

Getting to a Better Place: Why Should Every Citizen Vote?

One goal of my campaign is to engage more people in the political process. Not just because I think it will help get me elected, but also because I believe that the more sides of an argument we hear the more likely we are to find workable solutions.

Almost all of my adult life, I have campaigned to register new voters, believing democracy works best when everyone has a place at the table. Sadly, Texas always comes out at or near the bottom for public engagement, voter registration, and voter turnout, especially among young people. When I work voter registration, people too often respond with such remarks as: "My vote wouldn't matter;" "Politicians don't listen to people like me;" "It's all too big a mess;" or "I don't get into politics."

I would just like to point out that people who are "into politics" aren't doing such a great a job for us, so maybe it's time to engage with those who are not members of either of the two warring tribes. The "politically disengaged" can probably inject some common sense into this process. It seems to me those who are "into politics" are too entrenched in their own positions to even listen politely to the other side. In fact, if we wade through the angry rhetoric and listen to the many sides of most issues, we would likely find more common ground than we think.

For example, let's look at the issues I choose to focus on in this campaign: addressing the health care crisis, improving our public schools, increasing access to college, and expanding availability of broadband Internet. Most people of all political persuasions are likely to acknowledge that if we have an overall healthier, better educated, and more connected population, Texas will be a much better place to live. If we can agree on these basic premises, we can argue passionately over how to get to that better place. That's how democracy is supposed to work: we should be fighting over how to build a better place for the next generation of Texans, not trying to destroy the rival political party.

Unfortunately, Texas has some of the nation's most restrictive voting rules and one of the lowest voter turnouts. I suspect that those limitations on the number of Texans who actually vote has made politicians lazy. After all, it's always easier to tear someone else down than it is to find real solutions. As Sam Rayburn famously said, "Any jackass can kick down a barn, but it takes a good carpenter to build one."

In the coming months, I plan to focus primarily on registering more voters and getting more people involved in problem solving (i.e. politics as it should be practiced.) If you want to help with my campaign, the first step is to register more voters.

Here's the link to the Secretary of State's training material:

<https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/forms/volunteer-deputy-registrar-training.pdf> and to the test you take to be a deputy voter registrar:

<https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/forms/exam-volunteer-deputy-registrars.pdf>. And here's a list of the election officials in each Texas county:

<https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/votregduties.shtml>. Just find your county and get started!