

Statewide offices: Land Commissioner

Next in our series on statewide offices on the November ballot: the Texas Land Commissioner (TLC).

This elected official oversees the General Land Office (GLO). Established in 1836, it's the oldest state agency in Texas. The main role of the TLC is to oversee Texas' 13 million acres of public lands, using the revenue streams from these lands to invest in the Texas Permanent School Fund (PSF).

The GLO contributes over \$1 billion annually to the PSF, which funds K-12 public education in Texas. At \$60 billion, the PSF is the largest educational endowment in the US, yet Texas ranks near the bottom of the list in per-pupil education funding. While the fund has more than tripled over the last 30 years, the inflation-adjusted contribution to public schools by the fund has remained the same.

The GLO's contributions to the PSF reduce the burden on individuals' contributions to public education through property taxes. Democrats believe that we must improve the performance of the PSF and increase the amount we distribute to K-12 education. Democrats also believe that the private school voucher scam, passed in the 2025 Texas Legislature, is an unnecessary drain on public school financing and should be abolished.

The majority of the revenue from those PSF lands is from oil and gas leases. But the lack of diversification in energy production will eventually lower revenue for public schools over time. Currently, only a small percentage of revenue created on GLO-managed lands is from

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**LAURA
BRAY**

KENDALL COUNTY
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renewable energy. Democrats will expand that energy portfolio to secure a source of stable, long-term funding for the GLO's contribution to the PSF. This expansion would include wind, solar, geothermal, kinetic wave energy, and offshore wind.

The GLO also oversees leasing millions of acres of state lands for farming, grazing, hunting, timber production and recreational purposes. The land is the cornerstone of Texas' vibrant and functioning ecosystem. It filters air and water pollutants, minimizes the impact of increasing natural disasters through flood mitigation, and provides wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and economic benefits.

Democrats will work to ensure the GLO is responsibly managing public lands while minimizing the impact of natural disasters and combating climate change through sustainable agricultural and wildlife management practices.

The GLO can also have a profound impact on CO2 emissions. Texas emits more carbon than any other state. We see the effects of climate change every day: extreme heat, drought, more wildfires, unpredictable weather patterns and increased hurricanes and tornadoes. The communities most impacted by the current Land Commissioner's denial of climate change are the ones who can least afford it.

The GLO is also respon-

sible for distributing federal disaster relief funds. No agency has harmed Houston residents more in the past 9 years than the GLO.

In August of 2017, Harvey devastated Houston and Harris County, dropping 60 inches of rain, killing nearly 70 people, and causing \$125 billion in damages. The city asked for \$1.3 billion in flood aid and disaster relief, but very little of those funds have ever been distributed.

Democrats will make sure that the GLO will equitably help families across Texas, not play politics with billions of dollars in desperately needed mitigation and relief funds.

Democrats will prioritize Texans' lives and livelihoods and establish a plan to put emergency federal funds to work in a matter of months — not years — after a natural disaster. Democrats will work with the communities impacted and federal partners to prepare for natural disasters ensuring we are funded, staffed, and ready for whatever disaster is to come.

The office is also responsible for overseeing the Veterans Land Board, investing in coastal resiliency, and overseeing the management and restoration of the Alamo.

The last day to register to vote in the November election is Oct. 5. Texas does not have online voter registration; voters will need to fill out a form and mail it to the Kendall County Elections Office.

For details on statewide offices or to register to vote, call our office at 830-331-1243 or visit www.kodems.us

Laura Bray is the former Chair of the Kendall County Democratic Party.