

Contact legislators on two terrible bills

Mark Twain once said, "No man's life, liberty, or property are safe while the legislature is in session." And that's definitely the case right now.

The Texas Legislature is about a month into its every-other-year session, and they are considering quite a few awful bills. I've already written about the harm that a school voucher program would do to Boerne ISD. According to the Texas House Democratic Caucus, BISD would lose over \$4 million if a voucher scheme is enacted.

But today, you should know about another bill under consideration. Kendall County residents have enjoyed the popular county-wide voting system since 2019. Prior to that, voters were required to cast their ballots at the polling station in their specific precinct.

With countywide voting, residents can vote at any of the 11 polling locations in the county. The program is extremely popular with voters and also saves the county quite a bit of money. According to the Texas Tribune, the program "is allowed in 99 counties encompassing more than 80% of the state's voters."

Despite the program's popularity and cost savings, two bills have been filed to eliminate it.

One of the bill's sponsors (Rep. Bob Hall) complains, without evidence, that the program isn't transparent.

State and local officials have disputed Hall's assertions about transparency. The program allows counties, especially those in rural areas, to expend fewer resources by staffing and equipping fewer polling locations in areas more



accessible to voters.

If a polling location shuts down — due to loss of power or a natural disaster, for example — voters aren't limited and can still cast a ballot at any other available location.

Should the program be discontinued, county elections offices would need to spend more money on election equipment and ongoing expenses for election workers' hourly wages, supplies, facility rental fees, not to mention the inconvenience to voters.

I urge you to contact Sen. Donna Campbell (512-463-0125) and Rep. Ellen Troxclair (512-463-0490) and urge them to vote against these bills.

The other terrible bill is before the U.S. Congress and is sponsored by our very own Rep. Chip Roy. The SAVE Act is "a bill that would require all Americans to provide a birth certificate, passport or one of a few other citizenship documents every time they register or re-register to vote," according to the Brennan Center for Justice.

The Brennan Center asserts that over 21 million Americans (almost 10% of the voting population) don't have ready access to these documents.

"The bill would functionally eliminate mail registration by requiring voters registering by mail to produce citizenship documents 'in person' to an election official." Voters

would no longer be able to automatically update their voter registration when they make a change of address on their driver's license.

Many married women are in particular danger of being denied registration under this law, since their married name differs from the name on their birth certificate.

"Contrary to what some have suggested, the SAVE Act does not contain a meaningful failsafe provision that would allow those without physical documentation to register. While the bill includes a provision requiring states to establish a failsafe process for those without citizenship documents to demonstrate their citizenship through other evidence, that option is vague and severely undercut by another provision making it a crime for election officials to register any applicant who does not 'present documentary proof of United States citizenship.' Many election officials would be wary of risking criminal prosecution for running afoul of this provision," according to the Center.

Due to the potential of disenfranchising thousands of eligible voters, the U.S. Congress should vote against this bill. Again, I urge you to contact Sen. John Cornyn (210-224-7485), Sen. Ted Cruz (210-340-2885) and Rep. Roy (210-821-5024) and urge them to vote "No" on this bill.

Thanks for reading. To find out more about how to get involved with local Democratic activities, visit www.kcdems.us.

Laura Bray is Chair of the Kendall County Democratic Party.