

CONSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC NORMS

A resolution in support of requiring making tax returns public for federal and judicial candidates and officeholders

WHEREAS the President, members of the U.S. Congress and all federal judges may have conflicts of interest in their decisions; and

WHEREAS these public servants need to be required by law to faithfully serve the public interest and not enrich themselves at the expense of others; and

WHEREAS confidence in the government itself is becoming extremely toxic due to corruption and self-serving politicians at every level;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that all current and future national and judicial candidates and officeholders be required by law to submit a minimum of five years of complete personal and business tax filings for public record.

Submitted by Robert Weaver, Precinct 447, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

A resolution in support of limiting gift amounts allowed by public servants

WHEREAS the President, members of the U.S. Congress and federal judges may have conflicts of interest in their decisions because of donations from lobbyists or private individuals having interest in legislation or judicial outcomes; and

WHEREAS these institutions are not enforcing ethical behavior and allow these officeholders to accept gifts from people wanting favors;

THEREFORE BE BE IT RESOLVED that all public servants need to be required to decline any gifts or travel valued at \$10 or more.

Submitted by Robert Weaver, Precinct 447, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Resolution in support of repealing the death penalty in Texas

WHEREAS the death penalty carries a high risk of executing an innocent person and, in fact, more than 160 people have been released from death rows across the country due to evidence of their wrongful conviction, including 13 in Texas; and

WHEREAS there is significant evidence that Texas has already executed innocent people; and

WHEREAS the death penalty has been documented to be exorbitantly more expensive than life without the possibility of parole; and

WHEREAS juries and prosecutors across Texas are opting against death in favor of life in prison without parole, with death sentences remaining in the single digits for the last five years; and

WHEREAS application of the death penalty remains racially biased and arbitrarily imposed, with just four counties in Texas accounting for more than one-third all new death sentences imposed in the past five years; and

WHEREAS Texas continues to lead the nation in the number of executions carried out each year; and

WHEREAS other states are increasingly turning away from the death penalty as evidenced by the legislatures in New Jersey (2007), New Mexico (2009), Illinois (2011), Connecticut (2012), Maryland (2013), Nebraska (2015), New Hampshire (2019), and Colorado (2020) repealing the death penalty; the Supreme Courts of New York, Delaware, and Washington ruling it unconstitutional; and Governors in Oregon, Pennsylvania, and California declaring a moratorium on executions; and

WHEREAS the 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 Texas Democratic Party platforms endorsed abolition of the death penalty;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the following language be retained in the Capital Punishment subsection of the Public Safety Section of the 2020 Texas Democratic Party Platform:

Texas Democrats call for the passage of legislation that would repeal the death penalty in this state and replace it with the punishment of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Submitted by Lauralee Harris, Precinct 221, SD 25, Hays County, Texas

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

EDUCATION

Resolution in support of the continued defined benefit system in the Teacher Retirement System of Texas

WHEREAS the Teacher Retirement System of Texas was created in 1937 by the Texas Legislature to address the unmet need for a safe and secure retirement program for Texas teachers as well as establish a public policy to attract and retain educators for the state's youth; and

WHEREAS the Teacher Retirement System of Texas is funded through a partnership of individual teacher contributions and state contributions; and

WHEREAS the Teacher Retirement System of Texas is composed of more than 1.4 million Texans, located in every county and city of the state, who contribute to the viability of our local economies, as well as the economy of the state as a whole; and

WHEREAS the vast majority of Texas teachers are not participants in Social Security, making the Teacher Retirement System of Texas the retirement program available to them; and

WHEREAS the Teacher Retirement System is based on a defined benefit system that appreciably contributes to the ability of the state to attract a strong workforce of educators for the benefit of the state's children;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Democratic Party recommend that the 87th Texas Legislature continue the principle of defined benefits in the Teacher Retirement System of Texas and appropriate the necessary funds to meet the state contribution level enacted by the 86th Texas Legislature.

Submitted by Kathy Carriker, Precinct 440, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

Resolution for a relevant funding mechanism for TRS-Care stability and sustainability

WHEREAS TRS-Care was created in 1985 by the Texas Legislature to address the significant need of public school retirees unable to obtain health insurance in retirement; and

WHEREAS TRS-Care reflects a state policy that supports the recruitment and retention of highly qualified professionals to meet the state's responsibility of providing a public education for its citizens; and

WHEREAS state funding for TRS-Care is based on a percentage of covered payroll rather than cost of services delivered; and

WHEREAS that current method of funding has resulted in shortfalls in recent legislative sessions requiring the Texas Legislature to enact emergency legislative funding rather than following a prudent budget process;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Democratic Party recommend that the 87th Texas Legislature enact a relevant funding mechanism for TRS-Care that establishes a pathway to stability and sustainability and ensures the state's continued commitment to this critical public policy.

Submitted by Kathy Carriker, Precinct 440, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

ENVIRONMENT

A resolution in support of limiting single-use plastic straws

WHEREAS we use more than 500 million plastic straws every day in America, and most of those end up in our oceans, polluting the water and killing marine life; and

WHEREAS by the year 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish (by weight); and

WHEREAS most plastic straws are too lightweight to make it through the mechanical recycling sorter, and they drop through sorting screens, mix with other materials and are too small to separate, contaminating recycling loads or getting disposed of as garbage; and

WHEREAS plastic straws end up in the ocean primarily through human error, often left on beaches in coastal communities and seaside resorts globally or blown out of trash cans (often overfilled) or off transport boats and vehicles; and

WHEREAS plastic in the ocean breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces known as "microplastics" rather than biodegrading or dissolving, which poses great threats to marine life including fish; and

WHEREAS it is projected that by 2050, 99% of all seabird species will have ingested plastic, with a resulting mortality rate of up to 50%; and

WHEREAS research has shown plastic in sea salt, in 94% of U.S. tap water, and in shellfish; and

WHEREAS scientists have discovered microplastics particles smaller than dust or powdered sugar inside baby sea turtles, which in turn were dying due to ingested plastic pollution, threatening the species' survival; and

WHEREAS alternatives exist for single-use plastic straws, such as those made of paper, glass, silicone, steel, and bamboo; and

WHEREAS straws are among the top 10 items found during beach cleanups and can harm seabirds, turtles and other marine creatures; and

WHEREAS straws are an item of convenience for the vast majority of us, refusing the single-use plastic straw is the easiest and simplest way for everyone to take action to address plastic pollution; and

WHEREAS we recognize that some individuals with special needs may require the use of a straw;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Democratic Party supports (1) requiring all establishments and vendors that provide beverage services or sales to withhold plastic straws unless specifically requested and to also offer a fully biodegradable straw option; (2) implementing a full ban on single-use plastic straws in Texas, except for people whose special needs specifically require plastic straw use; and (3) actively encouraging people to invest in reusable straws for their drinking needs.

Submitted by Diana Robinson, Precinct 230, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

FINANCE

Resolution in support of changing property assessment in Texas

WHEREAS the current Central Appraisal Districts discriminate against the longtime homeowner; and

WHEREAS the current system uproots families from the home they have lived in for many years; and

WHEREAS the average home in Texas is sold every seven years;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Democratic Party encourage stable neighborhoods and protect people from losing their homes because of gentrification by asking that the Central Appraisal Districts in the State of Texas be dissolved; that the title company report the sales prices of all properties conveyed in Texas to the local tax assessor in each county where the property is located without exception; and that the value of each property be adjusted each year to reflect only inflation.

Submitted by Aart Millecam, chair of Precinct 332, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

GUNS

Resolution in support of ending the sale of high-velocity weapons

WHEREAS weapons such as the AR-15 and similarly made high-velocity weapons are adapted from weapons of war; and

WHEREAS such high-velocity weapons do tremendous damage to their targets due to the tremendous velocity of the bullets; and

WHEREAS such high-velocity weapons seem to be the weapon of choice for mass murders; and

WHEREAS such high-velocity weapons are not hunting weapons due to the extreme damage they do to, being a cruel way to kill an animal, and rendering much of the meat unusable; and

WHEREAS such high-velocity weapons and similar quasi-weapons of war are too easily obtainable at gun shows, whereby people can circumvent background checks; and

WHEREAS long guns may be purchased by 18 year olds;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Democratic Party adds to its platform and calls on the Texas Legislature to

1. raise the age of purchase of all guns to 21 years of age;
2. ban the manufacture and sale of all high-velocity weapons;
3. allow the State of Texas and/or local cities to institute a buy-back plan for such guns, with the cost financed by a tax on the sale of guns and ammunition, and that the collected guns be destroyed;
4. allow licensed commercial gun ranges to keep such high-velocity weapons for use at gun ranges only so that those people who enjoy shooting them can go to a range and require these gun ranges to register all high-velocity weapons with the ATF.

Submitted by Kathi Thomas, Precinct 446, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

A resolution in support of red-flag warning laws

WHEREAS women are injured and murdered at an alarming rate by partners who have weapons in their home; and

WHEREAS suicides tend to result in death more often when guns are used; and

WHEREAS friends and family often know something is wrong but don't know how to help; and

WHEREAS law enforcement currently has no way to remove weapons from a law-abiding citizen who may be going through a mental health crises;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Democratic Party adds to its platform and calls on the Texas Legislature to

1. institute a "red-flag warning" law so that friends and family may report possible gun violence intentions to law enforcement;
2. allow law enforcement to remove any weapons for a certain period of time; and
3. ensure that this legislation includes a mechanism allowing for someone to go to court to challenge this weapon removal.

Submitted by Kathi Thomas, Precinct 446, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

LABOR

Resolution in support of alternatives to daylight saving time (DST)

WHEREAS daylight saving time is misconstrued as providing more daylight in the evenings when the only difference is a clock change; and

WHEREAS the 2020 coronavirus pandemic has presented workers with alternatives to long commutes by working at home, providing us with a template to change the way we live; and

WHEREAS traffic congestion in metropolitan areas has lessened as more people stay home to work, thereby reducing stress as well as pollution, and conserving fossil fuels, all of which can be further enhanced with staggered workday schedules; and

WHEREAS daylight saving time is scientifically proven to have adverse effects on the elderly and very young by disrupting an established routine;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Hays County Democratic Party supports legislation requiring that daylight saving time be abandoned in favor of 1) staggered work schedules, 2) work from home options, and 3) choice of work schedule whenever possible, giving citizens more control over their day-to-day lives and helping to improve our social and physical environment.

Submitted by Charles Tubbs, Precinct 226, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

VOTING RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC REFORMS

A resolution in support of implementing ranked choice or instant runoff voting (RCV/IRV) in Texas primaries and general elections

WHEREAS ranked choice or instant runoff voting (RCV/IRV) promotes majority support; and

WHEREAS RCV/IRV encourages positive campaigning over mudslinging and desperation attacks; and

WHEREAS RCV/IRV provides voters a way to accurately reflect their choice of candidates; and

WHEREAS RCV/IRV minimizes strategic voting; and

WHEREAS RCV/IRV provides for an instant runoff system, saving costs of holding a second election; and

WHEREAS RCV/IRV provides an outcome more reflective of the will of the voters than either primaries or runoff elections; and

WHEREAS RCV/IRV increases participation from military and overseas voters;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Hays County Democratic Party calls on the Texas Democratic Party to add RCV/IRV to its platform and calls on the Texas Legislature and Texas Secretary of State's Office to

1. revise current election laws, policies and procedures as needed for implementation of RCV/IRV, and
2. implement ranked choice or instant runoff voting for all primary and general elections by 2022.

Submitted by Ana Juarez, Precinct 120, SD 21, and Brandon James, Precinct 221, SD 25, Hays County, Texas

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

Resolution in support of electing the President by popular vote, joining the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact

WHEREAS the Electoral College was established in the U.S. Constitution to delegate the choice of president to a handful of elite citizens and magnify the political power of slaveholding states; and

WHEREAS it has long since ceased to accomplish either purpose; and

WHEREAS it has been responsible for the election of five presidents who lost the popular vote; and

WHEREAS the American people deserve and demand to elect the president by popular vote; and

WHEREAS presidential campaigns typically pass by the majority of states where the votes are not likely to be close; and

WHEREAS the present system discourages voting by citizens who believe their votes will not matter; and

WHEREAS the difficulty of achieving popular election by constitutional amendment necessitates a more practical method; and

WHEREAS such a method is at hand in the form of the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, by which state legislatures commit their electors to vote for whoever wins the popular vote nationwide; and

WHEREAS 15 states (CA, IL, NY, CO, CT, MD, MA, NJ, NM, OR, WA, DE, HI, RI, VT) and the District of Columbia have joined the Compact, accounting for 196 of the 270 electoral votes needed to put it into effect;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Democratic Party supports our state joining the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, commits its full support and resources to joining the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, and calls upon all members of the Texas Legislature to work for passage of such legislation.

Submitted by Diana Robinson, Precinct 230, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.

A resolution in support of more diverse early primary states

WHEREAS the first primaries of the presidential election years for Democrats are held in states that have very small populations of minority people; and

WHEREAS to give more nontraditional candidates (i.e., women, people of color) a more fair opportunity;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Texas Democratic Party adds to its platform and calls on the Democratic National Committee to

1. change the first primary to states where there are significant numbers of African-American and LatinX residents, or majority minority states; or
2. change to holding all primaries on the same date nationwide.

Submitted by Kathi Thomas, Precinct 446, SD 25, Hays County

Adopted by the Hays County Democratic Party Convention on March 21, 2020.