

Hays County Democratic News

Spring 2021

Volume 2

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR: Building Momentum for 2022

A successful Democratic county party depends upon one key ingredient: an organized and mobilized group of energetic Democrats who recognize the stakes of an election and work hard to elect Democratic candidates. For the past two election cycles, Hays County has successfully elected Democrats at the national and state level. In 2020, we successfully contributed to electing Joseph R. Biden as President and Kamala Harris as Vice President,

while also electing Democrats to national, state, judicial, and law enforcement positions. In 2022, we want to improve by winning all county-level races as well.

Winning these county races, while continuing our success at the state and national level, is the key to the long-term success of the party. The stakes of the 2022 election are clear. Voter access, environmental and criminal justice, racial equity in policy and resources, and recovery of our

economy while building a strong middle class are all on the ballot. We need national, state, and local leaders that are champions of our Democratic values. To win these elections, we need your help. Over the next year, we will recruit volunteers, fundraise for candidates, and provide opportunities for you to be involved. Please read through this annual report and ask yourself, what can I do to contribute? There are a wide variety of ways to be involved, including financial



giving, contacting others to encourage voting, or putting a sign for a candidate in your yard. Consider how you might be involved and answer our survey in this annual report. To be successful, we need you.

Let's keep our eyes on 2022, and keep Hays County blue.

Mark Trahan,
Hays County
Democratic Party Chair

HAYS DEM CLUBS

College Democrats & Young Democrats



The College Democrats at Texas State work to uplift progressive voices and causes throughout Hays County. Founded in 1968, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that our community is engaged in civic action. We'll be hosting monthly meetings during the summer. Anyone who hasn't reached the age of 40 can join us at our meetings due to our recent merger with Hays County Young Democrats.

Get Involved: Follow us on social media @txstdems or contact collegedemocrats.txstate@gmail.com

Democracy for Texas



The goals of Democracy for Texas (DFT) are to educate our members on issues and candidates and to promote activism at the neighborhood level. Recent projects include email and phone campaigns opposing voting restriction bills. We meet virtually on the 3rd Thursday of each month from 6:30-8 pm. Please contact us to join a meeting.

Get Involved: Join our Facebook group *Democracy For Texas-Hays County* or contact Hays315@hayscountymdemocrats.org

Dripping Springs Democratic Action



Dripping Springs Democratic Action (DSDA) meets monthly, generally 2nd Sundays, with programs about issues important to our Democratic values, and candidates forums for school board and contested primaries. We regularly donate to the local food pantry, to help our neighbors in need, and work to elect principled progressives to office, and then hold them accountable to those Democratic values. All progressives welcome!

Get Involved: Find us on Facebook at @DSDATX and Facebook group *DSDA Dripping Springs Democratic Action* or contact Info@DSDATX.org

Hays County Tejano Democrats



The Hays County Tejano Democrats (HCTD) Chapter is a member of State Tejano Democrats, the largest Hispanic Democratic organization in the state of Texas. Locally, HCTD works to promote Democratic values and candidates in a variety of ways. During the 2020 general election, HCTD partnered with the Hays County Democratic Party to reach out to Hispanic Voters in low turnout precincts in Hays County. Join us as we continue to make a difference!

Get Involved: HaysTejanoDems.org

Kyle/Buda-Area Democrats



Kyle/Buda-Area Democrats' mission is to elect Democrats at every level of government who will lead the fight for justice, equality, and equal opportunity while holding them and ourselves accountable to our communities. We are a grassroots led organization funded by our dues-paying members and local donors that believe in this mission. We believe in building power through service to our communities, and invite all area Democrats to become involved in our outreach efforts.

Get Involved: KyleBudaDems.com

San Marcos Area Democrats



The San Marcos Area Democrats (SMAD) meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. SMAD is currently meeting via zoom and will do so for the foreseeable future. The purpose of SMAD is to provide information pertinent to democratic party activists in the San Marcos area. We regularly hear from candidates and officeholders. We also give the members opportunities to volunteer for campaigns and voter registration events.

Get Involved: Find us on Facebook at @SanMarcosAreaDemocrats or contact SanMarcosAreaDemocrats@gmail.com

Wimberley Democrats



The Wimberley Democrats (WimDems) support local, state and national Democratic candidates; conduct events to further democratic ideals; provide scholarships for deserving students; and take other actions to support equity and justice for all people everywhere. The Wimberley Democrats Steering Committee (SC) asked our members to tell us what they see as important next steps. We listened. As a result, we are proposing at our Annual May Meeting that the size of the SC be expanded to provide more programs, outreach and support of our candidates.

Get Involved: WimDems.org

2021 GOALS

- Register new voters, including at Texas State and ACC Hays
- Welcome new Democrats to Hays County
- Develop outreach program for specific interest groups
- Recruit candidates for all races in 2022
- Raise funds for 2022
- Fill vacant precinct chair positions

2022 GOALS

- Support candidates with funding and campaign training tools
- Recruit robust volunteer base
- Mobilize volunteers to support candidates
- Countywide GOTV program
- Recruit more election workers
- Elect more Democrats

Hays County Dems Bid Farewell to Two Champions

By Lacy Waller and John Hatch

Earlier this year two leaders in the Hays County Democratic Party (HCDP) announced they were retiring from their elected positions. Buda-area Precinct 5 Justice of the Peace Scott Cary and Hays County Democratic Party Chair Donna Haschke both announced they were stepping down from their positions, leaving big shoes to fill.



judicial robes in service of the people of Hays County for 12 years. A former

In February, Judge Scott Cary announced he was retiring after a lifetime of service that began in law enforcement and ended with donning

sergeant and homicide detective with the Austin Police Department, Cary was chosen to replace long-time Buda JP 5 Judge Lamont Ramage. In addition to his professional duties, Judge Cary is well-known in the community for his extensive volunteer work with Buda Lions Club, serving on Hays Communities YMCA Board of Directors, and as a basketball coach at Marbridge Foundation. He has long been a frequent fixture at the Buda Chamber of Commerce monthly luncheon and passed out many a plate at the Thursday Luncheon at the Onion Creek Senior Center in Buda.

"It was a pleasure and an honor to have Judge Cary serve with our JP team. It's a tough balance with family and being on call 24/7. It's not a job, but a way of life, and he did it well," said Beth Smith, Justice of the Peace Precinct 2.

Judge Cary is looking forward to traveling with his wife Merry, and spending time with their children and grandchildren. HCDP sincerely thanks Judge Cary for his leadership and service to our community, and for demonstrating what a heart for public service looks like in action.

Buda attorney Lucinda Doyle was appointed by Hays County Commissioners Court to serve out the remaining term as Justice of the Peace Precinct 5. Judge Doyle is no stranger to the court, having watched her dad, Judge Lamont Ramage, who served as Precinct 5 JP for over a decade.



"Because of recent personal reasons regarding health and family issues, I must resign my position as Chair of the Hays County Democratic Party," stated Haschke, "I will always advocate for and support the Party and our candidates as much as possible as we move forward

In March, Donna Haschke announced she would be stepping down as Hays County Chair for health reasons, but will continue her work with Hays Dems to keep turning Hays County blue.

into 2022 and beyond. Thanks to all for talent, time, and treasure that has strengthened our efforts!"

Mark Trahan was appointed by the Hays County Democratic County Executive Committee to serve the remainder of the term as chair.

Trahan issued this message to Democrats in Hays County, "as your next chair of the Hays County Democratic Party, I will ensure inclusion as a core value of our procedures and processes. Over the last several years, I have served as a precinct chair, as a co-sponsor of the College Democrats at Texas State University, and spent countless hours working with local, state, and national candidates on their campaigns." "As a social worker by training and with experience working in government and politics," he continued, "I bring a focus on expansion of our purpose to elect Democrats while meeting the needs of our county party. I am ready to address our community and county party needs while developing a strategic plan for our organization."

Trahan said that Hays County is well-positioned to become a model for blue expansion to other surrounding counties. With increasing population and two previous blue cycles, we can be a key catalyst for tipping the state. "To do so," he said, "we must solidify our organizational structure, develop communication channels, recruit for open precinct chair positions, reach out to communities and serve, and fundraise so that we may contribute to our local candidates. I plan to lead these efforts with your help. The 2022 election is right around the corner, and we cannot afford to be held back by previous challenges or differences. We will win. But we must work for it. Now, let us hit the ground running."

We owe a great deal of gratitude to leaders like Donna and Judge Cary. Judge Cary showed what competent and compassionate leadership looks like. With Chairwoman Haschke's leadership, we showed that Hays County could lead the way in proving Texas is truly blue at heart.

Hays County Democratic Party Financial Report

By Linda Rodriguez, Treasurer
Marvadene Eves, Chair Budget Committee

The Hays County Democratic Party is an entirely volunteer organization focused on electing Democrats. We rely almost entirely on donations to operate. A small amount of income is derived from the sale of HCDP merchandise and campaign signs as well as some contributions in-kind. In 2020, we raised \$44,799.53 in donations. Our expenses totaled \$38,170.35.

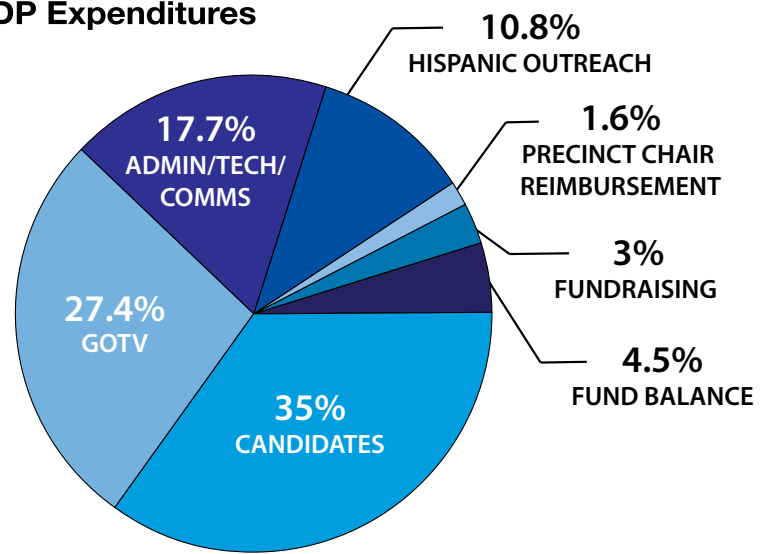
Our biggest donation drive is the annual celebration of LBJ's birthday each August. In 2020 that brought in \$21,123 in total donations with a net revenue of \$19,359.43. In the last few years, we have also worked to build a sustaining member donor program, though annual contributions or monthly recurring donations. Sustaining donors allow a steady source of income so we can plan and budget accordingly. Sustaining membership begins at a minimum contribution of \$60 a year, or \$5 a month. In 2020, we had 138 sustaining members and hope many more will join us. We need you!

GOTV (get out the vote) materials and activities accounted for 27.4 % of expenses in 2020. We produced very popular door hangers, judicial postcards, and mailers that precinct

chairs distributed before the November 3 election. Vote By Mail (VBM) was a huge part of our success and was even more critical during the pandemic when VBM increased significantly and was a critical part of our budget. Voters clamored for campaign signs in 2020, and we were able to purchase and provide low-cost signs and bumper stickers to voters. We also published the first issue of HAYS COUNTY DEMOCRATIC NEWS before the March primary.

Our primary function is to support the Democratic ticket and a huge portion of that is direct funding of candidates. In 2020 we contributed \$14,000 to our candidates to support their campaigns. Two candidates deferred their stipends and asked they be used elsewhere, those funds were applied to Hispanic Outreach, which was greatly expanded in 2020. Hispanic Outreach activities were a joint effort with Hays County Tejano Democrats and largely targeted voters along the I-35 corridor, especially east of the interstate. A series of four postcards with different messages were mailed (at least 10,500 total households), radio ads were run with Univision in the lowest turnout precincts, and posters encouraging turnout were printed and placed in strategic areas to reach Hispanic voters.

2020 HCDP Expenditures

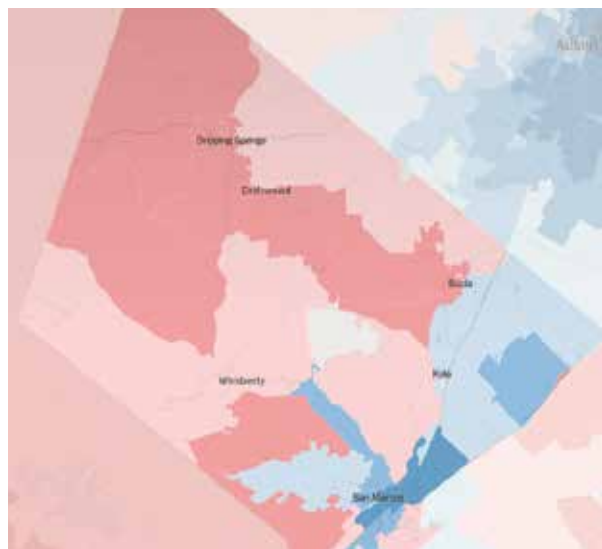


Administrative expenditures, including technology and digital communications, represented 17.7% of our expenses. Administrative expenses include the cost of renting an office in San Marcos where we hold business meetings, provide a voter information center, and distribute GOTV materials. Administrative costs also include utilities, insurance, internet and phone services. Never before have digital services been more valuable than this past year. Our last live monthly meeting of the HCDP County Executive Committee occurred in early March 2020. Since March 2020 all county party meetings and events have been held virtually.

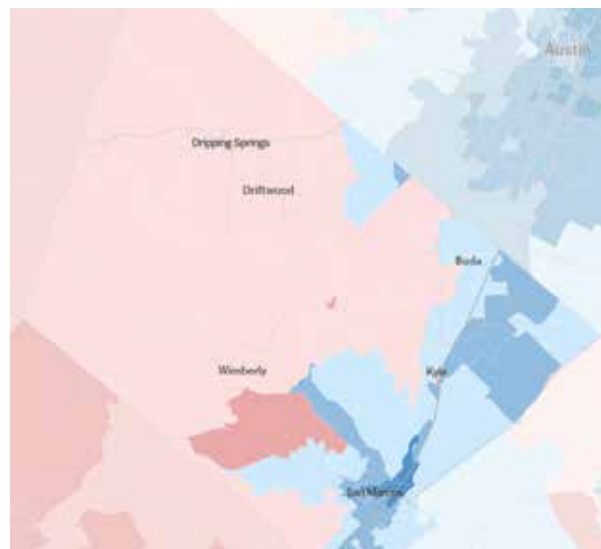
The annual LBJ Birthday celebration even went virtual in 2020 and was a great success, raising funds in line with or exceeding our usual in person event. The HCDP website and social media became an even more critical tool to reach voters in the past year, especially younger voters, thus our spending on social media was crucial to our success.

Nothing would happen without precinct chairs! A portion of the budget is allocated for precinct chair reimbursement for GOTV expenses, however many precinct chairs chose to donate these expenses as a donation in-kind do precinct chair reimbursements totaled only 1.6 % of expenses.

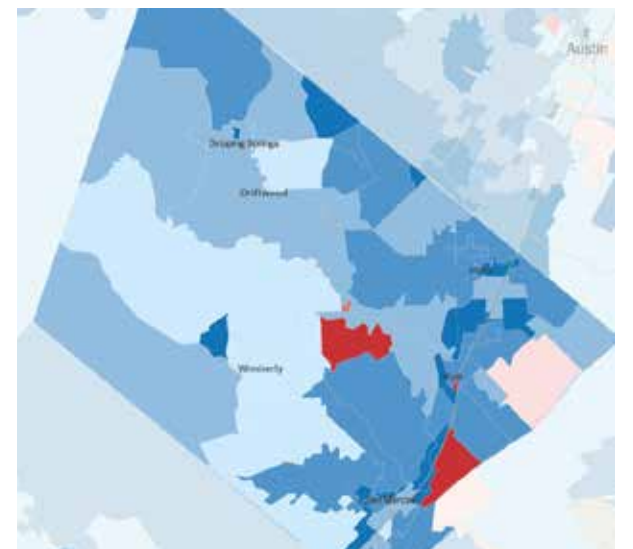
HAYS COUNTY - TRENDING BLUE



Hays 2016



Hays 2020



Hays Change 2016-2020

Since 2016, almost every Hays voting precinct has shifted more Democratic, 5 voting precincts have shifted more Republican. The darkest blue precincts show voting shifts from 15% to 59% toward Democrats. While Hays still has quite a few precincts where more Republicans than Democrats vote, the trend is moving in our direction.

Fresh Start: Use \$17.5 Billion for Education

By Rebecca Bell-Metereau, State Board of Education Member, District 5, San Marcos Resident



As a new member of the State Board of Education, I recognize the dedication of my fellow board members, and I respect TEA Director Mike Morath's commitment to using data to make decisions about education. Our legislature must distribute the federal \$17.5

billion for education and tackle our environmental and social challenges now.

The pandemic has exposed gaps in digital resources and harsh burdens on those living in rural and poor urban areas. It has revealed the weakness of state-based high-stakes testing. The federal dollars can fund summer school and train tutors and volunteers to work with students who need help catching up.

The digital divide highlighted by online teaching calls for investment in a digital new deal that will reap benefits far beyond the costs. Texas has the largest public-school fund in the

nation, but our spending per pupil ranks 41st in spending and 38th in funding nationwide. Given our unequal infrastructure and low teacher pay, investment in education is long overdue. Along with COVID-19, we face weather extremes, pollution, toxic air and water. Our students must graduate ready to build a clean sustainable future based on technology and adaptive skills for the 21st century.

Texas has idealistic, artistic and ingenious students, but teachers are tied to a curriculum that is limited to costly STAAR tests that frustrate teachers and students with little assessment value. STAAR

yields poor longitudinal data since they morph every few years, and no comparative data since other states don't use them. School ratings of A-F punish schools, driving families to abandon neighborhood schools in favor of unproven charters.

Some argue that Texas has already committed to STAAR tests to be administered by Cambium and Pearson, but STAAR tests stress students and parents, pressuring schools to teach to a test that is certain to have disappointing and relatively meaningless results. Imagine how demoralized students, parents, teachers and schools will be to see

scores that will probably reflect the shock of online teaching and missing in-class instruction.

Results from STAAR will not be as useful as data we could glean from adopting the Iowa Skills tests at some future point. Nationally-normed assessments will give us a baseline and show us where our students stand in relation to others from across the United States. We can have a fresh start for our students if we switch to the Iowa Skills test. We can get meaningful and fair assessment of where our students stand in relation to other states from a tool that is considered the gold standard in standardized

assessment.

We can trust teachers to teach the subject and assess students' progress. Our students deserve education that emphasizes STEM, creative arts, critical thinking, and the joy of learning. In light of climate change, students need skills to transition Texas to a stable, sustainable economy. Our curriculum should prepare students for their higher education, careers and lives, not for home-grown tests. We are at a fork in the road. Let's stop STAAR and teaching to the test, and start giving Texas students an education that inspires them and prepares them for the future.

TURN YOUR GREEN TO BLUE

BECOME A SUSTAINING DONOR TO HELP DEMOCRATS WIN

HaysCountyDemocrats.org

Hays County Democratic News was produced by the HCDP Fundraising Committee and Hatch Consulting Group on behalf of Hays County Democratic Party.

	Rebecca Bell-Metereau Kathy Carriker Marvadene Eves	Donna Haschke John Hatch Rebecca Hatch	Brandon James Lori Moya Paul Parrish	Linda Rodriguez Betsy Singleton	Mark Trahan Lacy Waller	
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Turning Hays County Blue Couldn't Happen Without You

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

\$1000+

Dixie Camp, Dripping Springs Susan Denn, Austin Lloyd Doggett, Austin Anna Hargrove, San Marcos	John & Rebecca Hatch, Buda Ray Jacobson, San Marcos Dale & Libby Linebarger, Austin	Paul & Linda Parrish, Driftwood Sharon Reed-Miller, San Marcos Darlene Byrne Campaign, Austin
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\$500+

Kathy Carriker, Dripping Springs Mrs. William H Crook, San Marcos Terry Cummings, Buda Robert Elder, Buda Fay Cliett Gilham, San Marcos	Peggy & Larry Hilburn, San Marcos Ross Jones, Mountain City Sue Jones, Wimberley Martha McKee, Buda Debora Morris, Wimberley Mahlin Musgrove, Buda	Michael Nachbar, Austin Patricia Nilsson, Wimberley Perry & Lynsey Young, Buda Kyle/Buda-Area Democrats, Buda Wimberley Democrats, Wimberley
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\$250+

Debbie & Richard Bentley, Driftwood Scott Cary, Buda Deborah & Ray Chavez, Buda Dennis Dunn, San Marcos Gil Fulmer, San Marcos Jerry Gregoire, Austin Nicholas Hoover, San Marcos Jane Hughson, San Marcos Lucy Johnson, San Marcos	Lucinda Kapral, Austin Jane Kirkham, Kyle Jane Little, Wimberley Melissa & Art Millecam, San Marcos Robert "Bo" Miller, San Marcos Mike & Nora Moeller, Wimberley Gabrielle & Lynny Moore, San Marcos Alfredo Munoz, Lockhart Rosemary & James Nelson, Kyle	Dianne Pape, San Marcos Jeanette & Greg Passty, San Marcos Diana Robinson, Buda Linda A. Rodriguez, Kyle Sherri Tibbe, Buda Alex Villalobos, Kyle Judith Webster, San Marcos Judge Beth Smith Campaign, Mountain City
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\$100+

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Up to \$100

Maria Acosta, San Marcos Alice Adams, Austin Stanley Ashlock, San Marcos Bill & Jean Avera, Dripping Springs Deanna Badgett, San Marcos Linda Benjamin-Miles, Buda Baron Blakley, Richmond Hilda Bogue, Buda Michael Boone, San Marcos Jessie A. Bouldin, Wimberley Debbie Brakefield, San Marcos Judith & Bill Burns, Buda Elaine Cardenas, Wimberley Terry Casparis, Johnson City J Childress, Driftwood Michelle Cohen, Kyle Dixie Davis, Kyle James Doddrell, Dripping Springs Alex Dormont, Dripping Springs Jay Edwards, San Marcos Jamie Eickhoff, San Marcos Jonathan Engel, San Marcos Laura Ewing, Wimberley	William David Friesenhahn, San Marcos Bert Garza, Buda Gary Gibbs, Kyle Mitzi Gopffarth, San Marcos Gary Grafel, Buda Anne Halsey, San Marcos Patrick Hargadon, Dripping Springs Diana Hendricks, San Marcos Diane Hervol, Kyle Karen Hester, Oakland Joyce Humble, Johnson City David Janise, Austin Jeffrey Kaufmann, Buda James Kilby, San Marcos Theresa Kilday, Buda Esperanza Kruse, Austin Lei Ann Lawson Ogle, San Marcos Joseph Leonard, San Marcos Jeannie Lewis, San Marcos Susan Luton, Austin Connie Madia, Kyle Kathryn McCarty, San Marcos	R. Jon McGee, San Marcos Celeste Montforton, San Marcos Margie Moore, Austin Stella Susan Morgan, Kyle Anthony Padilla, Buda David Parker, Buda Linda Paul, Wimberley Carol Peters, Kyle Diane Phalen, San Marcos Timothy Rice, San Marcos Sterling H Rogers, San Marcos Jeff Sandman, Buda John Sanford, Buda Craig Smith, Buda Karen H Smith, Kyle Leanne Smith, San Marcos Jeff Thompson, Kyle Charles Tubbs, Buda Bonnie & Terry Tull, Austin Michelle Valdivinos, San Marcos Lacy Waller, Kyle Mindy Webber, Wimberley
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OUR DEMOCRATIC ELECTED OFFICIALS

Congressman Lloyd Doggett
State Senator Judith Zaffirini
State Representative Erin Zwiener
State Board of Education Member Rebecca Bell-Metereau
Judge Sherri Tibbe, 453rd District Court
County Judge Ruben Becerra
County Clerk Elaine Cardenas
Commissioner Debbie Gonzales Ingalsbe, Commissioner Pct 1
Judge Jo Anne Prado, JP 1-1
Judge Maggie Moreno, JP 1-2
Judge Beth Smith, JP 2
Judge Lucinda Doyle, JP 5
Constable David Peterson, Precinct 1
Constable Michael Torres, Precinct 2

OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the backbone and the heart of the Hays County Democratic Party, we are fortunate to have such an abundance of talented, dedicated people, far too many to list.

To those who walk the blocks, knock the doors, register the voters, drop the lit, make the calls, staff the events, put up signs, write postcards, serve on committees, serve as election workers, staff headquarters, help candidates, serve as precinct chairs, and do all of the many odds and ends that are required to keep the organizing running,

Your time helping Democrats is the most valuable contribution of all.

A SINCERE THANK YOU!

Every effort has been made to complete an accurate list. Please notify info@hayscountymocrats.org of any corrections that need to be made.

CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE NUMBERS

Hays County Democratic Party

\$44,800
total contributions



462
separate contributions

191
contributors



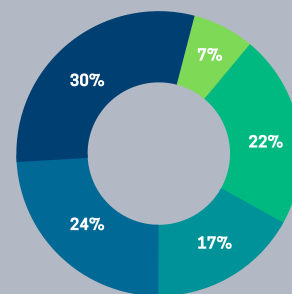
138
sustaining donors

\$97
average donation



ANNUAL SHARE OF CONTRIBUTIONS

- Under \$100
- \$100-249
- \$250-499
- \$500-999
- \$1000+



JOIN THE PARTY! BECOME A SUSTAINING DONOR

Join us at HaysCountyDemocrats.org

HCDP Sustaining Donor Levels

SKY \$60
AZURE \$150
TEAL \$250
SAPPHIRE \$500
INDIGO \$1000
MIDNIGHT \$2500

CONTRIBUTE TODAY!



A DEMOCRAT IN EVERY RACE

Offices Up for Election in 2022

U.S. Representative, District 21
Portion of Hays

U.S. Representative, District 25
Portion of Hays

U.S. Representative, District 35
Lloyd Doggett
Portion of Hays

State Senator, District 21
Judith Zaffirini
Portion of Hays

State Senator, District 25
Portion of Hays

State Representative, District 45
Erin Zwiener
Countywide

District Court 207th
Countywide

District Court 274th
Countywide

District Court 428th
Countywide

Criminal District Attorney
Countywide

County Judge Ruben Becerra
Countywide

STATEWIDE

Governor
Lieutenant Governor
Comptroller
Attorney General
Land Commissioner

County Court at Law #1
Countywide

County Court at Law #2
Countywide

County Court at Law #3
Countywide

District Clerk
Countywide

County Clerk Elaine Cardenas
Countywide

County Treasurer
Countywide

County Surveyor
Countywide

Commissioner, Precinct 2
Buda/Kyle

Commissioner, Precinct 4
Dripping Springs, Driftwood, Kyle, San Marcos

JP Precinct 1 Place 2
Maggie Moreno
San Marcos

JP Precinct 2
Beth Smith
Kyle

JP Precinct 3
Wimberley

JP Precinct 4
Dripping Springs

JP Precinct 5
Lucinda Doyle
Buda

Ag Commissioner
1 on Railroad Commission,
3 seats on Texas Supreme Court
3 seats on Texas Court of Criminal Appeals

For more information on running for office contact
info@hayscountymocrats.org

Texas Voters Under Attack, Democrats Fight Back

By Lacy Waller

In March of 2020, long lines wrapped around the LBJ Student Center at Texas State University in San Marcos. Voters faced hours-long waits to cast their ballots in the 2020 primary election on Super Tuesday, with the final Hays County ballots cast near midnight.

By that time the polls had long been officially closed and



"We cannot talk about voting rights without talking about equality and equity."
- Rep. Erin Zwiener (D-Driftwood)

Texas' Democratic primary had already been called for Joe Biden.

In the fall of 2020, despite the pandemic and Republican legal maneuvers to prevent counties from making voting more accessible, Texas saw the highest voter turnout in decades.

Hays County became the first county in the United States to exceed the entire vote total from the 2016 presidential election—with a week still left in early voting. Hays County eventually topped out at 72% turnout.

Texas Voting Rights On the Line

In the 2021 Legislative session, Texas Republicans have gone all-in on voter suppression efforts. To both prop up the "big lie" of a stolen election as well as attempt to blunt Democratic gains in urban areas and diversifying suburban communities.

More than a year into a global pandemic, following Winter Storm Uri and a catastrophic failure of the state power grid, and with a \$246 billion state budget to pass, it would seem state lawmakers would have enough work to do in the tight 140-day legislative session. But no, Republicans are prioritizing efforts to make it more difficult for Texans to cast a ballot.

"Under the guise of 'election integrity,' House Bill 6 is an egregious attack on Texans' voting rights," said Rep. Erin Zwiener, D-Driftwood. "In addition to making it more difficult to vote, this bill would grossly expand the criminal penalties for voting-related offenses, using scare tactics to dissuade folks from voting. The many anti-voting bills that are making their way through the Legislature are rooted in racism, ableism, and classism."

Texas is the latest

battleground in a nationwide GOP effort to pass new laws restricting voting access. Across 47 states, Republicans have proposed more than 360 voter suppression laws designed to limit early, mail-in, in-person, and election day voting. In Texas, Republicans are attempting to push through new legislation that, if signed into law, would lead to sweeping changes for how Texans can vote and criminalize innocent voting errors and mistakes made by election workers.

Similar to voting bills in Georgia and other states, the Texas legislation is designed to diminish local control over elections. Democrats have argued any attempt to "standardize" voting hours, number of polling sites, and number of voting machines across the state are ludicrous in a state with counties with populations ranging from 4.6 million to less than 200.

Purity at the Ballot Box

In a state that already has some of the strictest voting laws in the county, the legislation is targeted squarely at diverse, urban counties that expanded voting options amid the pandemic. Texas has a long history of passing laws that have a disparate impact on marginalized communities, and the two omnibus voting restriction bills filed this legislative session are no exception.

Near the end of a 12-hour senate floor debate over SB 7, the Senate omnibus election bill, Zaffirini said, "I'm in disbelief that our esteemed body would consider legislation we consider detrimental to countless persons of color. We urge you to hear our voice and public testimony." She noted there were "numerous pleas from our fellow Texans not to do this, we heard from men and women of color who interpret Senate Bill 7 as yet another sign that those who control their state do not

welcome their participation."

What was also presented as the voter suppression bills made their way through the Legislature was testimony from



"By reducing the number of polling locations, restricting forms of voting that improve efficiency and enhance convenience for voters, and greatly curtailing mail-in voting, Senate Bill 7 is a giant step backward for our democracy."

Sen. Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo)

the chief election official of Texas, Secretary of State Ruth Hughs, stating that the 2020

elections were "free, fair and secure."

SB 7 was passed by the Senate with a party-line vote. Once it moved to the House, the floor debate over Texas voter suppression bills rose to national attention following an exchange between Democratic Rep. Rafael Anchía and Republican bill sponsor Rep. Briscoe Cain over the overtly racist language in the bill and its stated purpose to punish fraud and maintain "purity of the ballot box."

Anchía pointed out that the "peculiar language," taken directly from the Texas Constitution, was passed following the Civil War and used well into the twentieth century to disenfranchise people deemed "unfit to vote," giving rise to all-White primaries.

"We cannot talk about voting rights without talking about equality and equity," said state Rep. Erin Zwiener. "Senate Bill 7 will make it harder to vote—particularly

for our communities of color. These bills continue voter suppression efforts from the 1800s with layers of unnecessary restrictions to accessing the ballot box."

Many House Democrats showed up to fight the bill wearing face masks that read "Good Trouble," quoting the late civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis.

Texas Democrats have argued that the logistical details of administering elections, such as voting hours, number of polling sites and voting machines, are best left to local officials, officials empowered to address the problems and needs in their communities.

The racist language was ultimately stricken from the bill and following hours of floor debate and failed amendments, the bill ultimately passed out of the House around 3 a.m. along a near party-line vote. A committee will work to reconcile the two different versions passed by each legislative body.

Voting Rights Supporters Rally

Republican assaults on voting in Texas and other Republican-controlled states have made it more urgent for the U.S. Senate to pass the For the People Act at the federal level, which would somewhat mitigate the new state laws and forthcoming challenges related to redistricting.



"We need to organize now to be prepared to turn out the vote no matter what new barriers are erected."
- Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-TX)

"After a historic 2020 election where Hays County turned blue, we face significant obstacles with these GOP legislative attacks on voting rights," said Rep. Lloyd Doggett, D-TX, "that's why we must enact HRI, the For the People Act, to protect our democracy by setting uniform, national standards. It favors turning

out the votes, not throwing them out. It will make the right to vote more than a paper guarantee—allowing people to know their own power and better hold public officials accountable."

The Republican push for severe restrictions at the ballot box following the most secure election in U.S. history has been characterized as "solutions in search of problems."

Major corporations, business organizations, voting rights groups, local election officials, faith leaders, and Texas Democrats have all mounted efforts to oppose Republicans as they move to finalize bills that would make it harder to vote.

None of this has phased Texas Republicans. They are clearly more concerned by potential primary challengers from their right than from Democrats.

Texas State A Voter Friendly Campus

One recent bright spot for voter access in Hays County is the recent designation of Texas State University as a "Voter Friendly Campus" based on the school's nonpartisan, university-wide and inclusive programming and events that encouraged students to register and vote in the 2020 elections.

As part of the 2020 effort more than 1,770 people were registered to vote and voter outreach events were organized including candidate town halls, a voting information website, and voter registration events across campuses including drive-up voter registration.

"Texas State University was recently designated a Voter Friendly Campus thanks to the tireless work of university students, faculty, staff, and community organizers," said Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra.

However, Becerra offered the following warning, "unfortunately the Republican-controlled Commissioners Court has tried to systematically undo their hard work. The county recently voted to relocate the on-campus polling location from the center of campus. Limiting access or accessibility to the ballot box is voter suppression. Period."

Eyes on 2022

While the final assault on voting rights has yet to be passed in Texas, Hays Democrats head into 2022 prepared to counter the voter suppression with efforts expanding on the voter turnout success in 2020.

"We need to organize now to be prepared to turn



"My office remains vigilant and is working every day to ensure our citizens' right to vote is not further infringed upon."

Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra

out the vote no matter what new barriers are erected and following GOP extreme partisan gerrymandering in October reshapes our districts," said Doggett.

As one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation, Hays has many new people moving to the county who share Democratic values, and getting those people to the polls in 2022 will be the focus of the local Democratic Party.

"The right to vote is a human right," said Mark Trehan, Hays County Democratic Party Chair, Hays Democrats are dedicated to protecting this right with efforts to increase access and voter registration. We aim to increase turnout for the 2022 election. When we do that, democracy wins."

SAVE THE DATE

Hays County Democratic Party Annual LBJ Birthday Celebration

Sunday, August 29, 2021



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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