



# Voters Guide

EARLY VOTING • MAY 16 – 20

ELECTION DAY, MAY 24, 2016 • POLLS OPEN 7AM TO 7PM

*Cast an informed vote in the Primary Runoff Election • Candidates' answers on issues that affect you:*  
ENVIRONMENT • EDUCATION • ACCESS TO JUSTICE

## About This Voters Guide

This printed *Voters Guide* lists candidates in contested races who are on the May 24, 2016, Primary Runoff Election ballot and provides their answers to questions posed by the League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund.

Additional information can be accessed online at [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org), including an online *Voters Guide* with candidate races not included in the printed *Voters Guide*. VOTE411 allows voters to enter an address and review races and ballot initiatives specific to that address. It also includes the responses of candidates who miss the print deadline.

This *Voters Guide* is funded and published by the League of Women Voters of Texas Education Fund. For more than 95 years, helping voters cast an informed vote when they go to the polls has been the primary goal of the League of Women Voters. As an organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, the League believes that all of us are stakeholders in *Making Democracy Work*®. Neither the League nor the Education Fund supports or opposes any political party or candidate.

## Races & Candidates

This *Voters Guide* lists candidates for statewide and regional races in Texas, including Railroad Commissioner, Court of Criminal Appeals, Courts of Appeals, and the State Board of Education.

Only candidates in political parties that select their candidates in the primary election are included, currently Democratic and Republican parties. Candidates in other parties are selected by convention.

Questionnaires are sent to candidates in races that are contested within the same party. Candidate replies are printed without editing or verification. Due to space restrictions, candidates are given strict character limits. Replies exceeding the character limit are indicated by slashes (///). Candidates are asked to avoid references to their opponents; those who do not comply are listed with the notation, "Response does not meet criteria." Candidates appearing with no photo failed to submit one. Those who do not respond to our questionnaire are listed with the notation, "No response received by print deadline."

This *Voters Guide* is organized by office, with candidates listed alphabetically by party. Ballot order may vary from county to county.

## What to Take to the Polls

### TEXAS REQUIRES VOTERS TO SHOW PHOTO ID

Texas now requires voters to show an acceptable photo ID at the polls. The only acceptable photo IDs are:

#### TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (DPS) ISSUED PHOTO IDS

- Driver license
- Personal identification card
- Concealed handgun license
- Election Identification Certificate

#### UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ISSUED PHOTO IDS

- Passport
- Military identification card
- Citizenship certificate or naturalization certificate with photograph

*Only the above photo IDs can be accepted at the polls. Other photo IDs, including student IDs, employer IDs and out-of-state driver licenses, cannot be accepted. See PHOTO ID DETAILS AND EXCEPTIONS on back page.*

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# RAILROAD COMMISSIONER

6-YEAR TERM. MUST BE AT LEAST 25 YEARS OLD, A TEXAS RESIDENT, AND A REGISTERED VOTER. REGULATES THE OIL & GAS INDUSTRY, GAS UTILITIES, PIPELINE SAFETY, SAFETY IN THE LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS INDUSTRY, & SURFACE COAL AND URANIUM MINING IN TEXAS.

texas  
2016

## QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

**BACKGROUND:** What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

**TRANS-PECOS PIPELINE:** How would you balance the environmental concerns of Big Bend residents related to construction of the Trans-Pecos natural gas pipeline with oil and gas industry interests?

**URBAN DRILLING:** What are the main health and safety issues related to oil and gas drilling (fracking) in urban areas, and how would you address them?

**OTHER ISSUES:** Aside from the issues above, what are the two most serious issues the Railroad Commission will face during the next term, and how would you address them?



### WAYNE CHRISTIAN (R)

**BACKGROUND:** As a businessman and a former legislator, I am the only candidate in this race with experience in doing what the railroad commission actually does — creating a regulatory environment that protects our communities while promoting responsible oil and gas production. In the Texas House, I served on multiple committees that handled energy policy and had direct oversight of the Railroad Commission.

**TRANS-PECOS PIPELINE:** As Railroad Commissioner, it is important to balance the rights of landowners and industry across the state. On average 50 miles of 20-inch pipe keeps over 1,500 trucks off our roads each day. From a safety standpoint, it is essential that we have a robust network of pipelines across the state to transport our energy resources. At the same time, the property rights of landowners are important and we must not allow for those right to be eroded.

**URBAN DRILLING:** Whether the production is happening in urban or rural areas, we must ensure that all energy production is done in a way that is safe and responsible.

**OTHER ISSUES:** 1) The oil, gas and coal community deserves consistent and predictable leadership that is based on science, not speculation. 2) Texas needs a fighter that will stand up to the federal government and Obama's EPA to ensure Texas is able to continue producing fossil fuels. Our strong energy sector in Texas helps keep energy prices low and provides much needed revenue to the state budget, funding our schools, roads, and other pressing obligations.

**EDUCATION:** BBA in General Business; Stephen F. Austin University

**PHONE:** (936) 598-9966 | **EMAIL:** wayne@christianfortexas.com

**WEBSITE:** <http://ChristianForTexas.com>



### CODY GARRETT (D)

**BACKGROUND:** I am the only Democrat in the race. I am for the people, not the vested interests. I want to keep gasoline at two dollars a gallon and effectively institute a moratorium on natural gas rates. We need to restore balance to a commission that is dominated by one party and one region.

**TRANS-PECOS PIPELINE:** By listening.

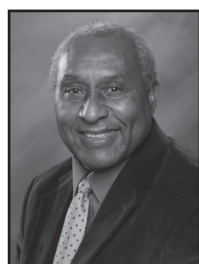
**URBAN DRILLING:** Earthquakes, disposal wells -- in effect we need to know what they're putting down.

**OTHER ISSUES:** I will serve the people, not the interests.

**EDUCATION:** UT Austin Bachelor of Science in Speech; UT Austin Master's of Arts in Writing; Temple High School 1989

**PHONE:** (512) 971-5986 | **EMAIL:** cody.garrett@gmail.com

**WEBSITE:** <http://www.texansforcodygarrett.com>



### GRADY YARBROUGH (D)

**BACKGROUND:** My academic training in the field of Business would give me that training needed to reach fair and equitable decisions facing the commission. Of course my years of service have been in the field of education, which requires the same logic, and critical thinking skills as any other field of endeavor.

**TRANS-PECOS PIPELINE:** The impact upon Human life, and the environment would always be my major concern.

The construction of the Trans-Pecos Gas pipeline would pose a Health and safety hazard to the residents of the area, and would oppose, based upon those reasons.

**URBAN DRILLING:** The reasons for my objections to fracking in urban areas, is the danger posed by such activity. Fracking, according to the U S Geological Survey contributes to the Earthquakes which are occurring, with frequency, within the Metro-Plex and surrounding counties. If this activity continue it will cause damage to homes and businesses within a very, densely populated

area, which would put lives at risk. My Proposal has been, for nearly three years, is to suspend Fracking within cities over one thousand inhabitants. This activity will eventually cause some areas to be declared an "Earth Quake" Zone, which will cause

**OTHER ISSUES:** Home owners Insurance premiums to increase, which will be an added cost to the taxpayer, of which he, the taxpayer, received no benefit from this activity. The Loss of confidence is a serious issue facing the commission at this time. This can be restored by adopting people oriented Solutions to those solutions

**EDUCATION:** Obtained a Bachelors degree in Business Education. Also, obtained a Master of Education in Guidance, Counseling, as well as Certification in Public school administration.

**PHONE:** (903) 216-3131 | **EMAIL:** No response.

**WEBSITE:** No response.

NO RESPONSE RECEIVED BY PRINT DEADLINE. SEE VOTE411 FOR ANY LATER RESPONSES.

**GARY GATES (R)**

# Voting for Judges in Texas

ALTHOUGH IN SOME STATES JUDGES ARE APPOINTED, MOST JUDGES IN TEXAS ARE ELECTED. VOTING DECISIONS IN JUDICIAL RACES ARE AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT THAT A TEXAS VOTER MAKES.

## Why are judicial elections important?

Judges make decisions about fundamental issues that affect all of us — family life, education, health care, housing, employment, finances, discrimination, civil rights, public safety, and government actions. Those decisions can have a long-lasting impact on individuals, groups, and the public as a whole. It is critical that our judges make fair decisions based upon open-minded and unbiased consideration of the facts and the law in each case. Judges must know the law and not be influenced by any external political or economic factors.

## What should voters look for when electing judges?

According to the American Bar Association, principles to consider in selection of judges include:

- *Judges should uphold the rule of law.*
- *Judges should be independent and impartial.*
- *Judges should possess the appropriate temperament and character.*
- *Judges should possess the appropriate capabilities and credentials.*
- *Judges and the judiciary should have the confidence of the public.*
- *The judicial system should be diverse and reflective of the society it serves.*
- *Judges should be constrained to perform their duties in a manner that justifies public faith and confidence in the court.*

Unlike candidates for most political offices, judicial candidates cannot make promises about decisions they would make when certain issues or types of cases come up in their court. Questions posed to judges, therefore, focus on improvements they would make to their court, the need for impartiality and how they would increase access to justice.

## How is the Texas court system organized?

The Texas court system is made up of a statewide network of trial courts and appellate courts. In trial courts, judges and/or juries evaluate the facts and the law and make a decision in a civil or criminal legal dispute. When decisions in most trial courts are appealed, they are sent to an appellate court where judges consider what happened at the trial court, evaluate legal arguments, and then decide if a mistake was made. See <http://www.courts.state.tx.us/pubs/court-overview.pdf> for a chart of the Texas court structure.

The state's two highest courts, the Texas Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeals, have both administrative and appellate responsibilities. The Supreme Court is the final court of appeals within Texas for both civil and juvenile cases. The Court of Criminal Appeals hears criminal cases that are appealed from one of the 14 Courts of Appeals and death penalty cases that by law go straight to the Court of Criminal Appeals.

All members of each court are elected for six-year terms, with three elected every two years. Any vacancies are filled by gubernatorial appointment until the next general election.

## Identify the Court of Appeals Serving Your Texas County:

**1<sup>ST</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** AUSTIN, BRAZORIA, CHAMBERS, COLORADO, FORT BEND, GALVESTON, GRIMES, HARRIS, WALLER & WASHINGTON

**2<sup>ND</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** ARCHER, CLAY, COOKE, DENTON, HOOD, JACK, MONTAGUE, PARKER, TARRANT, WICHITA, WISE & YOUNG

**3<sup>RD</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** BASTROP, BELL, BLANCO, BURNET, CALDWELL, COKE, COMAL, CONCHO, FAYETTE, HAYS, IRION, LAMPASAS, LEE, LLANO, MCCULLOCH, MILAM, MILLS, RUNNELS, SAN SABA, SCHLEICHER, STERLING, TOM GREEN, TRAVIS & WILLIAMSON

**4<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** ATASCOSA, BANDERA, BEXAR, BROOKS, DIMMIT, DUVAL, EDWARDS, FRIO, GILLESPIE, GUADALUPE, JIM HOGG, JIM WELLS, KARNES, KENDALL, KERR, KIMBLE, KINNEY, LA SALLE, MASON, MAVERICK, MCMULLEN, MEDINA, MENARD, REAL, STARR, SUTTON, UVALDE, VAL VERDE, WEBB, WILSON, ZAPATA & ZAVALA

**5<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** COLLIN, DALLAS, GRAYSON, HUNT, KAUFMAN & ROCKWALL

**6<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** BOWIE, CAMP, CASS, DELTA, FANNIN, FRANKLIN, GREGG, HARRISON, HOPKINS, HUNT, LAMAR, MARION, MORRIS, PANOLA, RED RIVER, RUSK, TITUS, UPSHUR & WOOD

**7<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** ARMSTRONG, BAILEY, BRISCOE, CARSON, CASTRO, CHILDRESS, COCHRAN, COLLINGSWORTH, COTTLE, CROSBY, DALLAM, DEAF SMITH, DICKENS, DONLEY, FLOYD, FOARD, GARZA, GRAY, HALE, HALL, HANSFORD, HARDEMAN, HARTLEY, HEMPHILL, HOCKLEY, HUTCHINSON, KENT, KING, LAMB, LIPSCOMB, LUBBOCK, LYNN, MOORE, MOTLEY, OCHILTREE, OLDHAM, PARMER, POTTER, RANDALL, ROBERTS, SHERMAN, SWISHER, TERRY, WHEELER, WILBARGER & YOAKUM

**8<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** ANDREWS, BREWSTER, CRANE, CROCKETT, CULBERSON, EL PASO, HUDSPETH, JEFF DAVIS, LOVING, PECOS, PRESIDIO, REAGAN, REEVES, TERRELL, UPTON, WARD & WINKLER

**9<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** HARDIN, JASPER, JEFFERSON, LIBERTY, MONTGOMERY, NEWTON, ORANGE, POLK, SAN JACINTO & TYLER

**10<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** BOSQUE, BRAZOS, BURLESON, CORYELL, ELLIS, FALLS, FREESTONE, HAMILTON, HILL, JOHNSON, LEON, LIMESTONE, MADISON, MCLENNAN, NAVARRO, ROBERTSON, SOMERVELL & WALKER

**11<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** BAYLOR, BORDEN, BROWN, CALLAHAN, COLEMAN, COMANCHE, DAWSON, EASTLAND, ECTOR, ERATH, FISHER, GAINES, GLASSCOCK, HASKELL, HOWARD, JONES, KNOX, MARTIN, MIDLAND, MITCHELL, NOLAN, PALO PINTO, SCURRY, SHACKELFORD, STEPHENS, STONEWALL, TAYLOR & THROCKMORTON

**12<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** ANDERSON, ANGELINA, CHEROKEE, GREGG, HENDERSON, HOUSTON, NACOGDOCHES, RAINS, RUSK, SABINE, SAN AUGUSTINE, SHELBY, SMITH, TRINITY, UPSHUR, VAN ZANDT & WOOD

**13<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** ARANSAS, BEE, CALHOUN, CAMERON, DE WITT, GOLIAD, GONZALES, HIDALGO, JACKSON, KENEDY, KLEBERG, LAVACA, LIVE OAK, MATAGORDA, NUECES, REFUGIO, SAN PATRICIO, VICTORIA, WHARTON & WILLACY

**14<sup>TH</sup> COURT OF APPEALS:** AUSTIN, BRAZORIA, CHAMBERS, COLORADO, FORT BEND, GALVESTON, GRIMES, HARRIS, WALLER & WASHINGTON

# TEXAS COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS

6-YEAR TERM. MUST BE AGE 35-74 YEARS, A U.S. CITIZEN, A TEXAS RESIDENT, LICENSED TO PRACTICE LAW IN TEXAS, A REGISTERED VOTER, & HAVE 10 YEARS EXPERIENCE AS A LAWYER OR JUDGE. REVIEWS ALL DEATH PENALTY CASES & APPLICATIONS FOR HABEAS CORPUS IN FELONY CASES, HEARS FINAL APPEALS ON CRIMINAL CASES, & ADMINISTERS PUBLICLY FUNDED JUDICIAL AND ATTORNEY EDUCATION.

TEXAS  
2016

## QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

**BACKGROUND:** What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

**IMPARTIALITY:** How do you maintain impartiality, given the need to raise funds for political campaigns?

**ACCOMPLISHMENT:** Describe an accomplishment of which you are proud and how it would help make you a better justice on this court.

**OTHER ISSUES:** Aside from the issues above, what are the two most pressing issues facing the Court in the next term, and how would you address them?

## JUDGE • PLACE 2



### MARY LOU KEEL (R)

**BACKGROUND:** Felony trial court judge, 1995-present. Trial and appellate prosecutor 1986-1994. Briefing attorney, First Court of Appeals, 1985-86. Board certified in criminal law since 1990. Top-rated among my peers in the 2015 Houston Bar Association Judicial Poll for impartiality and following the law.

**IMPARTIALITY:** I focus on the facts of the case and the applicable law.

**ACCOMPLISHMENT:** The Court of Criminal Appeals hears criminal cases on appeal, nothing else. Candidates for that court should demonstrate an aptitude

for that kind of work. I do. I represented the State in 279 criminal cases on appeal when I was a Harris County prosecutor.

**OTHER ISSUES:** (1) I would like to see the court issue its opinions more decisively, i.e., without the need for rehearing. (2) I would like the court to issue its opinions in a more timely fashion. I would address these issues by lending my three decades of experience to the job and working hard.

**EDUCATION:** JD, University of Houston, 1985; BA, University of Texas, 1982

**PHONE:** (713) 755-6778 | **EMAIL:** judgemlkeel@gmail.com

**WEBSITE:** <http://www.maryloukeel.com>



### RAY WHELESS (R)

**BACKGROUND:** Judge for fifteen years trying criminal cases from capital murder to DWI and civil cases. I was in private practice for twenty years. I am Board Certified in two areas of the law. I have tried over 500 criminal jury trials and have never had a jury verdict reversed. I have handled appeals to the Court of Criminal Appeals. I am the qualified Conservative as shown by my many endorsements

**IMPARTIALITY:** I was appointed to my first bench as a County Court at Law Judge and appointed by the Governor as a District Judge. I have never had an opponent. Because I didn't have to campaign, I did not accept campaign contributions until a few years ago. I have now received contributions from a broad cross section of citizens. Most of these people are not criminal defense lawyers and will never have cases before me. I pledge that I will follow the Rule Of Law and administer justice blindly.

**ACCOMPLISHMENT:** I created the first DWI/Drug Court Program in Collin County and serve as the Chairman of the Specialized Courts Advisory Council to Governor Greg Abbott. My role is to establish best practices and recommend

funding to the Governor for alternatives to incarceration such as Veterans Court Programs and Drug Court Programs. As a member of this Court, I will help to shape our criminal justice system policy and help administer State funds to train judges in these specialized courts.

**OTHER ISSUES:** 1. Statewide electronic filing of all documents in criminal cases still needs to be implemented. A hearing is scheduled in April of this year to address these issues. Provisions will have to be made to allow pro se citizens to file paper documents. 2. The Court is struggling with issues surrounding the Michael Morton Act requiring prosecutors and law enforcement to turn over all exculpatory evidence. This Court must affirm proper convictions but remain vigilant against wrongful convictions.

**EDUCATION:** I earned my GED in the Air Force during the Vietnam War era and attended college at night. I earned a Bachelors in Business Administration at California State University and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from the University of Texas at Austin, Texas' top law school. Double Board Certified. AV rated. Licensed to practice law in Texas and Alaska.

**PHONE:** (214) 403-5770 | **EMAIL:** ray@judgeraywheless.com

**WEBSITE:** <http://judgeraywheless.com>

## VOTER INFO

### Facts about Texas Primaries

- Voting in the primaries does not make you a Republican or a Democrat
- You do not register with a party in Texas
- Voters in a Texas primary sign, "I am a (insert appropriate political party) and understand that I am ineligible to vote or participate in another political party's primary election or convention during this voting year."
- You can vote for any candidate in the general election

**i** Vote in the primary if you want a say on who is elected. ....

Texans vote in the Democratic or Republican primaries for candidates who are running in federal, state, county and local elections. Candidates in other parties, such as the Libertarian and Green parties, are selected by convention.

Voting in the primary election allows you to select the candidates who will be on the ballot in the General Election in November. You can vote for any candidate in the General Election in November; all candidates, who are selected in the primaries, from all parties are on the same ballot.



**BRENT WEBSTER (R)**

**BACKGROUND:** I've practiced Criminal law since 2006, and I have very diverse criminal, trial and appellate experience. I've handled everything from misdemeanors to murder and I've written appeals. I currently served as the General Counsel for the Williamson County District Attorney's office.

**IMPARTIALITY:** I am running a grassroots campaign and have received many donations from a broad group of people. They are donating to me because they believe in me. They trust that I am Conservative and will always do the right thing. As an appellate judge, the quality of my work will be judged by the opinions that I write. Therefore, if I were to do something that is contrary to what the law requires (in a way that is not impartial), then the voters would, and should, hold me accountable for that action.

**ACCOMPLISHMENT:** I am proud of how hard I fought for children that have been physically abused. I have been very successful helping multiple children get out of bad environments where their life and physical safety was at risk. I believe

this will make me a better judge because, not only will I be a strong advocate for our constitutional rights, but I also have a deep and profound understanding of what victims of violent crime must live with for the rest of their lives.

**OTHER ISSUES:** First, there is always a high volume of cases that can result in a backlog. I am running to work hard for Texas and I will use my skills and energy to help move the caseload at the Court of Criminal Appeals. Second, I believe that our Constitutional Rights are under attack around the nation by the Government. As a Judge, I will make sure that your rights are protected, especially your 1st Amendment right to Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Religion, and your 2nd Amendment right to bear arms.

**EDUCATION:** J.D., University of Houston Law Center B.A. in Political Science, Southwestern University

**PHONE:** (512) 736-9962 | **EMAIL:** brent@websterforjudge.com

**WEBSITE:** <http://www.VoteWebster.org>



**SCOTT WALKER (R)**

**BACKGROUND:** I have been a small business owner all of my adult life. I have learned the importance of stewardship and fiscal responsibility. I am, and have always been, a constitutional conservative, and don't believe in legislation from the bench. I have been attorney of record on over one thousand criminal cases. I have tried over forty jury trial. I have written over one hundred appellate briefs.

**IMPARTIALITY:** I am an Evangelical Christian. Integrity, fairness and honesty are of utmost importance. My beliefs as a Christian will never allow me to rule in any way which is contrary to my convictions because someone or some group contributed to my campaign. Impartiality will never be a problem.

**ACCOMPLISHMENT:** Over fifteen years ago I was asked to write my first appellate brief. I spent a lot of time researching briefs that others had written, as well as researching the law. Eventually the brief was finished. I realized that I was gifted with the ability to think logically and to apply that gift to legal

analysis. I decided that I would love to be an appellate judge. I began taking every appeal case I could so that I could gain the knowledge and experience necessary to be an effective appellate judge. I have now written over 100 briefs and I am qualified to be an effective appellate judge.

**OTHER ISSUES:** The Court of Criminal Appeals hears appeals of criminal cases. There is no way to know for sure what issues will be presented during the next term. Because of the recent implementation of the Michael Morton Act, I expect that discovery issues will be presented to the Court. The relatively new law will likely be an issue in a variety of criminal matters. A second issue that is related to the first is at the forefront of awareness in Texas because of all of the exonerations in recent years. It is the issue of wrongful convictions. I will address these issues with fairness and impartiality.

**EDUCATION:** Graduated with honors from Dallas Baptist University. Juris Doctorate from Baylor School of Law.

**PHONE:** (817) 478-9999 | **EMAIL:** scott@lawyerwalker.com

**WEBSITE:** <http://scottwalkerforjudge.com>

**i** *When & Where to Vote* .....

**EARLY VOTING:** All registered voters may vote early by personal appearance at any early voting location in their county. Check with your local newspaper or the county clerk or election administrator for early voting times and locations. Early voting days for the May 24, 2016, Primary Runoff Election are May 16 - 20.

**ELECTION DAY VOTING:** On Election Day you must vote in your precinct of residence (unless your area is participating in countywide vote centers). Your precinct is listed on your registration card, or you may find out where to vote by calling or going online with your county election administrator.

County elections addresses and fax numbers are available at [www.VoteTexas.gov](http://www.VoteTexas.gov) or at [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org). Voting places are also listed in most newspapers. If you report to the incorrect polling place, you will be redirected to the correct site or offered a provisional ballot. You can vote by provisional ballot, but if it is determined that you are not registered in the precinct where you vote, your ballot will not be counted by Texas law. More information on provisional voting appears on the Texas Secretary of State website [www.VoteTexas.gov](http://www.VoteTexas.gov).

**BALLOT-BY-MAIL VOTING:** Only specific reasons entitle a person to vote by mail (no longer called absentee voting).

You may request a ballot by mail if you

- will be away from your county on Election Day and during early voting.
- are sick or disabled.
- are 65 years of age or older on Election Day.
- are confined to jail.

You do not need a photo ID to vote by mail, but photo ID will be required of first time voters if a driver license or Social Security number was not included with the voter registration application.

Request an Application for Ballot by Mail from the early voting clerk in the county where you are registered, or download the form from [www.VoteTexas.gov](http://www.VoteTexas.gov). The completed form must be received by mail, fax or email by May 13, 2016. Note: postmarks don't count.

A ballot will be mailed to you, and you must return your completed ballot to your county elections department by 7 p.m. on Election Day, May 24. The ballot must be received, not just postmarked, by that date. If you are mailing your ballot from outside the United States, the early voting clerk must receive your ballot by the fifth day after Election Day. (You must mail it no later than 7 p.m. on Election Day.)

# TEXAS COURT OF APPEALS

6-YEAR TERM. MUST BE AGE 35-74 YEARS, A U.S. CITIZEN, A TEXAS RESIDENT, LICENSED TO PRACTICE LAW IN TEXAS, A REGISTERED VOTER, & HAVE 10 YEARS EXPERIENCE AS A LAWYER OR JUDGE. HEARS APPEALS ON CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CASES FROM LOWER COURTS IN ITS DISTRICT.

TEXAS  
2016

## QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

**BACKGROUND:** What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

**IMPARTIALITY:** How do you maintain impartiality, given the need to raise funds for political campaigns?

**ACCOMPLISHMENT:** Describe an accomplishment of which you are proud and how it would help make you a better justice on this court.

**OTHER ISSUES:** Aside from the issues above, what are the two most pressing issues facing the Court in the next term, and how would you address them?



### DABNEY BASSEL (R)

**BACKGROUND:** Only those with a conservative judicial philosophy and who refuse to legislate from the bench should be judges. My legal skills are demonstrated by a 30-year legal career, a board certification in Civil Appellate Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, and my published articles on the law.

**IMPARTIALITY:** My guiding principles on the bench will be honesty and a commitment to a conservative judicial philosophy that dictates total fidelity to the rule of law. Certainly, I am grateful to everyone who has supported my campaign. But the cases of those who supported me will receive the same treatment as everyone else's—a fair and timely resolution based on the law and the facts.

**ACCOMPLISHMENT:** My proudest accomplishments are a marriage that has lasted almost three decades and rearing a strong and able daughter. A long

## JUSTICE • 2<sup>ND</sup> COURT OF APPEALS, PLACE 3

marriage, rearing a child, and a thirty-year legal career has taught me patience, diligence, and fairness. These lessons will help me serve humbly and in the way that all judges should serve—as a neutral arbiter who listens carefully, works hard, and applies the law equally and fairly.

**OTHER ISSUES:** Every Justice on the Court of Appeals faces two primary challenges—deciding appeals correctly and timely. The first challenge requires: 1) careful consideration of the arguments; 2) care in the research, analysis and writing of opinions; and 3) an open-mind to the views of the other justices. The second challenge requires the dedication to put in whatever time is needed to make sure the parties have their appeals resolved timely.

**EDUCATION:** B.A.-Trinity University-1979 J.D.-Baylor University School of Law-1982

**PHONE:** (817) 989-6485 | **EMAIL:** dbassel@dabneybassel.com

**WEBSITE:** <http://dabneybasselforjudge.com>



### ELIZABETH KERR (R)

**BACKGROUND:** I've spent my 32-year career as a civil trial and appellate lawyer honing my skills as a plain-English writer, able to explain complex legal matters clearly. Other lawyers often hire me to help with their briefs, including at the U.S. Supreme Court level. I helped edit Black's Law Dictionary when it was modernized; my work is also quoted in the widely regarded 'The Winning Brief' treatise.

**IMPARTIALITY:** Two facts show my impartiality. First, I have the highest "AV (Preeminent)" peer-review rating, something that is awarded only to those lawyers known for having the highest professional and ethical standards. Second, I've garnered enthusiastic support for my campaign from colleagues in and around Fort Worth who are on both sides of the docket, who are in large firms and small ones, who are conservative and not-so-conservative, and who represent the widest possible types of clients and cases. Lawyers who know me best support me because they're confident that I will always be fair-minded.

**ACCOMPLISHMENT:** In 2001, when my husband was only 46 and our three children were ages 6, 4, and 1, he had a life-threatening stroke. From dealing

with that experience while also practicing law, out of necessity, I learned to draw upon inner strengths I didn't know existed. I was already working from home as an independent contractor while our children were young, but my husband's and my roles reversed significantly from that point forward. Helping Jon with rehabilitation, raising a family, and being the lead briefwriter on a significant U.S. Supreme Court case in 2003 all taught me how to work efficiently.

**OTHER ISSUES:** This busy court needs judges who can analyze cases efficiently and who can write clearly—two things that I know how to do. In addition, to the extent it's not being done, I would like to see more specific internal targets for disposing of cases depending on what types they are. Many appeals do not involve complicated legal issues, and can be fast-tracked for disposition. Although others are complex and thus not appropriate candidates for artificial deadlines, parties deserve reasonably prompt decisions, no matter how complicated the case.

**EDUCATION:** Rice University (B.A. 1978) (double-major in English and Art History; minor in Russian); University of Texas School of Law (J.D. 1982)

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## **i** VOTER INFO

### Donate!

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

## **i** Access the Interactive Voters Guide ...

An interactive version of this *Voters Guide* is available online at [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org). Enter your address and zip code and view the races and candidates that appear on your ballot. You will be able to compare the candidates' responses to the questions side-by-side and create a printout of a ballot that you can take to the polls.



**GINA M. PALAFOX (D)**

**BACKGROUND:** I've been a lawyer over twenty years with experience in litigation, business, education, and public health care including trials and appeals. These experiences required strong communication skills, analytical thinking, researching, and writing.

**IMPARTIALITY:** Impartiality is very important to the integrity of our courts. Impartiality is maintained by a strong commitment to ethics and deep respect for the important role of the court in our community. Although political contributions are needed, these funds should never override ethical standards and responsibilities.

**ACCOMPLISHMENT:** I am proud of my work on cases, among others, that included public policy and constitutional issues. One in particular was very challenging and I reached a professional highlight of presenting an oral argument to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit - just one level below the U.S.

Supreme Court. I am better prepared as a judge because I had these experiences and appreciate the important responsibilities of this Court.

**OTHER ISSUES:** I feel it is important for the Court and all other publicly funded institutions to provide timely service and strive for quality outcomes. Two pressing issues and challenges for the Court are (1). Reducing the length of time that people or parties wait for appeals to conclude; and (2). Maintaining balance as a reviewing court so as acting to correct reversible error, but not overly acting and undermining trial court judges and juries.

**EDUCATION:** Juris Doctor (JD) - Pepperdine University School of Law; Master of Public Administration (MPA) - University of Texas at El Paso; Bachelor of Science in Accounting (BS) - Pepperdine University, Seaver College.

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**MARIA RAMIREZ (D)**

**BACKGROUND:** I have practiced law for 27 years, including misdemeanor and felony trial experience and civil litigation in state and federal court. For the past 18 years I have focused on appellate law in the family and criminal law area. In 2001, I was elected as Judge, Municipal Court No. 1 in El Paso, Texas.

**IMPARTIALITY:** It has been my aspiration for years to serve El Paso and the 16 other counties as a Justice in the 8th Court of Appeals. Although I do believe that Judges are able to maintain impartiality despite having to raise funds for their campaigns, I anticipate that I will not request or take contributions to fund my campaign.

**ACCOMPLISHMENT:** I am most proud of my education and my work ethic that was instilled in me by my parents. I am a first generation American. My parents immigrated to the US and worked very hard to make sure their children obtained

a higher education. They also taught me not to forget my roots. For the last 18 years I have run a successful law practice and presided as Judge of a municipal court for 15 of those years. It is this work ethic and my life experience that I believe will make me a better Justice.

**OTHER ISSUES:** More appeals are being filed and the counties the 8th Court of Appeals handles are growing. Although all cases should be given proper attention, I believe the backlog of work should be addressed to expedite a final decision of a case. Appellate courts are important not only because they decide individual cases but that decision sets precedent for all similarly situated individuals in those 17 counties. As such, it is important that the justice and court consider this when issuing a decision.

**EDUCATION:** I received a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from UTEP. I graduated from Indiana University School of Law with a Doctor of Jurisprudence. I am licensed by the State Bar of Texas, the Western District of Texas, the 5th Circuit of the United States and the Supreme Court of the United States.

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**i VOTER INFO**

*Registering to Vote*

You must register to vote at least **30 days** before the election date. The last day you can register to vote in the 2016 Primary Runoff Election is **April 25**.

**WHO CAN REGISTER?**

- To register to vote, you must be
- a citizen of the United States,
  - a resident of the county, and
  - at least 18 years old on Election Day.
- You must not have been declared mentally incapacitated by a court of law. If you have been convicted of a felony, you may register to vote only after you have completed the punishment phase of your conviction, including any terms of incarceration, parole, supervision, or period of probation ordered by the court.

**i More About Registering to Vote .....**

**WHERE DO I REGISTER?**

- You can register
- in person at the voter registration office in your county, or
  - fill out an application that can be mailed (or faxed with follow-up by mail) or returned in person to the voter registrar in your county of residence.

Application forms are available at many libraries, government offices, and high schools. The application is available online at [www.votetexas.gov](http://www.votetexas.gov) and [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org). These websites also allow you to search to see if you are already registered.

After you apply, a voter registration certificate will be mailed to you within 30 days. This certificate includes your precinct for voting on Election Day as well as your congressional, state legislative, county, and local districts.

**FOR HOW LONG IS MY REGISTRATION EFFECTIVE?** The registration will remain in effect until you move or change your name, and a new certificate will be sent to you every two years without further application on your part. If you move, however, your registration certificate will not be forwarded to your new address. If you move within the same county or change your name, you must notify your county clerk or election administrator in writing or online of your new address or your new name as soon as possible. Then a new certificate will be mailed to you. If you move to another county, you must re-register by applying to the election office in your new county.

**i What is Provisional Voting? .....**

The Federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002 provides for provisional voting if a voter's name does not appear on the list of registered voters due to an administrative error. If your name is not on the rolls of registered voters in your precinct, but you believe you are registered, the election judge will attempt to determine if you are registered somewhere in your county. If your registration cannot be found, you may cast a provisional vote by filling out an affidavit and a paper ballot. This ballot is kept separate from the regular ballots, and the case will be reviewed by the provisional voting ballot board. The ballot will be counted only if the voter is determined to be a registered voter in that precinct. Provisional voters will receive a notice in the mail by the tenth day after the local canvass advising them if their provisional ballots were counted and, if they were not counted, the reason why.

# STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

4-YEAR TERM. MUST BE 26 YEARS OLD OR OLDER, A U.S. CITIZEN, A TEXAS/DISTRICT RESIDENT, & A REGISTERED VOTER. SETS POLICIES & STANDARDS FOR TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS & OVERSEES THE TEXAS PERMANENT SCHOOL FUND.

TEXAS  
2016

## QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES

**BACKGROUND:** What training, experience, and characteristics qualify you for this position?

**CURRICULUM:** What criteria should be used in developing and approving curriculum standards for courses?

**TESTING:** What changes, if any, would you make to testing requirements in the public schools and why?

**OTHER ISSUES:** What are the two most serious public education issues facing the State Board of Education during the next term, and how would you address them?

## DISTRICT 6



### R. DAKOTA CARTER (D)

**BACKGROUND:** Trained in child development and learning, autism-spectrum, and intellectual/pervasive developmental disorders; previous substitute teacher, mentor in Shamrock and Denton ISDs; curriculum development, UHealth and Baylor College of Medicine. Educational research, curricula and instruction background

**CURRICULUM:** The standards must be backed by evidence-based, research-proven, and factual information; education is no place for politics, and curricula should not be biased. We must include experts and educators in our decision-making process; each subject should represent up-to-date, broad-based knowledge that develops critical thinking skills and well-rounded youth prepared for college or the job force. The current curricula in TX represents a political agenda to the detriment of students and educators.

**TESTING:** Testing is a difficult issue; evaluation is needed to gauge students, but the emphasis on the numerous tests can be extreme. A compromise is needed between testing and supporting other methods of learning. Many students

struggle with passing the current exams despite the AYP stating we should reach a 100% pass rate in 2020. We must set reasonable goals (especially in demographically-diverse or low SES districts) and provide the resources to help struggling students, teachers, and schools.

**OTHER ISSUES:** 1) TX has the lowest graduation rate in the nation, and we need to better prepare our graduates with knowledge and skills for college/workforce, where we are currently failing. We must re-evaluate testing and develop better tracts of developing basic skills to aid students in meeting potential. 2) TX is in the bottom-tier of educational quality nationally. Students deserve to have a broad, non-biased curriculum with expert-reviewed textbooks and resources that promote evidence-based knowledge.

**EDUCATION:** 2014-Present, UHealth, Dept. of Psychiatry, Adult/Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2015-Present, University of Houston, Ed.D in Healthcare Leadership and Education, 2010 – 2014, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, M.D., 2006 – 2010, University of North Texas, Bachelor of Arts

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### JASMINE L. JENKINS (D)

**BACKGROUND:** -Career educator with 10 years of experience teaching and leading -Former bilingual 4th grade teacher in Alief ISD (Southwest Houston) -Education Policy researcher -Outreach Manager with Advantage Testing (plan and execute sessions on standardized tests and college readiness for high school students) -Experience working with students and teachers at nearly every grade level

**CURRICULUM:** Curriculum standards and textbooks for all areas of instruction should be adopted based on well-known expert opinion and widely recognized (preferably peer-reviewed) research. Input on these matters should come from experts in the content areas (e.g. Chemistry, U.S. History, Algebra, etc.) and education researchers with strong knowledge of learning and instructional styles.

**TESTING:** In order to determine whether or not students have a firm understanding of academic content, we must have a way to assess them. We spend a great deal of time making sure that students are "ready for the test," and I believe we should spend even more time making sure that the tests are "ready for the students." This means our content and method of testing should respond to various learning

styles. Assessments must be adaptable and able to accurately determine every child's mastery of given concepts, not just his/her ability to take a multiple-choice exam. While the curriculum standards may be the same, we must ensure that those standards allow for the various ways that children learn.

**OTHER ISSUES:** 1.)Texas ranks 50th in high-school graduation rates, and only about 33% of Texas students who take the SAT reach a college or career-ready score. While some of these issues can be addressed at the school level, it is the job of the State Board to ensure that content being taught is aligned with the academic demands of post-secondary education. Those who want to go to college should be adequately prepared for the SAT/ACT. 2.)Currently, the State Board consists of only a handful of experienced educators. This job should not be a political stepping-stone. I will provide the perspective of an active educator and prioritize incorporating more voices from teachers, parents, and students.

**EDUCATION:** Ph.D. in Education Policy, University of Houston; M.A. in Public Policy, University of Houston; B.A. in Spanish and Political Science, Loyola University Maryland

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## Student Voters

Students may use either their parents' address or their college address for voter registration, whichever they consider to be their permanent address.

Students cannot be registered at both places. The general rule of thumb is that wherever students claim residency is the place where they should be registered to vote. Students who will be away from their address on Election Day and during early voting may request ballots by mail. Student IDs are not adequate photo IDs for voting and will not be accepted at the polls.



**MARY LOU BRUNER (R)**

**BACKGROUND:** I have 36 years experience as a teacher, special ed. counselor, and educational diagnostician in Texas Public Schools. I taught kindergarten, 2nd, and 4th grade classes in elementary school. In junior high school I taught English, American literature, American history, and TX History.

**CURRICULUM:** The State Board of Ed. should not only hear testimony from experts in education, but from more parents and local businessmen who have an interest in the youth of their communities. The textbooks adopted in Texas should meet a minimum of 95% of the TEKS instead of 60%. The curriculum should not be guided by political correctness but by factual information and truth. The curriculum should tell the schools what should be taught at the different levels not how to teach the material.

**TESTING:** The schools are doing far too much testing. Twenty-five to forty days each year are spent taking practice tests and the actual tests. The children lose a month to 1 and 1/2 months of instruction time each year practicing for and taking tests. The children could be spending this time learning. Classroom teachers are under so much pressure to have their classes do well on the test, they often neglect important skills and areas of the curriculum because they are not tested.

So much emphasis is placed on the tests, parents tell me their children get sick on test days. Teachers are pressured to rush through materials trying to cover everything; they may not be able to teach for mastery.

**OTHER ISSUES:** The science curriculum teaches evolution as a fact and not a theory of at least the only theory. The solution is to require students to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the evolution theory and discuss strengths and weaknesses of other theories if the students bring them up. The health curriculum should not be used to make the homosexual lifestyle more desirable, and to make transgender changes, homosexual marriage and adoption by homosexual couples more socially acceptable. Sex education does not belong in the elementary schools. Health classes should teach healthy habits. Schools should not be used to teach politically correct issues or partisan politics such as climate change.

**EDUCATION:** M.Ed. in special education from East TX State Univ. (TX A&M) Commerce. BA in Ele. Ed. And Eng. from TX Wesleyan Univ., Ft. Worth. 6 other TX teaching certificates: Ed. Diagnostician, Language-Learning Diff., Early Childhood, Kindergarten, Sp. Ed. Counselor, All Level School Counselor.

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**KEVEN M. ELLIS (R)**

**BACKGROUND:** In 2012 I was elected to the Lufkin ISD Board of Trustees and was elected to serve as President of the Board in 2015. Serving on the local school board has given me a keen perspective of the needs and challenges of educating our children. I bring a level heading approach to problem solving.

**CURRICULUM:** Texans know best how to education Texas children so we need to continue to keep the development and approval process away from Washington DC and in the hands of Texans. Improving the TEKS standards is an ongoing process and we need to keep Common Core from working its way into our curriculum standards. As standards are reviewed we must make sure that they are concise enough to allow our great teachers time to focus on what is most critical for our students.

**TESTING:** The 2013 the Legislature did a great job in passing House Bill 5 which decreased the number of end of course tests from 15 to 5. Now we must focus on decreasing the amount of tests for grade 3-8. The goal should be to test

no more than required by federal law. In 2015 the legislature passed HB 743 which limited the length of STAAR tests to 2 hours for grade 3-5 and 3 hours for grade 6-8, currently these tests are 4 hours. We need to make sure this law is fully implemented as soon as possible.

**OTHER ISSUES:** First would be the rewrite of “No Child Left Behind” into “Every Student Succeeds Act”. The key components of this is that the Federal Government passed the "challenge" of increasing student success down to the states and we must do this thoughtfully. Second would be narrowing our TEKS. Our standards are a mile wide and an inch deep and students are not taught the depth of knowledge required. The challenge will be the narrow the TEKS without decreasing the rigor that is necessary for success.

**EDUCATION:** 1992 Western Washington University – Pre-med undergraduate studies. 1995 – Texas Chiropractic College – Doctor of Chiropractic (Cum Laude) Omega Psi Honor Society Texas Chiropractic College Who’s Who among American College Students National Dean’s list

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**i VOTER INFO**  
*Helpful Websites*  
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[www.sos.state.tx.us](http://www.sos.state.tx.us)  
[www.VoteTexas.gov](http://www.VoteTexas.gov)  
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[www.lptexas.org](http://www.lptexas.org)  
 GREEN PARTY  
[www.txgreens.org](http://www.txgreens.org)

**i What should I take to the polling place?.....**

In addition to your photo ID, which is discussed in detail on both pages 1 and 10 of this *Voters Guide*, you can bring any written or printed material into the voting booth for your personal use. You cannot use mobile phones, smartphones and tablets or other electronic devices at the polling place.

You may bring this *Voters Guide* into the voting booth! In 1995, the Texas law prohibiting use of printed materials, such as this *Voters Guide*, in the polling place was ruled unconstitutional.

(Texas Election Code, Section 61.011)

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## **i** VOTER INFO

### Photo ID Details & Exceptions

See "What to Take to the Polls" on the front page for a list of accepted photo IDs. This section provides additional information about the photo ID requirements.

- The photo ID needs to be current or have expired no more than 60 days before voting (citizenship and naturalization certificates have no expiration date).
- The name on the photo ID should match the voter registration card. If names don't match, a voter may be accepted if names are "substantially similar." If names match, addresses don't need to match.
  - *If the names don't match exactly, the voter can be accepted if names are substantially similar; poll workers will look at address, date of birth, and the photo. If names are substantially similar, the voter will initial a box for similar name when signing in to vote.*
  - *To avoid confusion, you can change the name on your voter registration to match that on your photo ID at least 30 days prior to the election.*
- Voters with a documented disability from Social Security or Veterans Affairs can apply for a voter registration certificate exempting them from the photo ID requirement.
- Voters without acceptable ID can obtain an Election Identification Certificate (EIC) from Texas DPS at no cost by providing proof of citizenship and identity and registering to vote at DPS or showing a voter registration card. Requirements for the EIC can be found at <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/electionID.htm>. There is no charge for the EIC but the necessary documentation may have a cost.
- Photo ID is not required to vote by mail. Voters may apply for a mail ballot if 65 or older, ill or disabled, or absent from their county during early voting and on Election Day. Note: Photo ID will be required of first time voters if a driver license or Social Security number was not included with the voter registration application.
- Voters who do not show an acceptable ID at the polls can vote a provisional ballot and have six days to show the required photo ID.
- Those who lack a photo ID because of a religious objection to being photographed or because of a natural disaster declared by the president will be allowed to vote a provisional ballot and complete an affidavit within six days of the election.

Check the League's website for other helpful information about elections, voting and issues: [www.lwvtexas.org](http://www.lwvtexas.org).



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Who else but the LWV is a nonpartisan, political organization and one of America's most trusted grassroots organizations? The LWV...encouraging active participation in government...working to increase understanding of major public policy issues...influencing public policy through education and advocacy...making democracy work!

Learn more about our Local Leagues and how they help shape today's important issues by visiting the League's website at [www.lwvtexas.org](http://www.lwvtexas.org).