatory capture".

Environmental and Public Safety: Going forward, all well-owning companies must be insured and/or bonded against well abandonment, as a condition of their liability protection. However, dealing with the damage caused by decades-old abandoned wells is a difficult problem. Remediation and capping should not be financed solely by taxpayers. Oil and gas companies should also pay into a fund for remediation and capping.

Data Centers: Texas should allow all forms of energy production to compete in a free market. The state should not pick winners and losers. However, restitution should be readily available for property owners when oil and gas production causes property damage. That restitution can be provided in the form of insurance, bonding, and/or cleanup funds. Also, pipeline regulation should be transferred to TxDOT.

Monitoring and Enforcement: The legislature needs to ensure that the RRC has the tools it needs. Regulations should ensure that energy producers fully respect the property rights of landowners, and should provide for prompt restitution when the activities of energy producers cause property damage. Regulations should follow the principle that rights are more important than interests.

New Energy: As stated above, Texas and the RRC should not try to promote specific technologies. Energy producers and innovators should be allowed to compete in a free market. "Free market" means no favoritism, no cronyism, and no picking winners and losers.

Campaign Website: votedibianca.com

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CHIEF JUSTICE, TEXAS SUPREME COURT

Six-year term. This Court includes a Chief Justice and eight justices, each of which is elected by voters of the entire state. Responsibilities of the Chief Justice include hearing appeals, assigning opinions, voting and deliberation. In addition, the Chief Justice has an administrative role by appointing judges to committees, presiding over meetings to evaluate court dockets, managing the assignments of justices and overseeing the rollout of statewide judicial technology. Current annual salary: $266,700

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Ethics: How will you ensure your rulings remain impartial and free from both political pressure and the interests of your campaign donors?

Equity: What role should the Supreme Court play in expanding access to justice for persons or groups who may be underserved?

Issues: What do you see as the most pressing challenge facing the courts today, and how would you propose addressing it?

Precedent: What factors should the Supreme Court of Texas consider when deciding whether to change a past court ruling?

★ PLACE 1



★ Jimmy Blacklock (R)

Qualifications: I have served on the Supreme Court since 2018 and as Chief Justice since 2025. My experience, judgment, work ethic, and commitment to the Rule of Law qualify me to continue serving.

Ethics: My oath requires me to support and defend the U.S. and Texas Constitutions and follow the law wherever it leads. The text of the law and the Constitution's original meaning are my guides. If following the law costs me an election or angers a supporter, so be it. I would rather lose my job than violate my oath. Impartial courts are essential to liberty and justice.

Equity: SCOTEX leads the way in promoting access to justice for every Texan. We've developed forms that allow Texans to create basic documents like wills without expensive legal fees. We've promoted funding for legal aid programs. And we are always working to make Texas law clearer and simpler so that Texans can know their rights. There is much more to be done, but I am proud of the Court's steadfast work

Issues: Lawsuits should be decided by who is right under the law, not who can better endure the expense and burden of litigation. Too often, costs keep injured plaintiffs from court or force innocent defendants to settle. We should make procedural rules more efficient, while judges apply the law consistently and predictably. The Supreme Court works to promote clarity, consistency, and adherence to the law

Precedent: Precedent promotes stability and predictability, so prior decisions should not be changed lightly. My oath, however, is to defend the Constitution, not Supreme Court decisions. Courts throughout Texas must follow our decisions, so if a Supreme Court precedent is clearly wrong, we may be the only people who can fix it. We must be open to doing so, guided as always by prudence and humility.

Campaign Website: www.JimmyBlacklock.com

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CHIEF JUSTICE, TEXAS SUPREME COURT (*continued*)



★ Maggie Ellis (D)

Qualifications: I've handled thousands of matters in court as a Justice on the Court of Appeals, a prosecutor, and as an attorney representing individuals around Texas. I've also led and counseled large organizations

Ethics: Experience and a proven history of advocating fairly from all sides of the docket are good indicators of a candidate's likeliness to be fair and impartial. I have handled thousands of matters from all sides, including: ruling over cases fairly as a judge; defending individuals at risk of losing their liberty, their children, and their homes; and advocating for justice as a prosecutor.

Equity: The Court should be a leader. As a child who grew up transient and homeless and with 15% of Texans living below the poverty level, I understand the need. I have been awarded for my work helping our most vulnerable have access to the court system by drafting legislation and establishing pro bono clinics. I will bring this experience to expand the commissions that address access to the courts.

Issues: We are experiencing an erosion of our separation of powers and of our civil rights. This election comes at a critical time when our judiciary is under attack and under political pressure. As the first openly gay woman to serve as an appellate justice in Texas, I will bring balance back to our courts; I will not bow to political pressure; and I will protect the laws that protect everyone.

Precedent: For the public and practitioners to have confidence in our court system, it is imperative that rulings are consistent and follow the law. However, when a rule or law has proven unworkable, the Court should use its discretion and take great care to bring these rulings in line, so that they reflect the sound development of the law.

Campaign Website: www.maggieforjustice.com/

VOTING FOR JUDGES IN TEXAS

Although in some states, judges are appointed, in Texas most judges are elected. Judges make decisions about fundamental issues impacting family life, education, health care, housing, employment, finances, discrimination, civil rights, public safety, and government actions.

The Texas court system is made up of a statewide network of trial courts and courts of appeal. In trial courts, judges and/or juries evaluate the facts and the law and make a decision in a civil or criminal legal dispute. When decisions in most trial courts are appealed, they are sent to a court of appeal where judges consider what happened at the trial court, evaluate legal arguments, and then decide if a mistake was made.

See **txcourts.gov/about-texas-courts** for more information.

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JUSTICE, TEXAS SUPREME COURT

Six-year term. The Texas Supreme Court is the court of last resort for civil matters in Texas. This Court includes a Chief Justice and eight justices, each of which is elected by voters of the entire state. This court issues final decisions on civil and juvenile appeals; issues certain orders to governmental officials to act and individuals to appear before the court; and has jurisdiction over orders or judgments of trial courts if the Supreme Court determines them important to the Texas legal system. Current annual salary range: $210,000–$264,600

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Ethics: How will you ensure your rulings remain impartial and free from both political pressure and the interests of your campaign donors?

Equity: What barriers prevent Texans from accessing the court system, and what can courts do to reduce those barriers?

Issues: What do you see as the most pressing challenge facing the courts today, and how would you propose addressing it?

Philosophy: What qualities are most critical for a judge to possess for fair administration of justice?

★ PLACE 2 (UNEXPIRED TERM)



★ James P. Sullivan (R)

Qualifications: I've been a Texas Supreme Court Justice since January 2025. I previously served as Assistant Solicitor General and as the Governor's General Counsel, and attended Harvard Law School.

Ethics: I take my judicial oath seriously and will always remain committed to saying what the law is, not what I might like it to be. Every litigant who comes before our Court is entitled to fair and impartial consideration of their arguments, without respect to who's making them.

Equity: The Texas Supreme Court has been a leader in narrowing the justice gap, as seen in the fundraising and volunteerism efforts of our Access to Justice Commission. And by making judicial proceedings more efficient through our rulemaking function, the Court can reduce the costs of accessing the court system.

Issues: Judges at every level face security threats that are corrosive to the rule of law. To address that risk, adequate funding must be given to the law-enforcement officers at DPS who keep us safe.

Philosophy: A good judge must have the courage to make an unpopular decision when that's what the law requires; the humility to understand that the judiciary plays an important but limited role in our system of government; and the work ethic to ensure that careful consideration is given to every party in every case.



★ Chari Kelly (D)

Qualifications: Justice of 3rd Court of Appeals since 2019; authored 800+ opinions. One of 19 Texas judges board-certified in Judicial Administration. Former US Army JAG Captain, Texas Assistant AG, Assistant DA.

Ethics: Independence is part of my record. On the 3rd Court, I ruled that the Texas Attorney General was not above the law in a whistleblower case, and that the governor does not possess absolute authority under the Texas Disaster Act. On the Supreme Court, I would decide cases the same way: based on the law, the record, and the arguments presented, not politics, donors, pressure, or personal preference.

Equity: Texans face barriers including cost, transporta-

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JUSTICE, TEXAS SUPREME COURT (*continued*)

★ Chari Kelly (D) (*continued*)

tion, language, disability, lack of counsel, and legal complexity. As an appellate judge, UT Law adjunct professor, past Austin Bar president, and published writer on the need for pro bono legal services, I know courts must be accessible to everyone. Courts can expand plain-language resources, remote access, interpreters, and legal-aid partnerships.

Issues: The public lacks confidence that courts are independent and accountable. My record includes rulings on state power and public accountability. As a Texas Assistant Attorney General, I helped secure a $19.9 million Medicaid fraud settlement for taxpayers. As a Supreme Court justice, I would continue to write clear and timely opinions, be transparent, and enforce the rule of law.

Philosophy: A judge needs integrity, independence, courage, patience, humility, command of the law, and freedom from bias. My lifelong public service as an Army paratrooper, prosecutor, appellate judge, Austin Bar president, and mentor to young attorneys has taught me that fair judging requires discipline, careful listening, respect for people, and decisions rooted in the law and the record.

★ PLACE 7

★ Kyle Hawkins (R)

No response received



★ Kristen Hawkins (D)

Qualifications: I am board certified in judicial administration, civil-trial law, and personal-injury law. In 2021, I was Tex-ABOTA Judge of the Year. I have presided over more than 200 jury and bench trials.

Ethics: As a trial-court judge, I base my decisions on the facts and the law—not on campaign contributions. If elected to the Supreme Court, that would not change. I strive for predictability and consistency so the parties know what to expect when they come to court. I treat everyone with courtesy and respect, regardless of socio-economic status, political affiliation, or whether they have donated.

Equity: Many Texans lack the financial resources to hire lawyers. The Supreme Court can adopt rules expanding access to the courts and to ensure that Texans, including self-represented litigants, are not effectively locked out of the judicial system. The Court should choose cases important to all Texans and be mindful that the right to a trial by jury is embedded in the Texas Constitution.

Issues: The persistent attacks on judges—both at the state and federal levels. The judicial branch is a co-equal branch of government, and maintaining judicial independence is necessary to sustain our democracy. I would rule based on the law and facts and strive for consistent and fair application of the law without favoring any party.

Philosophy: The Constitution requires every party appearing in Court be treated equally under the law and guarantees a right to a jury trial. It is critical that judges apply the law equally to everyone who appears in court and ensure that juries and their verdicts are respected. Consistent and predictable application of the law is what every Texan should expect from our judicial system.

Campaign Website: www.judgehawkins.com

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JUSTICE, TEXAS SUPREME COURT (*continued*)

★ PLACE 8



★ Brett Busby (R)

Qualifications: Based on my experience as a board-certified appellate lawyer and record as a fair judge, every Democrat and Republican in the Texas Senate voted unanimously in favor of my Supreme Court appointment.
Ethics: My 14-year judicial record shows that I honor my oath by giving everyone the fair day in court they deserve and ruling impartially based on the law and the facts—not on politics, pressure, or personal preference. Compare the reviews we receive from lawyers who know our work: they consistently rate me among the best, hardest working, and most impartial appellate judges in Texas in anonymous polls.
Equity: With legal costs rising much faster than overall inflation, many Texans can't afford lawyers. I'm leading efforts to reform outdated regulations so that qualified paraprofessionals who pass an exam can become certified to help Texans with simple legal needs at reasonable prices. Like nurse practitioners for limited legal services, they would be trained and tested to ensure quality and ethics.
Issues: Court dockets are growing quickly as more Texans try to use AI to represent themselves. But court systems were designed to be used by lawyers, and AI-generated filings are often not on point or include mistakes. I am taking action to make courts easier for non-lawyers to use without AI by updating rules and procedures, creating plain-language forms, and educating Texans about available resources.
Philosophy: A Justice must give each side a fair hearing, study their arguments carefully, decide the case impartially based on the law and the evidence, and write a clear opinion so everyone can understand their rights and obligations under the law. A Justice must also work hard to improve the fairness, efficiency, and accessibility of the whole justice system by making changes like those just discussed.



★ Gisela D. Triana (D)

Qualifications: UT Law-JD-1988. UTSA-BA-Poli Sci-1985 I have been a judge in Texas for over 30 years, serving on every level of Texas trial courts. I am currently serving on my 8th year at the 3rd Ct of Appeals.
Ethics: By following the rule of law, since it is the bedrock of our democracy. It ensures we are governed by established legal rules rather than the mandates of the powerful. Judicial independence is paramount and as judges we must remain independent from special interests, donors and political pressure. Over my 30 years of service as a judge, I have developed a reputation for treating everyone fairly.
Equity: Lack of resources is the biggest barrier to access to justice. The courts should insure that the state has robust legal aid programs, especially in areas where there is the most need in indigent populations like housing, collections, and family law. However, access to justice should mean more than just opening the door to the courthouse, it should also be that justice is done once you are there.
Issues: Independence and legitimacy of the judiciary. It used to be that people believed in 3 separate but equal branches of the government with checks and balances between them. More now, the judiciary is and is perceived to be an extension of the other 2 branches, like a rubber stamp. We must do better at reclaiming our independence and worry less about keeping our jobs by placating political pressure.
Philosophy: Fairness, impartiality, and independence. A judge's role is to apply the law fairly and equally. Justice should not be sold to the highest bidder and judges should not be beholden to political parties or donors. All people and entities, including the government, should be held accountable under the rule of law. Laws should be publicly promulgated, equally enforced, and independently adjudicated.

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JUDGE, TEXAS COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS

Six-year term. The Texas Court of Appeals is Texas' highest court for criminal cases. The Court includes a Presiding Judge and eight Judges, each of which is elected by voters of the entire state. The court must review all cases in which the death penalty is assessed. It also exercises discretionary review in other criminal cases and issues rulings about wrongful imprisonment. Current annual salary range: $210,000–$264,600

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Ethics: How will you ensure your rulings remain impartial and free from both political pressure and the interests of your campaign donors?

Equity: What barriers prevent Texans from accessing the court system, and what can courts do to reduce those barriers?

Precedent: What factors should the Court of Criminal Appeals consider when deciding whether to change a past court ruling?

Philosophy: What is your judicial philosophy?

★ PLACE 3



★ Thomas Smith (R)

Qualifications: 30 years of legal experience including serving as a law clerk for the Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court, and currently as a Special Assistant Attorney General for Criminal Justice.

Ethics: Rulings are grounded in the law, not politics. The primary function of a judge is to apply the law faithfully.

Equity: That is a question that is best directed to those in charge of judicial administration in this state and the Legislature.

Precedent: Again, rulings are grounded in the law. To the extent a past ruling may be overturned, it means the previous ruling did not properly apply the law.

Philosophy: Originalist.

Campaign Website: www.smithfortexas.org



★ Okey Anyiam (D)

Qualifications: I have practiced Criminal Law for 28 years and handled several thousand criminal cases. My goal has been to see that the due process rights of defendants are upheld, and justice is truly served.

Ethics: I will abide by the Judicial Oath, just as I have upheld my Attorney Oath. I will be impartial. My rulings will be based on the law, independent of any outside influences.

Equity: Texans who live far from the courthouse will benefit from more satellite offices to meet with counsel, and virtual court proceeding where appropriate. A messaging system to keep abreast of court settings and requiring a court appearance only on disposition settings will reduce bond forfeitures. Lowering the threshold to qualify for court appointed counsel will help lower income earners.

Precedent: New evidence such as scientific evidence that fundamentally changes the basis of the past ruling may be considered. Legislative changes may also be considered. A persuasive recantation of the evidentiary testimony that formed the basis of a past ruling may also be considered. A past ruling may also be changed where it no longer serves the needs of today.

Philosophy: I believe in equal access to justice for all, upholding the law and following its clear intent, without legislating from the bench.

Campaign Website: okeyanyiamforjudge.com

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JUDGE, TEXAS COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS | *(continued)*



★ Mark Ash (L)

Qualifications: I have worked as a criminal defense lawyer for over 30 years. Also, I have been a property tax arbitrator for over 15 years.

Ethics: I am not running as a Democrat or Republican. As a Libertarian, I will keep partisan politics out of my judicial decisions.

Equity: Court websites should be user friendly and uniform.

Precedent: Judges need to follow the law. Statutes, administrative rules and other laws do change and the court must keep up with those changes. F

Philosophy: Follow the law as the legislature intended for it to be interpreted. Be fair and just to all parties.

★ PLACE 4



★ Kevin Patrick Yeary (R)

Qualifications: St. Mary's Univ. Law School, 1991 Law clerk to Judge Bill M. White on the CCA, 1991-1992 Private Attorney, 1992-1995 Appellate Prosecutor, Dallas, Harris, Bexar Counties, 1995-2014 CCA Judge 2015-now.

Ethics: I apply principles based decision making on the Court. One of my early and most commanding principles is that "opinions are not the law." By that I mean that Judges do not make law, we only apply law written or adopted by others. Opinions are important, but they are not the actual law. I have a list of 14 other principles, including "States are separate sovereigns from the Federal Government."

Equity: Lawyers are expensive. And language barriers exist for some too. We need Judges who understand these potential barriers and work to limit their impact. Our State Bar can help by producing information to assist people forced into our legal system. And I know our State is looking at possible changes that could lead to paralegals who demonstrate competence being allowed to provide legal help.

Precedent: Opinions that judges write are not the law. The law is written by the Legislature. Opinions are important to explain rulings to parties, and they bind the lower courts, but when Judges see an opinion that has misconstrued the law, the opinion should be overruled. I can hardly imagine a more corrupting influence on judges than to tell them their opinions will be defended no matter how bad.

Philosophy: Our government separates powers on purpose. Judges do not set policy and do not make law. Those are the job of the Executive and Legislative departments. The text of the constitution and laws mean what they meant to reasonably educated citizens on the day they were written, nothing else. State judges should also understand their unique role in American federalism. States are separate sovereigns.

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JUDGE, TEXAS COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS | *(continued)*



★ Audra Riley (D)

Qualifications: I bring 20+ years of criminal justice experience, including six years as a Criminal District Judge, nearly a decade as a prosecutor, criminal defense attorney, and work as a correctional officer.

Ethics: My oath as a judge comes before any campaign contribution or political pressure. Every person who comes before me deserves a fair and impartial decision based on the law and the facts. Campaign contributions do not buy access, influence, or favorable rulings. That has been my standard on the bench, and it will remain my standard on the Court of Criminal Appeals.

Equity: A person's ability to understand and participate in the criminal justice system should never depend on income, language, or circumstance. Courts can reduce barriers by ensuring timely access to qualified interpreters and counsel and by making court procedures and legal rights clear and understandable. Meaningful access to justice means understanding the process and being heard.

Precedent: Precedent provides stability and consistency in the law, but a prior ruling should not stand simply because it came first. The Court should consider whether the original ruling got the law right, whether the law has changed, how it has worked in practice, and the consequences of overturning it. Precedent deserves respect, but so does the Court's responsibility to correct the law when necessary.

Philosophy: My judicial philosophy is simple: follow the law, be fair, and treat every person with dignity and respect. Justice should never depend on who you are, or who you know. A judge must be impartial and consistent, while never losing sight of the people affected by each decision. The law must guide the outcome, but fairness, sound judgment, and humanity should guide how justice is administered.

★ PLACE 9



★ John Messinger (R)

Qualifications: For almost 16 years, I have represented Texas in the Court of Criminal Appeals (CCA). In that time, no one has done more petitions for discretionary review, briefs, or arguments in the CCA.

Ethics: As a career prosecutor, my ethical duty has always been to seek justice rather than convictions. In a system of law, justice can only come from following the law. I have followed the law even when I did not like where it led. My supporters know that my adherence to the law will eventually result in unpopular votes and opinions. For most of them, that adherence is the reason they support me.

Equity: In criminal law, defendants get access to the courts whether they like it or not. The more appropriate question for them is whether they have access to quality representation. Texas spends a tremendous amount of money on this. And courts are fairly lenient when it comes to filings made by defendants who for whatever reason proceed without counsel.

Precedent: The most important factor is whether its ruling was correct. Courts do not make law, legislatures do. If the CCA misinterpreted a statute, the CCA should fix it. The exception is for statutes that were genuinely ambiguous when passed. If the CCA made a good-faith effort to interpret it and that interpretation has stood for a significant amount of time, that decision is owed some deference,

Philosophy: Courts exist to settle disputes and interpret laws, not to force their personal policy preferences on the public. Judges should have the humility to accept their limited authority. Too many judges (or would-be judges) view the courts as the place to do what is right in their own eyes regardless of what a statute or rule says.

Campaign Website: messingerforjustice.com

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JUDGE, TEXAS COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS | *(continued)*



★ Holly Taylor (D)

Qualifications: Having been a prosecutor, defense attorney, professor, and court attorney with broad jury trial and appellate experience, I've seen the system from all sides. I will work for just and fair rulings.

Ethics: Judges must perform their duties without bias or prejudice, yet those who are not wealthy must raise money to campaign for office—often from lawyers who practice before them. The system needs to be reformed. Only a small number of my donations came from lawyers that practice in this court. I will recuse from any case where I served as counsel or where there is any possibility of bias or prejudice.

Equity: The judicial system is complicated and intimidating. Lawyers are expensive yet self-representation is not a good option for most. The appointment system in criminal cases can lead to overloaded lawyers and inadequate representation. Poor and minority litigants are disproportionately impacted. A crucial first step is to sufficiently fund indigent legal and interpretation services.

Precedent: Following past rulings promotes stability and helps ensure that litigants with similar facts are treated fairly. When deciding whether to change a ruling, the court should consider the impact of new laws and high court cases, protection of constitutional rights and freedoms, the extent other courts have relied on the ruling, and its workability. The court should not act merely due to disagreement.

Philosophy: I am dedicated to upholding a justice system that is: independent, impartial, and not beholden to special interests; grounded in the constitution and the rule of law; free of bias based upon race, sex, religion, or other unconstitutional factors; respectful of due process and other constitutional rights; and fair, just, and compassionate to litigants, victims, and others before the court.

Campaign Website: www.hollytforjudge.com

HELPFUL CONTACTS AND WEBSITES

League of Women Voters of Texas
lwvtexas.org

Secretary of State
VoteTexas.gov

Your County Election Website
sos.texas.gov/elections/voter/links.shtml

Election Protection
866OURVOTE.org

Voter Hotlines!
- English: 866-OUR-VOTE or 866-687-8683
- Spanish: 888-Ve-Y-Vota or 888- 839-8682
- Asian: 888-API-VOTE or 888-274-8683
- Arabic: 844-YALLA-US or 844-925-5297
- Disability Rights TX: 888-796-VOTE or 888-796-8683

Republican Party
texasgop.org

Democratic Party
txdemocrats.org

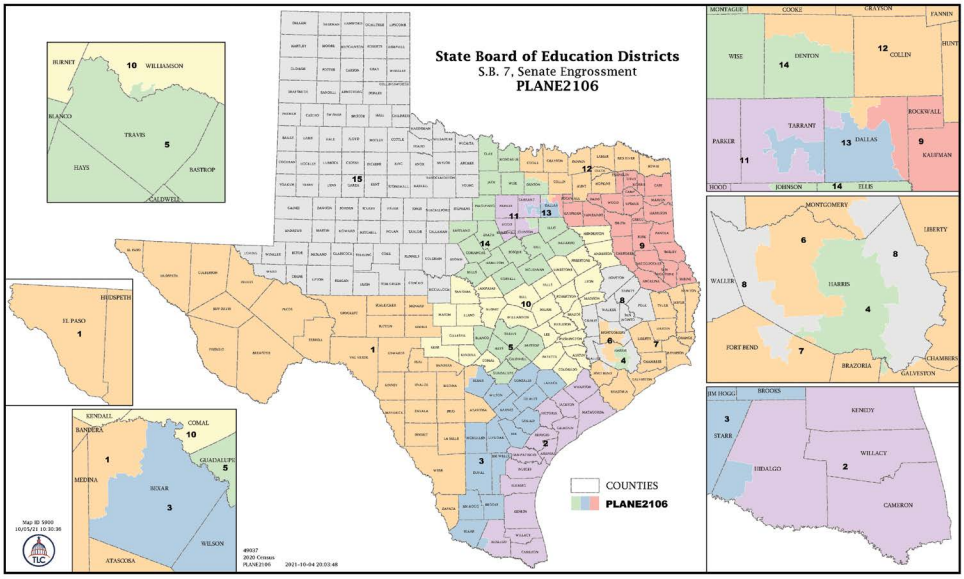
Libertarian Party
lptexas.org

Green Party
txgreens.org

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Four-year term. The fifteen-member board decides curriculum, standards, student testing, special education programs, and textbooks for Texas public schools. It also oversees the Permanent School Fund. Current annual salary: Members of the Board do not receive pay, but are reimbursed for expenses to attend meetings.



★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Teacher Support: How can the SBOE invest in the profession of teaching to support high-quality instruction?

AI in the Curriculum: What knowledge and skills related to artificial intelligence (AI) should be included in the Texas curriculum?

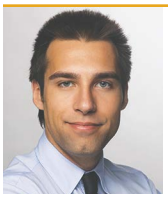
Civics: How can Texas improve civics education and understanding of government?

Reading Lists: What considerations would guide your recommendations when revising books lists for required reading?

★ DISTRICT 2

★ Victoria Hinojosa (R)

No response received



★ Thomas Ray Garcia (D)

Qualifications: I founded a college access program for underserved students at age 19. I became a high school teacher at age 22. Now, I teach English at a community college. I have direct experience with students.

Teacher Support: The SBOE can enhance the quality of instruction. Instructional materials adopted at the SBOE must be research-based & highly-vetted. I don't

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION | (*continued*)

★ Thomas Ray Garcia (D) (*continued*)

believe Bluebonnet Learning, our error-riddled state-developed curriculum, meets this standard. I will ensure teachers have a real voice in curriculum decisions. I will advocate to the Legislature to invest in classroom resources & pay raises for teachers.

AI in the Curriculum: As an educator, I see firsthand how students use AI tools to cheat. It doesn't have to be this way. Any knowledge and skills related to AI must focus on using AI as a tool of process (i.e. "walk me through this problem") and not as a tool of production (i.e. "give me the answer"). High school students should learn the ethics of AI use, how to spot AI hallucinations, and AI prompt engineering.

Civics: First, stop teaching to the test. Students learn how to pass the STAAR instead of learning how to participate in their local communities. As an educator, I have assigned service learning projects that teach real-world skills and practical knowledge about how local government works. Our state should invest in this kind of civics learning and give schools more freedom to localize their curriculum.

Reading Lists: I don't support the statewide required reading list passed by the SBOE in June. It exceeds the minimum number of required readings established in HB 1605 by over 100 texts! I believe in local control. Teachers should have more freedom to adapt to their students' needs. A one-size-fits-all approach to reading instruction doesn't work. The list must be shortened and contain age-appropriate texts.

Campaign Website: www.thomasraygarciatx.com

★ DISTRICT 4 (UNEXPIRED TERM)

★ Tammie Nielsen (R)

No response received



★ Coretta Mallet-Fontenot (D)

Qualifications: I am a 27 year educator who has taught elementary, middle, and high school. I have held various leadership positions in and out of the classroom that supported students and educators.

Teacher Support: The SBOE can fully funding our neighborhood schools, increase charter school financial and academic accountability, fund educator mentor programs to retain educators, return academic freedom to increase student teacher academic discourse that promotes critical thinking and analysis, and require fact based curriculum materials across grade/content areas, particularly in history and science.

AI in the Curriculum: AI should support not supplant critical thinking skills. Al TEKS should include safety skills and knowledge to help students navigate the dangers of AI such as deep fakes, while supporting students with certain physical and learning disabilities. AI TEKS should also include the impact this technology has on societal norms, mental health, the economy, and natural resource systems.

Civics: Texas can implement grade/age appropriate standards that include multisensory materials to promote student understanding across grade levels, teach fact-based events, the government's role in those events, and a differentiation of constitutionally granted powers versus traditional norms and limitations across branches that connect to state and local government powers and jurisdictions.

Reading Lists: When making recommendations for revising book lists for required reading some factors I would consider include, but are not limited to pedagogy, research, current events, as well as, historical content and context.

Campaign Website: corettaforsboe4.com/

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★ DISTRICT 5

★ Mica Arellano (R)

No response received



★ Allison Bush (D)

Qualifications: 25 years in public education as a classroom teacher, administrator, and advocate. Proven leader committed to integrity, collaboration, accountability, and serving students, families, and communities.

Teacher Support: Strengthen the teaching profession by decreasing unnecessary administrative burdens, providing high-quality instructional resources, and supporting educator preparation and mentorship. Teachers should be treated as respected professionals, not political pawns. The SBOE should elevate educator voices, improve retention, and allow teachers to focus on what matters most: helping students succeed.

AI in the Curriculum: AI should be a tool that enhances learning, not replaces it. Students must be prepared for a future workforce where understanding AI is essential. The SBOE should develop clear curriculum standards that teach responsible AI use while emphasizing innovation, ethics, equity, digital literacy, and critical thinking so students can use these tools effectively and responsibly.

Civics: Understanding government, the legislative process, voting, and civic engagement build informed citizens. Emphasizing critical thinking, civil discourse, media literacy, and the evaluation of reliable sources, along with hands-on experiences such as debates, service projects, and student government, helps prepare students for active participation in their communities and in democracy.

Reading Lists: Required reading lists should provide guidance, not limits. Teachers should have autonomy to match books to students' interests, backgrounds, and reading levels. When students see themselves in stories and explore topics they care about, they are more likely to develop a love of reading. The focus should be on student engagement, literacy growth, and access to diverse, age-appropriate literature.

Campaign Website: www.allisonfortx.com

TEXAS LOCAL LEAGUES

Learn more about our local Texas Leagues and how they help shape today's important issues by visiting **lwvtexas.org**.

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★ DISTRICT 6

★ Tiffany Nelson (R)

No response received



★ Michelle Palmer (D)

Qualifications: I am a high school/community college history and government educator. I also taught middle school math and K-6 ELA. I understand both pedagogy and content, which will help with standards approval.
Teacher Support: The SBOE approves new content and teaching qualifications. The SBOE can support high-quality instruction by ensuring that teachers and students have accurate, fair, inclusive, and well-designed curriculum standards, as well as textbooks and supporting materials. Additionally, they should help to improve certification pathways to increase the number of trained and certified teachers in TX.
AI in the Curriculum: Media literacy skills help students differentiate between an AI-created video/photo and a legitimate video/photo. Students should also understand the restrictions that AI has. I make sure that my students see evidence of AI "hallucinations" at the beginning of each research project, so they know not to depend on the information they get from AI without critical examination of the output.
Civics: As a government teacher, I bring elected officials into the classroom to speak to my students. I also require them to research all candidates running for specific offices. This should be common practice in all government classes. Students need to hear from those who represent them and learn to research those who are running for important positions before they go to the polls.
Reading Lists: I do not believe that anyone knows better than the classroom teacher which books are right for their classroom, due to the varying reading levels, interests, and backgrounds of the students of Texas. Any list of books should represent the diverse population of Texas, especially among the young, and allow students to broaden their minds and viewpoints, not center ONE set of beliefs.

Campaign Website: palmerfortexased.com/

★ Margo Jordan (WI)

Please see **VOTE411.org** for responses.

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION | *(continued)*

★ DISTRICT 7

★ Julie Pickren (R)

No response received



★ Tiffany Perkinz (D)

Qualifications: I am a certified Texas educator with an M.A. in English and an M.Ed. in Administration, a decade of classroom experience, and the ability to put students and public schools before politics.

Teacher Support: The SBOE must listen to teachers and respect their professional expertise. That means adopting clear, age-appropriate standards, providing quality materials without scripted mandates, reducing unnecessary testing, and supporting preparation and development. Teachers need the time, resources, autonomy, and respect to deliver the high-quality instruction every Texas student deserves.

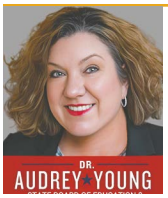
AI in the Curriculum: Students must learn how AI works, its sources, and how bias and errors enter its results. They should practice verifying AI claims, recognizing deepfakes, protecting their privacy, and using AI ethically—not as a substitute for thinking. AI literacy must include understanding how algorithms shape what students see, believe, and share, while preserving the essential role of teachers.

Civics: Texas must teach students how government works and how to participate meaningfully. Civics should explain the roles of state and local officials, show how local decisions affect daily life, and teach skills like tracking legislation, contacting elected officials, registering to vote, and giving public comment before governing boards, and ultimately how to participate in democracy beyond voting.

Reading Lists: Required reading should be selected by educators based on literary merit, age appropriateness, instructional value, and student needs. Lists should balance classics with contemporary works and include diverse voices. Students deserve challenging books that build knowledge, empathy, and critical thinking while exposing them to perspectives beyond their own.

Campaign Website: texasfortiffany7.org

★ DISTRICT 8



★ Audrey G. Young (R)

Qualifications: As a third-generation educator, serving our schools is a lifelong commitment. With more than 30 years in public education, I have served our children as a classroom teacher and an administrator.

Teacher Support: By writing academically challenging TEKS and vetting curriculum that supports and protects planning time. Beyond the SBOE, Dr. Young mentors new teachers through SFA and SHSU and continues to support National Board Cert. credentialing and the TIA. As TEA Certified teacher, Dr. Young understands the work of teacher as being part of the "boots on the ground" on a daily basis.

AI in the Curriculum: AI instruction in Texas must balance workforxe preparation with safety and ethics. Standards, as written by the SBOE, build computational thinking, data literacy, and practical AI skills. Crucially, we must continue to emphasize data privacy, academic integrity, media literacy, evaluating original sources and verifying AI generated output while protecting critical thinking and rigor.

Civics: Texas can improve by strengthening founda-

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★ Audrey G. Young (R) (*continued*)

tional government literacy and primary source analysis. Civics education must ensure an understanding of how local, state, and federal government systems function. By directly examining original historical documents and gaining a clear understanding of civic rights and responsibilities, Texas will help students think critically and be informed voters.

Reading Lists: My recommendations are guided by literary merit, developmental appropriatness, and educational value as it relates to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. Texts in school libraries and classrooms should foster a love of reading, improve comprehension, build background knowledge, and support rigorous academic growth while giving local schools the flexibility to serve their communities.

Campaign Website: SBOE8.com



★ Dana Van De Walker (D)

Qualifications: I am a lifelong educator with more than 20 years of experience in the classroom. I am passionate about student success, curriculum development, career readiness, and keeping religion out of school

Teacher Support: Texas has a teacher crisis. We have too few teachers overall, along with an unacceptable percentage of teachers coming into our districts without certification (or with alternate certification still in progress). We are also having a retention crisis. Texas teachers are underpaid and underappreciated. I support an across-the-board increase in teacher salaries and an end to state school takeovers.

AI in the Curriculum: Educators should not be afraid of AI. We need to understand how to use it and how it will impact the future of education and the workforce that we are preparing students for. That said, I think we need to construct an AI advisory committee to address complicated questions around the ethical use of AI in the classroom, along with where barriers and restrictions should be placed.

Civics: As a government professor, I know the importance of ensuring our young folks are educated on civic engagement and local politics. I originally hail from an Illinois, a state that has mandatory federal and state constitutional tests that are requirements for high school graduation. These tests are not unlike those required for new citizens. I support introducing these as a graduation requirement.

Reading Lists: Reading selections should be largely in the hands of teachers in the classroom. Indeed, teachers know best what books are suitable for their students and how to bring in authors and options that reflect their school's demographics. I think that only 1-2 books should be state-mandated for each grade. The rest should be selected by the teachers. Also, I firmly oppose religion in public schools.

Campaign Website: www.dana4txsboe8.com

★ DISTRICT 9

★ Kason Huddleston (R)

No response received

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★ Ericka Ledferd (D)

Qualifications: 12 years in public education, advanced degrees, college teaching, leadership, and small business experience qualify me to bring informed, practical, student-centered leadership to the SBOE.
Teacher Support: Invest in competitive pay, strong preparation, meaningful professional development, manageable workloads, and teacher voice so educators can focus on high quality instruction.
AI in the Curriculum: Teach AI literacy, ethics, privacy, bias, fact checking, and responsible use. Students should understand how AI works, its limits, and how to use it critically without replacing human judgment.
Civics: Strengthen civics through factual, nonpartisan instruction, critical thinking, media literacy, and hands on learning about government, voting, constitutional rights, and civic responsibility.
Reading Lists: Prioritize literary quality, age appropriateness, educational value, diverse perspectives, historical context, and opportunities for critical thinking while respecting parental rights.

Campaign Website: https://www.ledferd4texas.com/

★ DISTRICT 13

★ Carlos (Charlie) Garza (R)

No response received



★ Tiffany Clark (D)

Qualifications: I've been a teacher, adjunct professor, worked in education non profit and school counselor over the past 14 years. I also served two terms as a school board trustee, earning master trustee status.
Teacher Support: Teacher preparation must reflect today's classrooms, not a "perfect world." As a former teacher and school counselor, I know teachers need strong mentorship and practical training in classroom management, trauma-informed care, family engagement, and culturally responsive instruction. SBOE must hold preparation programs accountable while ensuring teachers earn a livable wage.
AI in the Curriculum: Texas students should be Ai literate, not simply AI users. The curriculum should teach how Ai works, its benefits and limitations, bias, misinformation, privacy, ethics, and responsible use. Students should learn to critically evaluate Ai, solve problems, and use it creatively while strengthening and not limiting human judgment and critical thinking.
Civics: Texas must strengthen civics by teaching how local, state, and federal government work, not replacing civics with patriotism. Students should understand their rights, responsibilities, and how to participate in democracy. We must prepare informed, engaged citizens who can respectfully disagree, work together, and contribute to their communities.
Reading Lists: Texas' required reading list should reflect the diversity of our 5.5 million students. We need greater representation of women, Black, and Hispanic authors and not mandated religious texts. I support the policy of one required book per grade level while preserving local control which means trusting educators to select additional texts that best serve their students and communities.

Campaign Website: tiffanyclark4stateofeducation.com

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★ DISTRICT 14

★ Mindy Bumgarner (R)

No response received



★ Amy Taylor (D)

Qualifications: After 17 years teaching in Title I schools, I understand how SBOE's rules impact children's learning. As I do in my classroom, my decisions focus on what works for students, not on pushing politics.

Teacher Support: I entered this profession to help students reach their potential. Investing in teachers means the SBOE honors our professional judgment instead of micro-managing us — trusting us to differentiate instruction, choose materials that fit our students, and use our training instead of scripting our every move. Respect the profession, and quality instruction follows.

AI in the Curriculum: My classroom is low-tech by design. Tech shouldn't replace learning to think, problem-solve, write, and work with others. Limiting tech allows kids to focus on these much-needed skills. We shouldn't allow AI to short-circuit learning. Rather, using current research and best practices, we must carefully develop AI literacy, ethical use skills, and the ability to critically evaluate AI.

Civics: Though Texas already has a civics knowledge requirement, that requirement is too often given the short shrift in favor of curricular mandates in history. The underemphasis shows up at the polls: only 49% of registered Texas voters 18-24 turned out in 2022. That gap shows the mandate isn't translating into engaged citizens. Civics must be non-negotiable with carved out time in every grade.

Reading Lists: The long reading list handcuffs teachers and students. As an English teacher, there's nothing more powerful than finding THE book that finally opens a kid's mind to reading. Each kid's "magic" book is different. And there are texts that undermine students' confidence and interest in reading. The longer the list is, the less likely teachers find the magic, and the more likely we undermine reading.

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CHIEF JUSTICE AND JUSTICE, COURT OF APPEALS

Six-year term. There are 14 regional Courts of Appeals, each covering several counties, plus a specialized 15th Court with statewide jurisdiction. Each of these Courts includes a Chief Justice and at least two other Justices. The Chief Justice has additional administrative duties including case management and oversight of administrative staff. These Courts hear appeals on civil and criminal cases from lower courts in their districts. Current annual salary range: $205,000–$255,050

See VOTE411.org to compare Court of Appeal candidates in your district.

★ QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Qualifications: What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

Ethics: How will you ensure your rulings remain impartial and free from both political pressure and the interests of your campaign donors?

Equity: What barriers prevent Texans from accessing the court system, and what can courts do to reduce those barriers?

Precedent: What factors should the Court of Appeals consider when deciding whether to change a past court ruling?

Philosophy: What is your judicial philosophy?

★ CHIEF JUSTICE, 15TH COURT OF APPEALS, PLACE 1

★ Scott Brister (R)

No Response Received



★ Jerry Zimmerer (D)

Qualifications: As a former 14th Court Justice with a J.D., two LL.M.s and PMP/Six Sigma credentials, I combine judicial experience with process expertise to manage complex dockets fairly and efficiently.

Ethics: I strive for impartiality by anchoring every ruling strictly in the trial record, statutory text, and established precedent. My core philosophy is built on civil respect for all parties. I have sponsored the HBA Implicit Bias Program, and my record demonstrates I actively work to eliminate outside influences, ensuring equal justice unaffected by political pressures.

Equity: Physical, financial, and digital barriers limit access to justice, I have advocated through HBA DEI for greater inclusion of people with disabilities. Courts can reduce these barriers by streamlining e-filing, expanding virtual access, and supporting legal aid. Technology can make justice more affordable and accessible for all Texans.

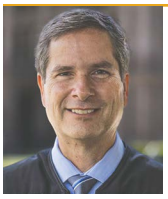
Precedent: To change a past ruling, I balance legal stability with active reasoning. I view stare decisis as a shield against arbitrary power, but I believe we must always favor constitutional correctness over erroneous precedent. Superior court rulings always override my intermediate decisions. When I seek change, I write detailed opinions to provide clarity for our trial judges.

Philosophy: I believe a judge's role is to preserve the constitutional structure established by the people, and I favor our individual liberties as reflected in our Constitution. Stare decisis is my shield, but constitutional correctness comes first. Ruling with impartiality and efficiency, I call cases exactly as I see them - no fear and no favor.

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CHIEF JUSTICE AND JUSTICE, COURT OF APPEALS (*continued*)

★ JUSTICE, 15TH COURT OF APPEALS, PLACE 2



★ Scott K. Field (R)

Qualifications: Current Justice, 15th Court of Appeals. Previously Justice on the Third Court of Appeals and Judge of the 480th District Court, Williamson County. Eleven years as judge; 20 years private practice.

Ethics: Our campaign donations are limited to small amounts that will not influence decisions. I comply with those limits. Many news outlets have correctly written on our court's judicial independence. I do not allow politics to play a role in deciding a case.

Equity: For an appeals court, the barriers are fewer than in other courts. But one barrier is the cost of the trial court record for litigants. My hope is that measures can be taken to reduce those costs, whether it be from free access to clerk's records or use of AI to streamline record preparation.

Precedent: As a court of appeals, we are bound to follow Texas Supreme Court precedent. Absent a new case from that court that is in conflict with a prior ruling, then the other cause for a change would be a new or modified law created by the Legislature. We do not make law, we follow it; we would therefore ensure that our cases follow any new or modified law.

Philosophy: To apply the law in every case as written, without regard for who wins or loses a given case. In other words, no matter who the parties to the case or the lawyers involved in the case are, my decisions cannot and will not change.



★ Tom Baker (D)

Qualifications: I served 2019 - 2024 as Justice, Place 5, Third Court of Appeals, Austin, which had jurisdiction over the cases now within this new court's jurisdiction. I have 42 years of law experience.

Ethics: I will ensure my rulings remain impartial and free from outside influence by focusing on the reporter's and clerk's records from the trial court, studying the applicable state and federal law and collaborating with my staff counsel and talking to the panel about the court's decision. I will not be concerned with running again for this office as I will not seek another term to this Court.

Equity: The biggest barrier to access to the court system is legal representation. The Court can reduce that barrier by fostering pro bono representation through the State Bar of Texas and its appellate law community. Alternatively, the Court can provide tools for litigants to represent themselves if the pro bono options are lacking. Education of the public about this new court is needed.

Precedent: The Court should first determine whether precedent and stare decisis strictly control our decision. A court should consider changing a past court ruling where it causes a manifest injustice to a class of persons or it leads to some fundamental unfairness in justice. This appellate court must defer to Supreme Court precedent and may only suggest that Court to reconsider prior ruling.

Philosophy: My judicial philosophy is to respect discretion and decisions of trial courts unless a clearly wrong decision has occurred in the law or the sufficiency of the evidence. Only where the law is not clear does the appellate court step in to interpret the intent and words of the law. Even if I do not agree with the law, I will apply it as I read and understand it unless it violates the constitution.

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CHIEF JUSTICE AND JUSTICE, COURT OF APPEALS (*continued*)

★ JUSTICE, 15TH COURT OF APPEALS, PLACE 3



★ April Farris (R)

Qualifications: Our Court handles business and constitutional appeals. I was an appellate partner at a top business litigation boutique. I am chair elect of the State Bar Constitutional Law section.

Ethics: I take my oath to defend the constitution seriously. A judge has the obligation to rule without fear or favor. I have already developed a strong reputation for impartiality and fairness, even when criticized by powerful interests. Judicial campaign contribution limits are low in Texas. I have donors from both parties and divergent interests who believe in my ability to fairly interpret the law.

Equity: Texans often know very little about the legal system. Our court is a new court that many Texans may not know about. I have spoken at many legal and civic functions to inform people about the Fifteenth Court of Appeals and what it does. The judge that I clerked for taught me to personally review pro bono cases and not rely exclusively on staff attorneys to analyze them.

Precedent: Factors include the constitutional soundness of the prior ruling, the workability of the prior ruling, and whether there have been any sweeping changes in technology that might not have been accounted for in the prior ruling.

Philosophy: I am a textualist. I believe that words have meaning, and that meaning can be interpreted from statutory context and tools like dictionaries. My role is to call balls and strikes. It is not to rewrite the law to suit my policy preferences.



★ Marc M. Meyer (D)

Qualifications: While I have not been a judge, I am a trial attorney, Board Certified in Administrative Law, (highly relevant for the 15th Court), and I am a retired firefighter and RN with real world life experience

Ethics: If elected, I am bound by the Texas Code of Judicial Conduct. As noted in the preamble to the Code, the legal system is based on the principle that an independent, fair and competent judiciary must honor and respect judicial office as a public trust. While the system to elect judges is a political system, judges must remain impartial to maintain confidence in the judicial system.

Equity: The greatest barriers to access is the cost of litigation with high legal fee and steep court costs that limit low income individuals from asserting their rights; and the complexity of the process due to specialized legal jargon, and confusing paperwork. The courts can address these issues by advocating for expanded legal aid and streamlined court proceedings.

Precedent: Stare decisis is an important legal doctrine, and Appellate Courts should not take lightly any consideration of overturning a prior ruling. Some factors to consider: - Is there controlling precedent from the Supreme Court of Texas; - Is there splits between the other 14 Courts of Appeals; - Is there a compelling factual or legal issue that raises an issue with real world consequences

Philosophy: To a large extent my judicial philosophy would be based on prudentialism, a philosophy that emphasizes pragmatism, caution, and consideration of the real-world consequences of judicial decisions, rather than focusing solely on abstract legal principles or moral arguments.

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BE A TEXAS VOTER!

Whichever way you choose to vote, be sure you are registered by checking at **VoteTexas.gov**! You must be registered before you can vote! Then, vote in one of the following ways.

VOTE BY MAIL

- You can vote by mail if you are:
  - 65 years or older
  - Sick or disabled
  - Out of the county during early voting and on Election Day
  - Expecting to give birth within 3 weeks before or after Election Day
  - In jail, but otherwise eligible to vote.
- To vote by mail in Texas, you must apply every year! Go to **lwvtexas.org/VotebyMail** for a vote-by-mail application and easy-to-understand instructions on voting by mail.
- Track your ballot at **VoteTexas.gov**! If there is an error in your vote-by-mail application or ballot, your county election office is required to notify you and instruct you how to fix it either by mail, in person or via the online tracker.

VOTE IN PERSON

- During early voting, you may vote at any polling place.
- On Election Day:
  - In some counties, you can vote at any polling place.
  - In other counties, you can vote only at your precinct.
- Find polling places on your county election website or at **VOTE411.org**.
- If you have a disability, you may request to move ahead of other voters in line.
- If in line before the poll closing time, you must be allowed to cast a ballot.

VOTE IN PERSON USING CURBSIDE VOTING

- If you are physically unable to enter the polling place without personal assistance or likelihood of injuring your health, you may park at the curbside voting parking space and call the number that is posted to ask that an election officer bring a ballot to your car.
- However, you must sign a form declaring, under penalty of perjury, that you cannot physically enter the polling station without personal assistance or without putting your health at risk.
- After you mark your ballot, give it to the election officer or hand it to a companion to deposit in the ballot box for you.

VOTE EVEN IF YOU ARE A SUSPENDED VOTER

You can still vote if your voter registration is in suspense as long as you are registered in your county! "Suspense" means that your county voter registrar needs to confirm your voting address.

PURGED FROM THE VOTER ROLLS?

If you receive a notice requesting proof of citizenship for your voter registration and you are a U.S. citizen, do not ignore it. Contact your county voter registrar or election office immediately to confirm your registration status and learn what steps, if any, you need to take to remain eligible to vote.

VOTE A LIMITED BALLOT

If you have moved to a new county and have not registered in that county by the registration deadline, you may be eligible to vote a limited ballot in your new county. A limited ballot is one that allows you to vote on candidates and measures that are on the ballot for both your former county and your new county, such as statewide and national races.

Note: Voting a limited ballot is only available during early voting at your county's main early voting polling place.

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VOTER ID: WHAT TO TAKE TO THE POLLS

You may use one of seven forms of photo ID, listed below.

- Texas Driver License
- Texas Election Identification Certificate
- Texas Personal Identification Card issued by the Department of Public Safety (DPS)
- Texas Handgun License issued by DPS
- US Military Identification card containing your photograph
- US Citizenship Certificate containing your photograph
- US Passport (book or card)

Note:

- IDs may have expired up to four years.
- Persons 70 years or older may use an expired ID, regardless of expiration date.
- ID address does not have to match the voter registration address.
- The name on the photo ID should match the name on the list of registered voters or be "substantially similar". If your name doesn't match exactly, you can still vote but will need to sign a form stating you are the person on the list of registered voters.

If you are registered but do not have a photo ID and cannot reasonably obtain one, you may sign a form and present alternative documentation. Learn more at **lwvtexas.org/Voter-ID**.

VOTER HARASSMENT

- Election officials cannot question a voter about the use of an ID type.
- Poll watchers may never question a voter about Voter ID issues.
- If you are harassed, call or text Election Protection at 866-687-8683!

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