

Make voting easier; registration date nears

Democracy works best when it's easy for all eligible voters to cast their ballot. Unfortunately, the most recent Texas Legislature failed to enact policies that would make voting in Texas easier.

Texas ranks 46th in "ease of voting," according to a 2022 study in the Election Law Journal.

The study states, "Voting still is not easy in Texas (as compared to 2020). The state, previously ranked 45th, did not have a lot of room to fall."

It cites a lack of online registration, a strict voter ID law and a lack of no-excuse absentee voting as major hurdles to voting.

According to the Texas Tribune, "In the process of addressing a problem they (the Texas Legislature) cannot prove exists (widespread voter fraud), they've created friction where it's not needed, inventing new hassles instead of knocking down existing obstacles."

According to the ACLU of Texas, "Texas is one of the most difficult places to cast a ballot, and Texas politicians continue to make voting even harder. In 2021, lawmakers passed legislation that added unnecessary obstacles to voting; empowered poll watchers to disrupt polling places; and erected barriers to helping voters with disabilities and those who need language assistance."

One of those "obstacles" is the Texas requirement that you must register to vote 30 days prior to an election. That deadline is fast approaching. You must be registered to vote by Monday, Feb. 2, 2026, if you want to cast a ballot in the upcoming March

PROGRESSIVE VIEWS

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2026 primary.

Here is our four-step solution to make voting easier in Texas:

- Implement online voter registration. According to Ballotpedia, 42 states, Washington, D.C., and Guam allow online voter registration. Texas has no such system.

Our voter registration process is excessively cumbersome and antiquated. A prospective voter can print out an application from vote-texas.gov, but after completing it, the voter must mail it into the local elections office (including affixing a stamp), delaying the process.

With the additional requirement that a voter must be registered 30 days prior to election day, this mail delay often results in prospective voters not having their vote counted.

On this year's Democratic primary ballot, there's a proposition that states, "Secure online voter registration should be accessible to all eligible Texas residents." (Primary propositions are advisory in nature and are not binding or a law.)

We encourage anyone voting in the Democratic Primary to vote "Yes" on this proposition.

- Allow anyone to cast an absentee ballot. In order to absentee vote (also known as vote-by-mail or vote-at-home), Texans must provide one of five specific reasons that a mail-in ballot is required. Reasons include being 65 years of age or older; being sick or dis-

abled; or being out of the county on election day and during the period for early voting.

Why not allow anyone who desires it, to vote by mail? According to the National Vote at Home Institute, "about 77% of registered voters live in states where they can vote at home for any reason."

In addition, "When states make it easier to vote by mail or absentee ballot, participation rises, inclusivity improves and our democracy grows stronger."

- Simplify the process for a mail-in ballot. Under current law, county elections offices may only send an application to vote by mail to those voters who specifically request it every year, another unnecessary barrier to voting.

The 2025 Texas Legislature did make the mail-in ballot easier to read, but it's still a cumbersome process. Make the mail-in ballot process easier to encourage more people to vote.

- Broaden the range of acceptable photo IDs. Texas has one of the most restrictive voter ID laws in the nation. One can use a concealed carry permit as an "acceptable photo ID," but not a student ID card from a state university.

Relax the requirements for an "acceptable photo ID" so more voters can cast their ballot.

It's time to eliminate these unnecessary hurdles to voting. For more about how to get involved with local Democratic activities and activism, visit www.kcdems.us

Laura Bray is Chair of the Kendall County Democratic Party.