

**NONPARTISAN  
VOTERS GUIDE**



**VOTE EARLY: Oct. 21–Nov. 1, 2019 » ELECTION DAY: Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Nov. 5, 2019**

**Personal Income Tax » Flood Control » Cancer Prevention Research » Tax Relief for Disaster Areas »  
Municipal Judges » Tax Exemption of Precious Metals » Funding Public Education » Sporting Goods Taxes  
to Support State Parks » Law Enforcement Animals » Assistance for Water Projects in Distressed Areas**

**COMMEMORATIVE EDITION—CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF VOTES FOR WOMEN**

**» 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 candidates for elected office or political parties. For one hundred years the League has been helping voters cast an informed vote when they go to the polls. **You may take this *Voters Guide* into the voting booth.**

**» SUPPORT THE VOTERS GUIDE**

Support the *Voters Guide* with a contribution to the League of Women Voters of Texas, 1212 Guadalupe #107, Austin, TX 78701, or make a secure donation online at [www.lwvtexas.org](http://www.lwvtexas.org).

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**» TEXAS LEAGUE CELEBRATES  
100TH ANNIVERSARY, 1919–2019**

The League of Women Voters of Texas celebrated its 100th anniversary in San Antonio on October 19, 2019 at the historic St. Anthony Hotel, the same hotel where suffragists from all around Texas gathered one hundred years ago to form the League. The League of Texas was formed in 1919 in anticipation of the imminent passage of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution.

Celebrate with us! Support the *Voters Guide* with a donation to the League of Women Voters of Texas. You will be empowering voters and defending democracy!



**Never forget an election!  
Sign up for voting reminders!**



# » THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION

The current Texas Constitution was written in 1876 and has been amended nearly five hundred times. Compare that to the United States Constitution, which has only twenty-seven amendments.

Why does the Texas Constitution have so many amendments? Rules for how state and local governments should run are very specific in the Texas Constitution, unlike in the US Constitution. Therefore our state lawmakers often have little freedom to make changes to laws without amending the state constitution. The proposed changes must pass both houses of the Legislature by a 2/3 vote, and then the voters must approve all changes.

All potential amendments that appear on your ballot must originate in the

Legislature. The Texas Constitution cannot be amended by citizen-led ballot initiatives, referendums, or petitions, as in some other states.

We vote on a slate of amendments in the fall of odd-numbered years, following the spring Legislative session. Topics vary and can cover a wide range of topics, and some may affect only a few counties.

Voting on amendments fulfills your right and duty as a Texas citizen. This approval or disapproval of changes to our Constitution gives you a direct voice in our state government.

Watch a short YouTube on the history of the Texas Constitution: [https://youtu.be/\\_h7oHEWahgQ](https://youtu.be/_h7oHEWahgQ).

## » VOTER ID: WHAT TO TAKE TO THE POLLS

### Bring your ID to Vote Texas!

All citizens wishing to vote must be on the official list of registered voters.

Voters may use one of seven (7) forms of photo ID, listed below. **IDs may be expired up to four years. Persons seventy years of age or older may use an expired ID.**

- Driver license
- Texas Election Identification Certificate (EIC)
- Texas Personal Identification Card issued by the Department of Public Safety (DPS)
- Texas license to carry a handgun issued by DPS
- US military identification card containing the person's photograph
- US citizenship certificate containing the person's photograph
- US passport (book or card)

Registered voters without photo ID, who cannot reasonably obtain one, may sign a form and present the original or a copy of one of the following documents with the voters name and address to vote a regular ballot:

- Voter registration card
- Certified birth certificate
- Current utility bill
- Bank statement
- Government check
- Paycheck

- Any other government document such as an out of state driver's license or expired Texas driver's license

\*ID address does not have to match the voter registration address.

Voters, who do not have an acceptable photo ID and cannot reasonably obtain one, may sign a form called "Voter's Declaration of Reasonable Impediment or Difficulty." The voter must mark on the form one of the following reasons for not providing a photo ID.

- Lack of transportation
- Disability or illness
- Lack of birth certificate or other documents needed to obtain an acceptable form of photo ID
- Work schedule
- Family responsibilities
- Lost or stolen identification
- Acceptable form of photo ID applied for but not received

### "Substantially similar name"

The name on the photo ID should match the voter registration card or be "substantially similar." If the names don't match exactly but are substantially similar, the voter will initial a box for similar name when signing in to vote.

### 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

## » HELPFUL CONTACTS AND WEBSITES

**VOTE411.org** (online *Voters Guide*)

**League of Women Voters of Texas:** [lwvtexas.org](http://lwvtexas.org)

### Major Political Parties in Texas

**Republican Party:** [texasgop.org](http://texasgop.org)

**Democratic Party:** [txdemocrats.org](http://txdemocrats.org)

**Libertarian Party:** [lptexas.org](http://lptexas.org)

**Green Party:** [txgreens.org](http://txgreens.org)

### Election Protection. Voter Hotline!

(<https://my.lwv.org/texas/voting-elections/election-protection>)

- 866-OUR-VOTE English
- 888-Ve-Y-Vota Spanish
- 888-API-VOTE English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, Bengali, Urdu, Hindi, and Tagalog

**Texas Secretary of State Voting Website:** [VoteTexas.gov](http://VoteTexas.gov)

# PROPOSITION 1 (HJR 72)

“The constitutional amendment permitting a person to hold more than one office as a municipal judge at the same time.”

## » EXPLANATION

The Texas Constitution (Article 16, Section 40) prohibits a person from holding more than one public office at the same time but has many exceptions, including county commissioner, justice of the peace, notary public, postmaster, etc. The proposed constitutional amendment would add elected municipal judge to this list of exceptions.

A municipal judge oversees pre-trial hearings, small claims proceedings, and misdemeanor cases in a city or town. Proposition 1 would allow municipal judges to hold more than one paid public office at the same time, meaning they could simultaneously preside over multiple municipalities, regardless of whether they were appointed or elected.

**Watch a short video on Prop. 1:** <https://youtu.be/zGFBdY2bGt8>

**For more information:** House Research Organization HJR 72, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/HJR0072.PDF>

## » ARGUMENTS FOR

- A municipal judge oversees essential local proceedings, such as pretrial hearings, small claims proceedings, and misdemeanor cases. Often smaller municipalities do not have municipal judges or attorneys qualified to serve as judges. Prop. 1 would make it easier for smaller municipalities to fill empty judgeships with qualified individuals.
- The proposition could benefit public safety by making it easier to obtain search warrants and streamlining other proceedings, such as ordinance violations, misdemeanor offenses and other types of cases.

## » ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- This proposition is unnecessary as Texas law already permits a person to be appointed as a municipal judge in more than one municipality at the same time. This law would only allow a person to be elected in more than one municipality.
- If the municipal judge were elected to a community where he or she was not a resident, he or she may not have an understanding or interest in that community.

# PROPOSITION 2 (SJR 79)

“The constitutional amendment providing for the issuance of additional general obligation bonds by the Texas Water Development Board in an amount not to exceed \$200 million to provide financial assistance for the development of certain projects in economically distressed areas.”

## » EXPLANATION

Proposition 2 would allow the Water Development Board to issue general obligation bonds for the Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP). The outstanding bonds could not exceed \$200 million. The bonds would be used to develop water supply and sewer projects in economically depressed areas of the state.

EDAP assists water infrastructure projects when the median income of a region is less than 75% of the state’s median income. The proposed amendment would give the Water Development Board the money to finance water and wastewater infrastructure in economically distressed areas.

**Watch a short video on Prop. 2:** <https://youtu.be/VDl0pJtYglc>

**For more information:** House Research Organization SJR 79, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/SJR0079.PDF>

## » ARGUMENTS FOR

- All citizens deserve clean water, regardless of their income. Socioeconomic factors should not determine access to safe water. It’s a basic right.
- This program needs to be replenished so it can continue funding existing and future projects for communities that could not otherwise afford it.
- Financing with bonds will provide more reliable funding over a longer period of time. Using general revenue would strain limited resources.

## » ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- The net impact to the general revenue fund will be \$3,375,000 through 2021.
- This is another constitutionally dedicated fund which the state should avoid. Infrastructure improvements should be funded using general revenue.
- This is a local issue and should not be handled by the state.

## » WHERE AND WHEN TO VOTE

### Vote early!

- Early Voting begins Monday, October 21, through Friday, November 1, 2019.
- All registered voters may vote early in person at any early voting location in their county.
- Check with your local newspaper or your county clerk or election administrator for early voting times and locations.

### Where do I vote?

- Contact your County Election Official. They can tell you where you can vote.
- Use [VOTE11.org](http://VOTE11.org). Enter your address and find where to vote.

## PROPOSITION 3 (HJR 34)

“The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for a temporary exemption from ad valorem taxation of a portion of the appraised value of certain property damaged by a disaster.”

### » EXPLANATION

Proposition 3 would allow the Texas Legislature to give a temporary property tax exemption in a governor-declared disaster area. The exemption would be 15%, 30%, 60%, or 100%, depending on the amount of property damage. The local government would choose whether or not to adopt the temporary exemption and would determine how long the exemption would last.

**Watch a short video on Prop. 3:** <https://youtu.be/-n0bB3ZoWgo>

**For more information:** House Research Organization HJR 34, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/HJR0034.PDF>

### » ARGUMENTS FOR

- In the event of environmental disasters, a tax exemption would bring quicker and easier relief to those affected.
- Proposition 3 would be easier and more affordable for the local government than the current property reassessment process, which is both lengthy and expensive.

### » ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- Since Proposition 3 relies on the local government to decide whether or not to adopt the tax exemption, it does not guarantee it will help as many people as intended. Any such relief should be mandatory.
- Though there would now be predetermined damage categories, the property may still have to undergo an extensive reappraisal process.

## PROPOSITION 4 (HJR 38)

“The constitutional amendment prohibiting the imposition of an individual income tax, including a tax on an individual’s share of partnership and unincorporated association income.”

### » EXPLANATION

Proposition 4 would prohibit the Texas Legislature from establishing a personal state income tax.

**Watch a short video on Prop. 4:** <https://youtu.be/nQL04OYs08s>

**For more information:** House Research Organization HJR 38, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/HJR0038.PDF>

### » ARGUMENTS FOR

- A 2019 poll by the University of Texas at Austin and the *Texas Tribune* found 71% of respondents oppose an individual state income tax.
- Texas has a low-tax, pro-growth approach to economic expansion, and that is dependent on having no personal income tax.
- This amendment could support population growth in Texas, as families and businesses may move to Texas because there is no state income tax.
- An income tax would also increase the size of government by requiring a large bureaucracy to administer it.

### » ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- This amendment is not necessary because the Texas Constitution now prohibits the Legislature from imposing an income tax without a statewide referendum (Art. 8, Sec. 24, adopted in 1993). In addition, any net revenue from that tax must be used for the support of education.
- Revenue from an income tax could reduce the tax burden on businesses, which pay a higher proportion of taxes in Texas than in other states.
- The current Legislature and today’s voters should not make taxation decisions for future Texans. The needs of Texans change over time, so future Texans should make their own choices on taxation.
- One reason Texans pay high property and sales taxes may be because Texas has no income tax. If Proposition 4 passed, these taxes would likely continue to increase, so Proposition 4 would not necessarily decrease the size of state government.

### » STUDENT VOTERS: AWAY AT COLLEGE? BE A TEXAS VOTER!

**You must be registered to vote.**

- Find out at [votetexas.gov](http://votetexas.gov).
- Register to vote! (Note! We don’t have online voter registration in Texas.)

**I am registered at my parents’ address!**

- Drive home! Early vote or vote on Election Day.
- Or Vote By Mail.

**I am registered at my college address!**

- Vote early!
- Or vote on Election Day!

You must show an ID to vote! You can’t use your student ID. Your ID address does not have to match the voter registration address.



## PROPOSITION 5 (SJR 24)

“The constitutional amendment dedicating the revenue received from the existing state sales and use taxes that are imposed on sporting goods to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Historical Commission to protect Texas’ natural areas, water quality, and history by acquiring, managing, and improving state and local parks and historic sites while not increasing the rate of the state sales and use taxes.”

### » EXPLANATION

Proposition 5 would require the Legislature to allocate the money raised from state sales taxes on sporting goods (i.e., hunting, fishing, outdoor equipment) to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Revenue from such taxes would be used to improve and manage state and local parks and historic sites, and to acquire new sites.

Proposition 5 closes a loophole in the current law that prevents all the revenue raised by these sales taxes from being given to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Historical Commission, thus allowing some of the money to be used to balance the state budget.

**Watch a short video on Prop. 5:** <https://youtu.be/MunCRSN0AGE>

**For more information:** House Research Organization HJR 39, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/HJR0039.PDF>

### » ARGUMENTS FOR

- State and local parks are essential to industries such as fishing, hunting, and tourism that benefit Texas economy. Proposition 5 would require the government to support this vital economic sector more fully. It would allow these agencies to make long range plans based on a reliable funding source.
- Many parks and historic sites of Texas are decaying, and new parks are needed due to population growth in the state. Proposition 5 would provide a sustainable source of funding for their preservation and new park development so they could be enjoyed in the future.

### » ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- Having a dedicated account, a fund used for a specific purpose, eliminates budget flexibility for the Texas Legislature.
- Dedicated accounts can cause unnecessary growth of the state budget by demanding funds in one area even though needs could be greater in another.

## PROPOSITION 6 (HJR 12)

“The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to increase by \$3 billion the maximum bond amount authorized for the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas.”

### » EXPLANATION

The proposed amendment would increase the maximum bond amount for the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) from \$3 billion to \$6 billion. CPRIT provides grants and supports programs that advance cancer research. The organization, begun in 2007, is currently set up to receive \$3 billion in funding until 2022.

**Watch a short video on Prop. 6:** <https://youtu.be/pApIbWdVXtQ>

**For more information:** House Research Organization HJR 12, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/HJR0012.pdf>

### » ARGUMENTS FOR

- The state is the second largest source of public funding for cancer research in Texas, behind the federal government. Increasing the bond amount would ensure that the state maintained its status as a hub for advancements in the cancer field, and continue Texas’ national leadership in cancer research and prevention.
- CPRIT has created thousands of jobs and brought in more than 170 researchers, including a Nobel Prize winner, to Texas. It has generated billions of dollars of economic activity.
- Increasing the bond amount would protect CPRIT’s future, because current funding for awards will run out in 2021.

### » ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- Current funding of CPRIT is in place until 2022, so the issue is not an urgent matter. Voters may not have to consider it right now—three years in advance. Instead the Legislature should develop a plan to make CPRIT become financially self-sufficient.
- CPRIT has a history of mismanaging funds. A ban was put on CPRIT grants in 2012, and was lifted in October 2013 after restructuring of the organization.\*
- The proposed amendment would cost the government \$12.5 million in general revenue funds during the first two years, assuming debt service payments based on the issuance of this new debt.

\*“Despite Moratorium, CPRIT Board Moves Forward,” Becca Aaronson, *Texas Tribune* (<https://www.texastribune.org/2013/02/25/cancer-advocates-wait-cpritol-moratorium-be-lifted/>).

### » LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS VOTERS GUIDE

**Voter Services Chair:** Carol Olewin

**Interns:** Ishani Pandya, Gwyneth Yeager, Rachel Patel, Meera Shaw

## PROPOSITION 7 (HJR 151)

“The constitutional amendment allowing increased distributions to the available school fund.”

### » EXPLANATION

The School Land Board, an independent entity of the General Land Office, oversees the management, sale and leasing of more than 13 million acres of land for the Permanent School Fund. The State Board of Education can then make distributions from this fund to the Available School Fund. The revenue generated from the land is used to purchase real estate and make investments to help fund public education through the Available School Fund.

This proposition would increase from \$300 million to \$600 million the amount the General Land Office could distribute to the Available School Fund each year.

**Watch a short video on Prop. 7:** <https://youtu.be/UHA7JNAeONQ>

**For more information:** House Research Organization HJR 151, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/HJR0151.PDF>

### » ARGUMENTS FOR

- This proposition will improve funding for public schools by doubling the distribution from the School Land Board to the Available School Fund.
- Were it not for the \$300 million cap in the Texas Constitution, this could have been happening already, making more money available for public education.
- As more money is available to school districts from the state Available School Fund, they should need to rely less on local property taxes.

### » ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- Both the School Land Board and the State Board of Education have responsibilities for managing the Permanent School Fund. If the School Land Board makes larger deposits directly to the Available School Fund rather than into the Permanent School Fund, it changes the amount the State Board of Education is required to distribute from the Permanent School fund.
- The State Board of Education is required to make a percentage-based biennial distribution to the Available School Fund. If they have less money in the Permanent School Fund, it might result in lower overall school funding.
- In the past, the School Land Board made questionable investments at the expense of public education funding. With the opportunity to make larger contributions, it might increase the lure of debatable investments.

## PROPOSITION 8 (HJR 4)

“The constitutional amendment providing for the creation of the flood infrastructure fund to assist in the financing of drainage, flood mitigation, and flood control projects.”

### » EXPLANATION

Proposition 8 would create the Flood Infrastructure Fund (FIF) as a special fund outside of general revenue. A one-time distribution from the Economic Stabilization Fund, also known as the “rainy day fund,” would establish the FIF. The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) would distribute FIF funds to local governments through loans or, in some cases, as grants. The money would be used to establish and maintain flood control structures and drainage infrastructure throughout the state, especially in economically distressed areas.

If passed, Proposition 8 would require cooperation among all impacted parties. A local government would receive money from the FIF only if it worked with other governments in the region and listened to stakeholder concerns in public meetings. The local government would also have to submit a technical analysis of the plan, comparing it to other possible projects in the region, and a proposal to repay the loan.

**Watch a short video on Prop. 8:** <https://youtu.be/FJ0jA65AkIQ>

**For more information:** House Research Organization HJR 4, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/HJR0004.PDF>

### » ARGUMENTS FOR

- Severe flooding events such as Hurricane Harvey show the necessity of being prepared to prevent future damage.
- Access to federal funding and grants often requires local governments to match the amount of money the federal government would provide. The proposed amendment would allow the TWDB to give loans to local governments so they could access federal funds.
- Because removing money from the Economic Stabilization Fund to create the FIF would be a one-time expense, rather than ongoing, it would not drain the “rainy day fund.”

### » ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- A local government could default on a TWDB loan, thereby costing the state income meant to replenish the FIF. Taxpayers might ultimately be liable for repayment of loans.
- Historically, state government has not played a heavy role in funding flood-control infrastructure. Flood control is the responsibility of both local and federal governments, rather than state government.
- Using money from the “rainy day fund” to establish the FIF could be inappropriate because only one-time expenses or funds for disaster response should be removed from the “rainy day fund.” Because the FIF itself is an ongoing project, funds to create it should be taken from general revenue.

## PROPOSITION 9 (HJR 95)

“The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation precious metal held in a precious metal depository located in this state.”

### » EXPLANATION

Texas opened a precious metals depository in 2018, run by a private company but overseen by the state government. The Constitution requires all real and tangible personal property to be taxed on its value unless exempted. These ad valorem (property) taxes are imposed at the time of purchase or exchange of precious metals. Proposition 9 would exempt from taxation precious metals held in a precious metal depository in the state.

**Watch a short video on Prop. 9:** <https://youtu.be/ufz6jSH1J9k>

**For more information:** House Research Organization HJR 95, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/HJR0095.PDF>

### » ARGUMENTS FOR

- Other states do not tax precious metals, so creating this exemption would allow Texas depositories to be more competitive.
- The proposed amendment would increase chances that the Texas depository could join COMEX, the leading marketplace for precious metals exchange.

### » ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- Texas counties do not enforce the property tax on precious metals, so a constitutional amendment is unnecessary.
- The proposed amendment gives preference through a tax break for precious metals over other investment choices.

## PROPOSITION 10 (SJR 32)

“The constitutional amendment to allow the transfer of a law enforcement animal to a qualified caretaker in certain circumstances.”

### » EXPLANATION

Proposition 10 would allow law enforcement animals to retire, and their former handlers or other qualified caretakers to adopt them with no fee. Law enforcement animals are currently considered as surplus property of the county, which means the county can only auction, donate, or destroy them. Proposition \_\_ would change the property laws to allow the animals to retire and be transferred to their original handler or another qualified caretaker with no adoption fee.

**Watch a short video on Prop. 10:** <https://youtu.be/-8cClqBhto0>

**For more information:** House Research Organization HJR 96, <https://hro.house.texas.gov/pdf/ba86R/HJR0096.PDF>

### » ARGUMENTS FOR

- Proposition 10 would ensure the wellbeing of law enforcement animals in their later years by allowing them to retire.
- Proposition 10 would remove the legally required fee for law enforcement officers, or other qualified caretakers, who generally adopt their own retired law enforcement animals.
- Proposition 10 recognizes the longstanding bond developed between a law enforcement animal and the animal's handler, a bond that would be ignored in a government auction.

### » ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- Proposition 10 may reduce state income. A government auction might raise more money than the free adoption of a law enforcement animal.
- If the animal's handler retires before the animal is ready to retire, it might be difficult to determine which of the animal's handlers had priority.
- It is unfortunate that such a common sense action would require a constitutional amendment.

### » LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS AND ELECTIONS

- The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties.
- Any use of the League of Women Voters name in campaign advertising or literature has not been authorized by the League.
- This *Voters Guide* is funded and published by the League of Women Voters of Texas.
- For one hundred years, the League of Women Voters has been helping voters cast an informed vote when they go to the polls
- The LWV Texas *Voters Guide* is nonpartisan, fair, and balanced.
- You may print the *Voters Guide* to bring into the voting booth!
- Mobile phones are prohibited in the voting booth, so be sure to bring what you need on paper, not on your phone.
- An interactive version of this *Voters Guide* is available online at [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org). Enter your address and view the Constitutional Amendments that appear on your ballot. You will be able to compare the pros and cons for each Amendment and create a printout of a ballot that you can take to the polls.

# » TEXAS REDISTRICTING

## » NEW DISTRICT MAPS TO BE DRAWN AFTER 2020 CENSUS

Every ten years, the federal government has the obligation to count every person in the United States and where they live; it does this through the census. The next census will be compiled in 2020, and each state will then be given its population numbers. Once we know how many people live in Texas, the state legislature will start the redistricting process. That is, it will draw new district lines that will impact state and congressional representation.

<https://my.lwv.org/texas/texas-census>

## » PUBLIC INPUT HEARINGS SCHEDULE

Please consider attending a local public hearing to let your state legislators know how important your community is to you.

A schedule of public input hearing locations and dates can be found <https://my.lwv.org/texas/public-input-hearings>.

If you are unable to attend a hearing and would still like to provide testimony, you may email or call legislators on the Redistricting Committee. A list of committee member information can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2KrYk0N>.

## » WHAT YOU CAN DO TO INFLUENCE THE REDISTRICTING MAPS?

The Texas Legislature will hold public hearings throughout the state in 2019–2020, and through your public testimony, you can influence how it will draw district boundaries. Speaking up about your community is critical in ensuring that district lines are drawn to keep your community whole and grouped with nearby communities with similar, shared interests (community of interest).

## » WHAT IS A “COMMUNITY OF INTEREST”?

A Community of Interest (COI) is a geographically connected population which shares common social and economic interests.

Examples of such shared interests are:

- Those common to areas such as urban, rural, industrial, or agricultural; as well as geographical such as rivers, mountains, coastal, inland, watershed, etc.
- Those common to areas in which the people share similar living standards, use the same transportation facilities, have similar work opportunities, or have access to the same media of communication relevant to the election process; as well as shared common goals.

## » REDISTRICTING PROCESS IN BRIEF

- The Texas Legislature, comprised of your state senators and representatives, has the first opportunity to draw and adopt district boundaries by filing redistricting bills.
- Census data will be received by the state in February, 2021, and all bills must meet the 60-day bill filing deadline of March 12, 2021.
- Senate and House redistricting bills traditionally originate in their respective houses, but Congressional and State Board of Education district bills may be introduced in either or both houses.
- Redistricting bills follow the same path through the legislature as other legislation, including having public hearings.
- If the house or senate redistricting bill fails to pass or is vetoed by the governor and the veto is not overridden by the legislature, the Legislative Redistricting Board is required to meet within 90 days of the end of the regular session.
- The Legislative Redistricting Board is composed of the lieutenant governor, speaker of the house, attorney general, comptroller, and commissioner of the general land office.
- In 1981 and 2001 the Legislative Redistricting Board was convened to draw the Texas House and Senate legislative maps.

## » WHAT CRITERIA GUIDES THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE IN DRAWING DISTRICT MAPS?

The United States and Texas Constitutions give the Legislature specific prioritized criteria in drawing district maps:

1. Draw districts with equal population, based on the U.S. Constitution.
2. Comply with the federal Voting Rights Act, to ensure minority voters have an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.
3. Draw districts that are contiguous, so that a district is connected at all points.
4. For State House Districts, county lines may not be crossed if the county holds enough population to contain the district(s).

The overarching intent: One Person, One Vote—districts must be drawn in a manner that neither has the purpose nor will have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on the basis of race, color, or language group.

The Texas Legislature also uses partisan data to draw the district lines, taken from election data of both the state’s primary and general elections. This allows legislators to choose voters based on party affiliation and how likely they are to vote in an election.

## » MORE INFORMATION

**The League of Women Voters of Texas**

<https://my.lwv.org/texas/advocacy-issues/redistrictingcensus>

The Texas Legislative Council, a nonpartisan legislative agency, provides technical and legal support to the Texas Legislature for redistricting. It has a website on redistricting where more detailed information about redistricting can be found, such as the process and history. Go to <https://redistricting.capitol.texas.gov>.

## » VOTERS GUIDE SUPPORTERS

LWVTX gratefully acknowledges major contributions in the past year from:

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