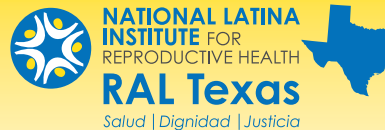


WHO'S WHO?

in Texas Politics



Voting is a public way of saying, "Our families count, and our voices matter!"

Civic participation means getting everyday folks involved in the decisions that affect our families and communities. Election season is an especially important time for us to speak up, and there are many ways we can all get involved in the process, regardless of our citizenship status or whether we can vote.

Elections matter because elected leaders can make decisions that can either help or hurt our families. Politicians pay more attention to communities who participate in elections. Voting is a public way of saying, "Our families count, and our voices matter!"

To make voting easier, Texans can vote on Election Day, before Election Day at Early Voting Locations, or by requesting that a Ballot by Mail (also known as absentee ballot) be sent to a home residence. You may vote early in person for any reason, but there are limitations on voting by mail.



If you need to register to vote, request a ballot by mail, or receive more information about upcoming elections, visit: www.866ourvote.org or call 1-866-OUR-VOTE.

CAN I VOTE?

You must be 18 and a US citizen to vote. You must also be a resident of the county where you submit the application.

- If you were convicted of a misdemeanor, you can vote. If you are currently in jail on a misdemeanor, you must complete a ballot by mail.
- If you have a past felony conviction, you may re-register after completing the sentence and any parole, supervision or court ordered probation, or if you have been pardoned.

NATIONAL ELECTED POSITIONS




US PRESIDENT

Heads the executive branch of the federal government. Serves for four years with a two-term (eight years) maximum.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Nominates the heads of all executive departments and federal agencies including Department of Homeland Security.
- Proposes the federal budget for approval by Congress.
- Has the power to veto (reject) bills passed by Congress; Congress can overturn a veto with a two-thirds majority vote.
- Serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.
- Appoints federal judges.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

-  The President sets enforcement priorities for immigration laws. For decades, presidents of both parties have deferred the deportation of millions of people who entered the country without documentation.
-  Recommends funding levels for programs such as childcare, health-care, and domestic violence services.
-  Nominates lifetime appointments of judges to Supreme Court, who rule on issues such as equal rights and privacy issues.

US CONGRESS • Congress is made up of two separate bodies: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Together they form the legislative (law-making) branch of the Federal Government. There are no limits on the number of terms that a member of Congress can serve.


US SENATORS


KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

There are 100 US Senators, each serving a 6-year term. Each state elects two senators in a statewide election. Senate races are staggered so that only one senator in a state is up for election at a time.

- Makes and passes federal laws.
- Allocates money to federal programs in yearly budget.
- Determines federal tax guidelines.
- Can propose changes to the Constitution.
- Has the power to declare war.
- Senate approves the President's appointments to important positions, including the US Supreme Court and the Cabinet (the body that advises the President, consisting of top officials from key departments).

 Chooses how programs such as Head Start, Medicaid, Cash Assistance, Social Security, relief for victims of natural disasters, military spending, child care, healthcare, and domestic violence services are funded or cut.

 Creates all federal-level policy, including laws governing immigration, healthcare, education, criminal justice, student loan interest rates, labor and environmental protections.

US REPRESENTATIVES

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

There are 435 members of the House of Representatives. All seats in the House are up for re-election every two years. The number of representatives from each state is based on population. Currently Texas has 36 representatives.

- Makes and passes federal laws.
- Allocates money to federal programs in yearly budget.
- Determines federal tax guidelines.
- Can propose changes to the Constitution.
- Has the power to declare war.

Same as above.

TEXAS STATEWIDE ELECTED POSITIONS

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION


KEY RESPONSIBILITIES


WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The Texas State Board of Education is made up of 15 members who are elected from districts across the state. School board members serve four year terms.

In 2016, eight of the fifteen seats are up for election.

- Reviews and adopts textbooks/ instructional materials for public schools (K–12) in the state.
- Sets curriculum standards in K-12 schools.
- Establishes graduation requirements.

 Decides what is taught in health classes (including sexual health and sexuality education).

 Adopts social studies/history standards, determining what information students will receive on civil rights, Mexican-American history, multiculturalism, etc.

WHAT IF I CAN'T VOTE?

Regardless of your voting status, you can still make a difference!

- Encourage and educate people who can vote.
- Share this guide at your church or with your neighbors.
- Write letters to your local paper about issues you care about.
- Volunteer with the TX LAN to support voter engagement and education.

Photo: Jennifer Whitney



TEXAS STATE LEGISLATURE • The Texas Legislature is divided into two houses: the Texas State Senate and the Texas State House of Representatives. Texas Legislators meet every other year in odd-numbered years for 140 days, and special sessions can be called, as needed.




TX STATE REPRESENTATIVES

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

There are 150 State House Districts. Each district elects one representative. All State House seats are up for election every two years.

- Enacts state laws in areas such as state taxes, education, child care and conservation of natural resources.
- Shares budget-making responsibilities with the Governor.

-  Makes decisions about funding for Texas public schools and CHIP/Children’s Medicaid.
-  Can expand Medicaid programs, determining whether low-income Texans can receive federal subsidies for health insurance.
-  Can change regulations governing healthcare clinics, including requirements to operate reproductive healthcare centers.

TX STATE SENATORS

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The state is divided up into 31 State Senate Districts and each district elects one senator. State Senate seats are up for election every four years and are staggered so that half of the Senate is up for election at a time.

Same as above.

Same as above.

LOCAL ELECTED POSITIONS

TEXAS SUPREME COURT

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The Texas Supreme Court is the highest civil court in the state, with one Chief Justice and eight Justices. Elected in statewide, partisan elections (candidates run as part of a political party), Justices serve six-year terms. Voters elect the Supreme Court Chief Justice. Three seats are up for election in 2016.

- Review cases from lower Texas courts and can reverse or uphold (agree with) previous decisions.
- Regulates the legal profession in Texas including administering the Texas Bar Exam and licensing attorneys
- Supervise all state courts to make sure they are running effectively and efficiently.

-  Makes decisions interpreting what the Texas and U.S. Constitutions say about our fundamental rights and how much they protect our rights to liberties like privacy and a clean and healthy environment.

IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES

ELECTION DAY
Tuesday, November 8, 2016

Last Day to REGISTER TO VOTE: Tuesday, October 11, 2016

EARLY VOTING
First Day: Monday, October 24, 2016
Last Day: Friday, November 4, 2016

The last day to apply for a Ballot by Mail is Friday, October 28, 2016. If you have questions about voting early by mail, please call 1-866-OUR-VOTE or visit: www.866ourvote.org

SHERIFF

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Sheriffs are the only locally elected law enforcement positions. Each of the 254 counties elects a sheriff.

- Serves court papers from divorce proceedings and child custody cases.
- Responsible for enforcing criminal laws of the state.
- Provides law enforcement for unincorporated areas of a county, but sheriffs do not normally patrol in cities which have their own police agency.
- Maintains the county jail.



Serves warrants and civil papers.



Has enforcement discretion regarding federal immigration detainees in county jails.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

There are 1,031 Texas school districts, and each one has a locally elected school board. Generally, school board members serve staggered terms so that the entire board is not up for election at the same time.

- Adopts policies to guide the school district.
- Hires and evaluates the superintendent for the district.
- Approves the annual budget



Decides what is taught in local public schools, including health education and family planning.



Makes decisions about school district police security.

WHAT TO BRING TO VOTE

Texas law requires all voters to present one of the following forms of photo ID:

- Texas driver license issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)
- Texas Election Identification Certificate issued by DPS
- Texas personal identification card issued by DPS
- Texas license to carry a handgun issued by DPS
- United States military identification card containing the person's photograph
- United States citizenship certificate containing the person's photograph
- United States passport

With the exception of the US citizenship certificate, the identification must be current or have expired no more than 60 days before being presented at the polling place.

If you do not have photo ID, you can apply for an Election Identification Certificate at your local DPS office. You may also still vote provisionally and present proper ID within 6 days of voting.



Photo: Jennifer Whitney

THE NATIONAL LATINA INSTITUTE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

(NLIRH) is the only national reproductive justice organization dedicated to building Latina power to advance health, dignity, and justice for 26 million Latinas, their families, and communities in the United States through leadership development, community mobilization, policy advocacy, and strategic communications.

STRONG FAMILIES is a program of Forward Together. NLIRH is a member of Strong Families, joining more than 150 groups working to change how we think, feel, act, and make policy about families.

THE TEXAS LATINA ADVOCACY NETWORK

(TX LAN) operates as an extension of NLIRH, serving as the voice and advocacy presence in Texas. The TX LAN works with activists throughout Texas to organize our communities around issue-based campaigns that impact our families and our lives.

For more information, contact: NLIRH TX Latina Advocacy Network at 956-278-5710.



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