

Guest
Column

Don't let your government down

Young people have let their local government down. They are not involved. Citizenship in our great country takes work. Young people often think about their "fit" bodies. Well, the political body also needs to be "fit." The community will fall apart if younger folks do not start to take an interest. Government at the local level impacts you where you live. Here's a brief quiz: Can you name the members of the County Commissioners, the City Councils, the School Boards, and the water entities, UGRA and Headwaters? Are they appointed or elected? Do they represent a geographic area or the area at large?

I would like to issue a call to action by every government student at Tivy High School or at Schreiner University to attend a local meeting of one of the political units mentioned above. They do vital things for your community. They affect your lives. Report back what you learn to others in your class. Learn what it is that makes an informed citizen and get your friends involved.



Ann G. Sullivan

March 11-17 is Sunshine Week, a national initiative that calls attention to the threats to transparency in government access. Whether it is to track potential environmental hazards or to attend a meeting where decisions about land use are being made, "sunshine laws" afford us access and create government transparency. We have the right to know what our government is doing and to have access to public records and government meetings. This means we should expect that notices of meetings are made public, and that the votes of elected officials will be recorded. Did you know that Texas is one of 10 or so states that do not require their Legislatures to record their votes?

However, these "sunshine" laws are only as good as we, the people, demand that they be. Finding information about how the government is serving the public has always been somewhat difficult. But in the post-9/11 age, these challenges are even greater. In the name of homeland security, "sunshine laws" and the opportunities for citizens to gain access to information have been constricted. As our elected representatives in Washington work to bring about greater transparency through ethics, lobbying and other reforms, so too should our leaders in Kerr County work to these ends. We citizens must demand such efforts of our representatives at every level of government.

As members of the League of Women Voters, we are always working to keep our community strong, healthy and vibrant, and that all starts with having an open government.

We, the Kerrville Area League of Women Voters (it is not just for women anymore) would welcome you as a student or regular member. We are a non-partisan political organization — we do not advocate for or against any political party or individual. Our focus is on citizen education and issue awareness. Do something for your country and yourself and become involved. My name is Ann G. Sullivan. I am a League officer and a former City Council Member, so I know what voter apathy does, and I know how very important it is to have an informed citizenry.

If you would like further information about the League's mission, activities and opportunities, contact me at 895-5841 or annrps69@kvc.com.