



League of Women Voters®
OF TEXAS EDUCATION FUND

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Texas County Elections Website Evaluation

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Credits

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Update

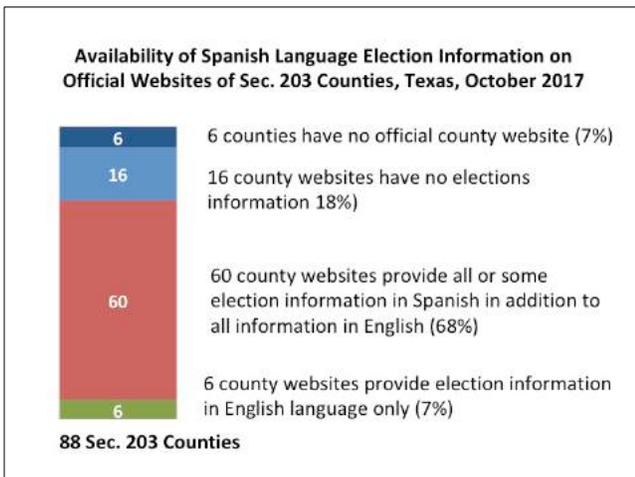
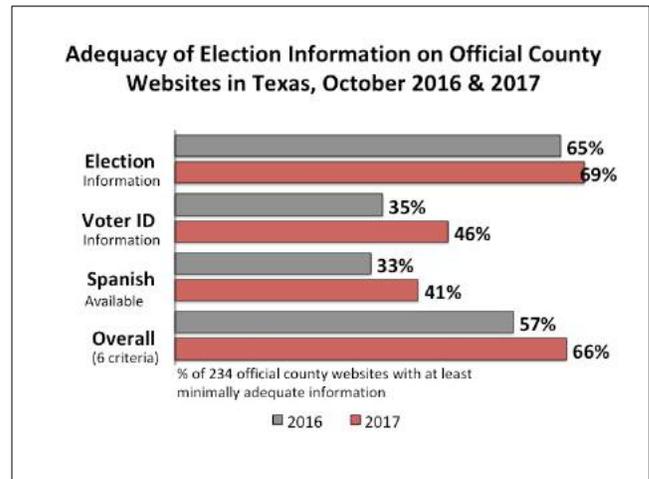
2017 LWV-Texas County Elections Website Review 50% Improvement in Provision of Adequate Elections and Voter ID Information Since 2016

Austin, TX.—The League of Women Voters of Texas conducted its third survey of Texas county websites in late October. The League found that nearly 50% of the existing 234 official county websites showed overall improvement in their elections and voter ID information from a year earlier. One hundred eleven (47%) counties increased their adequacy of online information for voters.

Elaine Wiant, president of the Texas League said, "We are especially pleased that almost half of county websites now provide minimum voter ID information, up from one third in 2016." However, only 45% of the websites noted that a voter's name and address do not need to be identical on their ID and voter registration card or official list of voters. "Confusion over voter ID requirements continues to be a problem that needs to be addressed before the 2018 Primary Election," said Wiant.

Election-related information was easy to find on most (85%) of the 234 websites. One hundred eight (47%) had a recognizable word or icon on the home page that linked to a page displaying elections information.

Close to half (110) of county websites provided voting dates and times, polling locations, a sample ballot, along with election results or information for military and/or disabled voters. The proportion of websites providing both election and voter ID information in Spanish increased to 41% (95), up from 33% (78) a year ago.



Much progress has been made in the availability of Spanish language elections information on official websites of those counties under Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act. Currently 60 (68%) of the 88 websites under Section 203 provide all or some of their elections information in Spanish, as opposed to 38 websites in 2016.

Congratulations to the 79 elections administrators recognized for excellence in providing election and voter ID information this year! It is indeed noteworthy that 50% of the existing 234 official county websites showed overall improvement in provision of online elections information for their voters.

Introduction

As a nonpartisan political organization, the League of Women Voters of Texas (LWV-TX) encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government. Essential to informed citizens who vote is election information. This third review was undertaken to assess progress in the online availability and adequacy of election information on official county websites in Texas since the last review in mid October 2016.

Methods

During the last 2 weeks of October 2017, an online survey of the 234 existing official Texas county websites was conducted. Official county websites were not located for 20 (8%) of the 254 counties (Atascosa, Baylor, Childress, Comanche, Crockett, Foard, Hall, Hardeman, Hudspeth, Kent, King, Loving, Mitchell, Motley, Reagan, Reeves, Roberts, Schliecher, Stonewall, Throckmorton Counties).

A LWV-TX volunteer administered a 6-item, closed-response questionnaire that measured the adequacy of election information on the websites. The items measured criteria that were adapted from *County Election Website Evaluation*, a survey conducted by Ballotpedia, The Encyclopedia of American Politics, in 2012 (https://Ballotpedia.org/County_election_website_evaluations).

Each of the six criteria was rated on a weighted scale of yes/no or a predetermined definition of value. A seventh item related to the presence/absence of a link to a LWV website provided the opportunity for 5 bonus points.

Following completion of online data entry, the data were audited to detect and correct duplicate entries, anomalies, contradictions, and inconsistencies. Finally, data were summarized using scores, means, and percentages.

Criteria

A. Does the county have a website page that displays election information? (yes/no)

5-Yes *Note.* It was not necessary to have a dedicated subpage for the information.
0-No

B. How easy is it to find election information?

10-*Perfect*: A recognizable word or icon on the HOME PAGE links to a page that displays elections information
8-*Very good*: A quick-links list, department directory, or list of services provides a recognizable link to election information (e.g., elections, voter registration, etc.)
6-*Good but could improve*: No recognizable link to find elections information on county clerk, tax assessor, or other page
4-*Fair*: Takes more than 3 or more clicks to get to elections information
2-*Bare minimum*: Had to use the SEARCH box to find elections information
0-*Inadequate*: Could not locate election information

C. How adequate is the election information provided?

20-*Outstanding*: 6 items provided
16-*Very good*: 5 items provided or FAQ link
12-*Good but could improve*: 4 items provided
8-*Fair*: 3 items provided or some information is out of date
4-*Bare minimum*: 2 items provided
0-*Inadequate*: Less than 2 items provided or all information is out of date

<i>Election Information Items</i>
(1) Election Day & early voting dates
(2) Polling locations for early voting & Election Day
(3) Deadlines for voter registration application, mail ballot application, and receipt of mail ballot
(4) Sample ballot
(5) Election results (past &/or present)
(6) Notice of Accepting Voters With Certain Disabilities
(7) Military/overseas voter information

D. How adequate is voter ID information?

- 30-*Outstanding*: 6 or more items provided
- 24-*Very good*: 5 items provided or FAQ link
- 18-*Good but could improve*: 4 items provided
- 12-*Fair*: 3 items provided or some information is out of date
- 6-*Bare minimum*: 2 item provided
- 0-*Inadequate*: Less than 2 items provided or all information is out of date

<i>Voter ID Items</i>	
(1)	List of seven acceptable photo voter IDs
(2)	Photo IDs must be no more than <u>4 years</u> old
(3)	List of other documents accepted if no photo ID and sign an Impediment Declaration form
(4)	Name on ID and voter registration card must be substantially the same but not identical
(5)	Voter addresses on ID and official list of voters need not match at time of voting
(6)	Election officials and poll workers may not question you about voter ID issues
(7)	Reasonable Impediment Declaration form

E. Is a link to the VoteTexas.gov OR other Secretary of State elections OR voter registration website provided?

- 15-Yes
- 0-No

F. Is election information and voter ID information provided (a) in Spanish or (b) the link to the Secretary of State Spanish language website provided?

- 15-Yes, required by VRA Sec. 203
- 5-Yes, not required by VRA Sec. 203 (awarded only if both election and voter ID information provided in Spanish)
- 10-Required by VRA Sec. 203 but only election or voter ID information provided in Spanish
- 0-No

G. Is a link to a League of Women Voters website provided? (bonus points)

- 5-Yes
- 0-No

Overall Evaluation Rating

<u>Raw Score (%)</u>	<u>Rating</u>
100	Perfect
90-99	Outstanding
80-89	Very good
60-79	Good
49-59	Fair
39-48	Bare minimum
< 39	Inadequate

Calculation of raw score (%)

- Total points ÷ 100 if county is required to provide Spanish language by VRA Sec. 203
- Total points ÷ 85 if county is not required to provide Spanish language by VRA Sec. 203

Results

Results by Criterion

A. Does the county have a website page that displays election information?

Over three fourths (84%) of Texas counties had a website that provided election information. The information could be found either (a) on a dedicated elections subpage, (b) as part of a county office subpage (county clerk, elections administrator, or tax assessor/collector), or (c) a dedicated elections website, such as <http://pottercountyvotes.com>. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Number of Counties* With and Without a Website Page That Displays Election Information, Texas, October 2016 (N = 254)

Election Website Page	Number	Percent
10 - Yes	213	84
0 - No	*41	16
Total	254	100

*Includes 20 counties with no official website.

B. How easy is it to find election information?

Among the 234 counties with elections websites, it was relatively easy to find election information on 85% of the county websites. Close to half (47%) had a recognizable word or an icon on the home page that linked to a subpage that displayed election information. Another one third (38%) had a quick links list, department directory, or directory of services with a recognizable word that linked to the election subpage (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of County Websites, by Ease of Locating Election Information, Texas, October 2016 (N = 234)

Ease	Number	Percent	Cumulative %
10 - Perfect	108	47	
8 - Very good	89	38	85
6 - Good but could improve	15	7	*91
4 - Fair	3	1	92
2 - Bare minimum	1	< 1	92
0 - Inadequate	18	8	100
Total	234	100	-

*91% of websites were rated minimally adequate or higher (good and above) in ease of locating election information.

C. How adequate is the election information?

Seven in 10 (69%) county websites provided at least minimally adequate election information, defined as the provision of four of the following seven items:

- Election Day and early voting dates
- Polling locations for voting early and on Election Day
- Deadlines for voter registration application, mail ballot application, and receipt of mail ballot
- Sample ballot(s)
- Election results (past and/or present)
- Notice of Accepting Voters With Certain Disabilities
- Military/overseas voter information

Fully adequate election information would include all seven of the items. While the bar for fully adequate election information may seem high, it is a set of information the League believes is essential to voters in each county.

See Table 3 that follows.

Table 3. Number of County Websites, by Adequacy of Election Information Provided, Texas, October 2017 (N = 234)

Adequacy	Number	Percent	Cumulative %
20 - Outstanding	110	47	
16 - Very good	22	9	56
12 - Good but could improve	30	13	*69
8 - Fair	23	10	79
4 - Bare minimum	4	2	81
0 - Inadequate	45	19	100
Total	234	100	-

*69% of websites were rate minimally adequate or higher (good and above) in providing election information.

D. How adequate is voter ID information?

As of the end of October 2017, almost half (46%) of county websites provided at least minimally adequate information related to the newly relaxed voter identification requirements for the November elections (Table 4). To be minimally adequate, the voter ID information had to include four of the following seven items*:

- List of seven acceptable photo voter IDs
- Photo IDs must be no more than 4 years old
- List of other documents accepted if no photo ID and sign an Impediment Declaration form
- Name on ID and voter registration card must be substantially the same but not identical
- Voter addresses on ID and official list of voters need not match at time of voting
- Election officials and poll workers may not question a voter about the use of an ID type or other voter ID issues
- The Reasonable Impediment Declaration form is available at <website link>

*SB 5 (Enrolled), 2017.

Table 4. Number of County Websites, by Adequacy of Voter ID Information Provided, Texas, October 2017 (N = 234)

Adequacy	Number	Percent	Cumulative %
30 - Outstanding	16	7	-
24 - Very good	89	38	45
18 - Good	2	1	*46
12 - Fair	50	21	67
6 - Bare minimum	2	1	68
0 - Inadequate	75	32	100
Total	234	100	-

*46% of county websites were rated minimally adequate (good or higher) in providing voter ID information.

E. Is a link to the VoteTexas.gov or Secretary of State elections or voter registration website provided?

A large majority (83%) of the county websites provided a link to voter registration information and/or voter ID information such as www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/ or www.VoteTexas.gov (see Table 5).

Table 5. Number of County Websites With and Without a Link to a Secretary of State Elections Website, Texas, October 2016 (N = 234)

Link	Number	Percent
15 - Yes	194	*83
0 - No	40	17
Total	234	100

*83% of county websites were rated minimally adequate (good or higher) in providing a link to a SOS elections website.

F. Is election information and voter ID information provided (a) in Spanish or (b) the link to the Secretary of State Spanish language website provided?

Forty-one percent of the 234 county websites provided election information *and* voter ID information in Spanish or a link to the Secretary of State Spanish language website, www.votetexas.gov/es/ (Table 6).

Table 6. No. & % of County Websites With and Without Spanish Language Elections Information, Texas, October 2017 (N = 234)

Spanish Language Information	Number	Percent	Cumulative %
15 - Yes, required by VRA Sec. 203	44	19	-
5 - Yes, not required (both election & voter ID info in Spanish)	51	22	41
10 - Required but only election <i>or</i> voter ID info in Spanish	15	6	47
0 - No	124	53	100
Total	234	100	-

*Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 as amended.

To further determine the availability of online elections information to those that prefer to read in Spanish, the results for the 88 counties covered by the Voting Rights Act Sec. 203 were examined.

Sec. 203 of the Voting Rights Act requires counties to provide bilingual election information if 10,000 voting age citizens or more than 5% of the population speak a single minority language, are not fluent in English, or have difficulty reading and writing English.

Among the 88 Texas counties governed by Sec. 203, two thirds (66) have websites that provide elections information. Only half (44) provide election *and* voter ID information in Spanish. Another 16 counties (18%) provide either election information *or* voter ID information in Spanish, but not both. (Table 7)

Table 7. No. & % of VRA Sec. 203* County Websites With and Without Spanish Language Election Information, Texas, October 2017 (N = 234)

Spanish Language Information	Number	Percent	Cumulative %
Election information <i>and</i> voter ID information in Spanish	44	50	-
Election information <i>or</i> voter ID information in Spanish	16	18	68
Election information and/or voter ID information in English only	6	7	75
Provide no election information or voter ID information	16	18	93
No official county website	6	7	100
Total	88	100	-

*Covered Areas for Voting Rights Election Materials--2015. Voting Rights Act Amendments of 2006, Determinations Under Section 203. 81(233) Fed. Reg. 87532 (December 5, 2016) published at www.census.gov/rdo/pdf/1_FRN_2016-28969.pdf

It should be noted that counties without the resources to contract for a website language translation service for Spanish (and other required languages), can link to the Texas Secretary of State elections website published En Español at <http://www.votetexas.gov/es/>

G. Is a link to a League of Women Voters website provided? (Bonus points)

Presence of a link to a LWV website on the county website provided 5 bonus points toward the adequacy score. Twenty-two (9%) websites had a link to a Texas or national League website. See Table 8.

Table 8. Numbers of Counties With and Without a Link to a League of Women Voters Website, Texas, October 2016 (N = 234)

Link to a LWV Website	Number	Percent
Yes	22	9
No	212	91
Total	234	100

Overall Performance

A website was considered minimally adequate overall if it achieved a score of 60% or higher of the total possible points (100 if the county is covered by VRA Sec. 203; 85, if not). In all, 155 (66%) county websites provided minimally adequate elections information. But most notably, half were rated either perfect/outstanding (34%) or very good (15%). See Table 9.

Table 9. Number of County Websites, by Overall Adequacy of Election & Voter ID Information Provided, Texas, October 2017 (N = 234)

Score	Adequacy	Number	Percent	Cumulative %
100%	Perfect	16	7	-
90% - 99%	Outstanding	63	27	34
80% - 89%	Very good	34	15	48
60% - 79%	Good	42	18	* 66
49% - 59%	Fair	22	9	76
39% - 48%	Bare minimum	21	9	85
< 39%	Inadequate	36	15	100
Total		234	100	-

*71% of county websites achieved a minimally adequate evaluation (60% or higher of total possible points).

Measuring Overall Improvement: 2016 to 2017

Results from the October 2017 survey were compared to those from the October 2016 survey to assess improvement in county elections websites. The same 6-item, closed-response questionnaire measured the adequacy of elections information on the websites in both years.

Methodological note. The 2017 analysis increased the weight given to Voter ID information in calculating the overall adequacy score. This was done to reflect the importance of providing voters with the list of other documents accepted if the voter does not have one of the seven acceptable photo IDs. In order to provide consistency in measurement of adequacy between the 2 years, it was necessary to recalculate scoring of the 2016 results using the 2017 method of calculating the overall score. The 2017 calculation uses ranges of percentage of total points rather than the mean score to rate adequacy of elections information on a scale from inadequate to excellent. Because the raw data from the 2016 survey was available, the reanalysis was feasible and accomplished.

Overall adequacy of elections and voter ID information improved from 2016 to 2017, both in the overall score and proportion of websites rated minimally adequate by category. Nearly half (47%) or 111 of the 234 websites improved their overall rating from 2016 to 2017. See Table 10.

Table 10. Percent of County Websites, by Change in Overall Adequacy, Texas, October 2016 (N = 234)

Overall Adequacy Rating*	Number	Percent
Maintained PERFECT overall rating	10	4
Achieved a higher overall rating	111	47
No change in overall rating	65	28
Achieved a lower overall rating	29	12
No election of voter ID information	19	8
Total	234	100

*Perfect, outstanding, very good, good, fair, bare minimum, inadequate.

In all four major categories of elections information, the proportion of county websites meeting the minimally adequate criteria increased appreciably from 2016 to 2017. See Table 11.

Table 11. Percent of County Websites That Achieved a Minimally Adequate Elections Information Evaluation, by Type Information, Texas, October 2016-2017

Type of Elections Information	Minimally Adequate	Percent		
		2016	2017	Change
Election information	Good or higher rating	65	69	+4
Voter ID information	Good or higher rating	35	46	+11
Overall provision of information	Good or higher rating	57	66	+9
Provision in Spanish language	Yes (both election info & voter ID info)	33	47	+14

However, as seen in Table 10, 12% (29) of websites achieved a lower overall rating in 2017 than 2016. This is likely due to the greater importance/weight given to the voter ID item. Take for

example, the excellent Travis County elections website found at <http://tinyurl.com/8tkw488>. With no change in the quantity of information provided, the greater importance of voter ID information in 2017 changed the overall evaluation from Outstanding to Honorable Mention. (Table 12)

Table 12. Change in Overall Adequacy, Travis County, October 2016-17

Item	2016		2017	
	Rating	Score	Rating	Score
Election page?	Yes	5/5	Yes	10/10
Easy to find?	Very good	4/5	Very good	8/10
Adequate election information?	Outstanding	5/5	Outstanding	20/20
Adequate voter ID information?	Fair (4 items)	2/5	Good (4 items)	18/30
Link to SOS election webpage?	Yes	5/5	Yes	15/15
Election <u>and</u> voter ID info. in Spanish?	Yes	5/5	Yes	15/15
Link to a LWV website? (Bonus points)	Yes	5/5	Yes	5/5
	Total points	31/30		91/100
	Percent	103%		91%
Overall evaluation	Outstanding		Honorable mention	

Summary of Results

Two hundred thirteen (84%) of the 254 counties in Texas had a website with an election information page; no official website was located for 20 (8%) counties. Among the 234 counties with websites, it was relatively easy to find election and/or voter registration information at 197 (85%) websites. One hundred sixty-two (69%) websites provided at least minimally adequate election information while 107 (46%) provided at least minimally adequate voter ID information. Eighty-three percent (194) of the county websites provided a link to election-related information on one of two Texas Secretary of State websites. Four in 10 (95; 41%) county websites provided both election and voter ID information in Spanish or a link to the Secretary of State Spanish language website. Considering the six criteria together, 155 (66%) county websites provided overall minimally adequate elections information. In addition, 22 (9%) county websites provided a link to a League of Women Voters website.

Overall adequacy of elections and voter ID information improved from 2016 to 2017, both in the overall score and proportion of websites rated minimally adequate by category. Findings revealed that 47% (111) of the 234 websites improved their overall rating. The proportion of county websites meeting the minimally adequate criteria increased appreciably for voter ID information (11%), overall provision of information (9%), and provision of information in Spanish language (14%). There was less improvement in presentation of election information (4%). However, 69% of the websites meet the criteria for minimally adequate election information.

Discussion

An online survey of the 234 existing official Texas county websites was conducted during the last 2 weeks of October 2017. The 6-item, closed-response questionnaire measured the adequacy of election information on the websites, using criteria adapted from the *County Election Website Evaluation*, a survey conducted by Ballotpedia, The Encyclopedia of American Politics, in 2012. When considering presence of a website page with election information, ease of locating the information, adequacy of election and voter ID information, presence of a link to Texas Secretary of State election information, and availability of Spanish a language translation, 155 (66%) county websites provided adequate election and voter ID information.

The bar for excellent election and voter ID information may seem high. However, it is based on a set of information that the League believes is essential to voters in each county.

The evaluation did not consider the challenges many counties encounter in providing and maintaining a website (e.g., lack of funding, adequate staff). However, the results of this third review found a substantial proportion of websites (47%) showed overall improvement in online provision of elections and voter ID information from October 2016 to October 2017.

Recognizing that individual county websites are at various levels of development in providing election and voter ID information, we offer the following suggestions to elections officials in the spirit of continuous quality improvement. And we commend the Texas Association of Counties (TAC) for their provision of information and technology assistance and resources (including website design and hosting) to over 140 Texas counties through the County Information Resources Agency (CIRA). For more information, see www.cira.state.tx.us

Recommendations

County Elections Officials



- **Election subpage.** Dedicate a website page solely to election information, including voter ID information.
- **Easy accessibility.** Make election information easy to find on the county website. The fewer the clicks the to the information the easier it is!
 - Use a recognizable word or icon on the home page that links to the information. For example:
 - Elections
 - Voting
 - Voter & Election Information
 - Voter Registration & Elections
 - Few voters will click on COUNTY CLERK or TAX ASSESSOR/COLLECTOR to look for elections and voting information.
- **On homepage menus** (DEPARTMENTS, SERVICES, FAQs, HOW DO I?), add a familiar word as another link to the elections information. E.g.,
 - Vote
 - Register to vote
 - Request a mail ballot



- **Fully adequate elections information includes:**



- Election Day & early voting dates & times
- Deadlines
 - Voter registration application
 - Mail ballot application
 - Receipt of mail ballot



Past & present

Information for particular voters:



Voters with special needs



- **Fully adequate voter ID information includes:**



- List of 7 acceptable photo IDs
- Photo IDs must be no more than 4 years old
- If no photo ID, sign a simple form and present an acceptable other document
- List of the other acceptable documents
- Link to a copy of the Reasonable Impediment Declaration form

CAVEAT



- Name on ID and voter registration card must be substantially the same but not identical
- Voter addresses on ID and official list of voters need not match at time of voting



- Election officials cannot question a voter about the use of a type of ID
- Poll workers may never question a voter about voter ID issues



- Provide link to frequently asked questions about required identification for voting at www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/need-id.html

En Español

- **Spanish language accessibility.** As mandated by Tex. Elec. Code § 272.005, election materials must be printed in Spanish as well as English. The law does not mention bilingual websites.
- In addition, 88 Texas counties are currently covered areas under Sec. 302 of the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 2006 and required to provide bilingual elections materials (81 Fed. Reg. 87532, December 5, 2016). A few of these counties must provide bilingual elections information in languages other than Spanish.

- It is recommended that elections information published online in English also be provided or available in Spanish.
- If the county website election subpage is not bilingual, a link to the Texas Secretary of State Spanish language website should be prominently displayed. www.votetexas.gov/es/



- **Link to Secretary of State election information.** The Texas Secretary of State provides comprehensive, detailed election and voter ID information and answers to frequently asked questions about voting. We recommend adding a link to www.VoteTexas.gov



- **Link to nonpartisan voters guides.** In addition to official election and voter ID information, a voter needs access to nonpartisan information on candidates and issues to be voted upon in the upcoming election. We highly recommend linking voters to nonpartisan voters guide(s).

- The League of Women Voters produces voters guides on statewide and local races and ballot issues. The League is a nonpartisan, political organization that does not support any political candidate or political party. It only supports issues that have undergone study and member consensus.

- Statewide voters guides are published at www.LWVTexas.org.

- Voters guides for local races will be published on local League websites. See www.LWVTexas.org/local_leagues.html to locate the local League website that serves your county.

- Voters guides for statewide races and local races (where available) are published in www.VOTE411.org, an online voters guide sponsored by the LWV Education Fund.





- Use the Texas Secretary of State voter ID educational materials found at www.votetexas.gov/resources/voter-id-education-materials.html
- Review the legal requirements for Texas county websites found at <http://tinyurl.com/y9o62coq>
- Use the series of *Field Guides to Ensuring Voter Intent*, described as "design guidelines that election officials can really use, based on solid research and best practices." The Center for Civic Design has published 11 field guides ranging from designing websites and ballots to communicating with voters and poll workers in print and online. The guides are found at <http://civicdesign.org/fieldguides/>
- Use *The Election Toolkit* and *Tech Tutorials*, free and low-cost tools and tutorials to make voting easier. These resources were developed by, with, and for election officials by The Center for Technology and Civic Life. *The Election Toolkit* is found at <http://electiontools.org> and the *Tech Tutorials* at www.techandciviclelife.org/tech-tutorials

Texas Secretary of State

We commend the Office of the Texas Secretary of State for providing comprehensive elections-related information for the general public at two information-laden websites:

- www.votetexas.gov
- www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/index.shtml

Both of these websites are used frequently by League of Women Voters members as references in our efforts to increase voter turnout among Texans.

We ask the Secretary of State to:

1. Continue development of educational materials found at www.VoteTexas.gov/resources/. County elections officials, particularly in counties with low populations, rely heavily on these educational materials as major resources on their local elections websites.

In our October 2017 survey of county websites, we found that the vast majority of elections websites published the Voter ID Informational Flyer or the 2016 Voter ID Press Release Template as their sole source of online voter ID information for voters. Several websites published the Elected Official Toolkit or the Community Organization Toolkit as their sole source of online elections information for voters. We recommend revision of both sets of documents.

- a. The Voter ID Information Flyer is an attractive and clear document that provides only minimally adequate voter ID information. The voter ID flyer should also include these items:
 - i. Name on ID and voter registration card must be substantially the same but not identical
 - ii. Voter addresses on ID and official list of voters need not match at time of voting
 - iii. Election officials cannot question a voter about the use of a type of ID
 - iv. Poll workers may never question a voter about voter ID issues
- b. The Elected Official Toolkit and Community Organization Toolkit provide comprehensive, useful information to those intensely involved in the elections process, especially county elections officials and poll workers. However, the toolkits are not an appropriate educational resource for voters. Secondly some information is outdated, such as the voting schedule and press release dates.
 - i. Develop alternative, user-friendly elections-related educational materials aimed at voters to be posted on county websites.
 - ii. Update the two toolkits with current information.

2. Continue leadership activities with county elections officials and:
 - a. Encourage local elections officials to update their websites in a timely fashion related to election and voter ID information.
 - b. Publish an online manual of best practices for county election websites, including templates related to voter information topics.
 - c. Notify county election officials when Secretary of State website pages change addresses. Many links to Secretary of State election-related web pages found on county elections websites have moved and no longer link to the intended resource.
3. Increase the website readability of information provided to voters on www.VoteTexas.gov.
 - a. The Nielson Norman Group identified three key barriers to website readability (Gupta, 2015, ¶7, <https://vwo.com/blog/website-copy-readability/>):
 - i. Legibility (clarity of visual design and landscape)
 - ii. Readability (complexity of words and sentence structure)
 - iii. Comprehension (ease of understanding the text and drawing valid conclusions)
 - b. According to Nielson, "Users won't read web content unless the text is clear, the words and sentences are simple, and the information is easy to understand" (2015, ¶1). Nielson provides guidelines and testing resources for legibility, readability, and comprehension at www.nngroup.com/articles/legibility-readability-comprehension/.
 - c. Most documents should aim for a Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level of 7.0 to 8.0, meaning that a seventh or eighth grader can understand the material. See <http://tinyurl.com/j55aue8>.

Example

The Voter ID information below found on the VoteTexas.gov website has a Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level of 21.25, meaning that a person would need a doctoral degree to fully understand it.

Frequently Asked Questions

On August 10, 2016, a federal district court entered an order changing the voter identification requirements for all elections held in Texas after August 10, 2016 until further notice. As a result, voters who possess an acceptable form of photo identification for voting listed below are still required to present it in order to vote in person in all Texas elections. The acceptable form of photo identification may be expired up to four years. Voters who do not possess an acceptable form of photo identification and cannot obtain one of the forms of acceptable photo identification listed below due to a reasonable impediment, may present a supporting form of identification and execute a Reasonable Impediment Declaration, noting the voter's reasonable impediment to obtaining an acceptable form of photo identification, and stating that the voter is the same person on the presented supporting form of identification.

From www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/need-id.html

4. In the long term, improve the menu-driven user interface of www.VoteTexas.gov. The user interface is one of the most important parts of an election website because it determines how easily a voter can find the information sought.

Texas Association of Counties

We recognize and appreciate the information and technology assistance and resources provided by the Texas Association of Counties (TAC) to over 140 Texas counties through the County Information Resources Agency (CIRA) at www.cira.state.tx.us We thank TAC for updating the voter ID links and information on its Resources for County Websites subpage and encourage TAC to:

1. Publish an online manual of best practices for county election websites, including templates related to voter information topics.
2. Encourage member counties to use the Texas Secretary of State voting educational materials found at www.votetexas.gov/resources/voter-id-education-materials.html, including materials related to military and overseas voters, voter ID, and other informational pamphlets.

Sampling of Excellent County Elections Websites

Among the county websites that provided fully adequate elections information, the following illustrate a variety of methods of presentation and creativity. This sampling includes use of commercial platforms and independently built websites. They demonstrate that counties large and small can provide great sites for their citizens to get the information they need to vote.

Population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau at <http://tinyurl.com/y7koz2ss>

Powered by Civic Plus

www.civicplus.com

Bexar County

Population estimate, 2016:	1,928,680
Elections administrator:	Jacque Callanen
Website:	www.bexar.org/1568/Elections-Department
Reviewer comments:	Provides links to Bexar County volunteer deputy registrar classes and social media sites (Facebook and Twitter). Unfortunately, the Events Election Schedule notes holidays instead of important election dates!

Ellis County

Population estimate, 2016:	168,499
Elections administrator:	Jana Onyon
Website:	http://tinyurl.com/yb3t9vz2
Reviewer comments:	We are so happy that there is an icon that links to <i>Civics for Kids</i> . This is a great website for kids to learn how government works through experience: award-winning games, interactive digital tools, and print-and-go lesson plans for teachers to match iCivics games with authentic action civics experiences.

McLennan County

Population estimate, 2016:	247,934
Elections administrator:	Kathy E. Van Wolfe
Website:	www.co.mclennan.tx.us/337/Elections
Reviewer comments:	We love websites that provide information on voting machines. The eSLATE ELECTRONIC VOTING EQUIPMENT subpage (in English and Spanish) has written instructions, a PowerPoint presentation, a demo, and training videos. Unfortunately, the website uses the voter ID information from the Secretary of State that has a readability level of 21—meaning that a person would need a doctoral degree to fully understand it!

Continued on the next page

Powered by Revize

www.revize.com

Montgomery County

Population estimate, 2016: 556,203

Elections administrator: Suzie Harvey

Website: <http://legacy.mctx.org/election/>

Reviewer comments: Click on the VER LA PÁGINA EN ESPAÑOL link at the top of the page to view the information in Spanish. Find links to using eSlate and poll worker training at the bottom of the home page.

Powered by Viva+Impulse Creative Co.

<http://vivaimpulse.com>

El Paso County

Population estimate, 2016: 837,938

Elections administrator: Lisa Wise

Website: <https://epcountyvotes.com>

Reviewer comments: Superior website readability. Comprehensive election information. Use of a more recognizable term than "New Identification Options" would facilitate find voter ID information under the VOTER INFORMATION menu.

CIRA-Hosted; Powered by ezTask

CIRA = County Information Resources Agency

www.cira.state.tx.us/

Powered by ezTask

www.eztask.com

Grimes County

Population estimate, 2016: 27,671

Elections administrator: Rebecca Duff

Website: <http://tinyurl.com/y7b3jk38>

Reviewer comments: Fun graphics, providing voter information with patriotic enthusiasm!

Hartley County

Population estimate, 2016: 5,747

Elections administrator: Melissa Mead

Website: <http://tinyurl.com/yb4xqbmt>

Reviewer comments: Comprehensive elections information presented in a straightforward manner. With lots of planning and work, Hartley County increased its adequacy score from 63% in 2016 to 100% in 2017. Congratulations!

Continued on the next page

Kendall County

Population estimate, 2016: 42,540
Elections administrator: Staci L. Decker
Website: <http://tinyurl.com/yc74q5tk>
Reviewer comments: Bright, colorful icons provide easily recognizable links to voter and election information.

Powered by Scytl

www.scytl.com/en/

Visual design and landscape is individualized for each county elections website.

Bastrop County

Population estimate, 2016: 82,733
Elections administrator: Bridgette Escobeto
Website: www.bastropvotes.org
Reviewer comments: Innovative website invites viewers to click JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST to get up-to-date voter registration and election information. Icons connect to Bastrop County Twitter and Facebook sites. Beautiful site!

Denton County

Population estimate, 2016: 806,180
Elections administrator: Frank Phillips
Website: www.votedenton.com
Reviewer comments:  Clicking this icon at the top of the home page translates the entire website into Spanish.

Gregg County

Population estimate, 2016: 123,745
Elections administrator: Kathryn Nealy
Website: www.greggcountyvotes.com
Reviewer comments:  Clicking on this icon leads to an easy-to-understand, step-by-step explanation of the current voter ID requirements in a table format. The site is visually appealing with simple icons linked to voter and election information.

Rockwall County

Population estimate, 2016: 93,978
Elections administrator: Christopher J. Lynch
Website: www.rockwallvotes.com
Reviewer comments: Very well organized voter and election information. We especially appreciate the frequently asked questions section found by clicking FAQs at the top of the home page.

Independently Built Websites

Dallas County

Population estimate, 2016:	2,574,984
Elections administrator:	Toni Pippins-Poole
Website:	www.dallascountyvotes.org
Reviewer comments:	Dallas voters are treated to election information enhanced by fun photos, videos, and interactive maps!

Fort Bend County

Population estimate, 2016:	741,237
Elections administrator:	John W. Oldham
Website:	http://tinyurl.com/lz93foa
Reviewer comments:	An easy site to find and read information. Very nice presentation.

Guadalupe County

Population estimate, 2016:	155,265
Elections administrator:	Lisa Adam
Website:	www.co.guadalupe.tx.us/elections/
Reviewer comments:	Meets all the criteria for a clean and simple design: less is more, neutral, honest, timely, thorough, and appealing!

Hays County

Population estimate, 2016:	204,470
Elections administrator:	Jenifer Anderson
Website:	www.co.hays.tx.us/elections.aspx
Reviewer comments:	Engaging language on elections page invites visitor to vote, register to vote, and be a poll worker. Excellent FAQs section, e.g., "If I am in college, should I register in my hometown or in my college town?" Includes a link for online volunteer deputy training through the Texas Secretary of State website.

Victoria County

Population estimate, 2016:	92,467
Elections administrator:	Vicki T. Vogel
Website:	http://tinyurl.com/y76sm5cn
Reviewer comments:	Fantastic home page consisting of an easy-to-read menu of voter and elections information. The HURRICANE HARVEY item has English and Spanish links to the Secretary of State information on voting issues for Hurricane Harvey evacuees in Texas.

Excellence Awards

Outstanding

16 (7%) of 234 county elections websites earned a score of 100% or higher.

Bastrop	Bexar	Dallas	Denton	Ellis	Fort Bend	Gregg	Grimes
Guadalupe	Hartley	Hays	Kendall	McLennan	Montgomery	Rockwall	Victoria

Honorable Mention

63 (27%) of 234 county elections websites earned a score of 90% to 99%.

Anderson	Aransas	Bandera	Bell	Brazoria	Brown	Burnet	Caldwell
Calhoun	Cameron	Cochran	Collin	Comal	DeWitt	Duval	Ector
Edwards	El Paso	Fannin	Frio	Galveston	Garza	Grayson	Harris
Harrison	Hemphill*	Hill	Hunt	Jefferson	Jim Wells	Johnson	Karnes
Kerr	Kleberg	Lampasas	Lubbock	Mason*	Midland	Moore	Navarro
Nueces	Palo Pinto	Parmer	Potter	Refugio	San Jacinto	San Patricio	Scurry
Smith	Tarrant	Taylor	Terry	Tom Green	Travis	Waller	Webb
Wharton	Willacy	Williamson	Wise	Wood	Yoakum	Young	

*Most improved elections websites: Improved overall rating from INADEQUATE (<39%) to HONORABLE MENTION (90-99%).