

August 7, 2020

Election code protections

PROGRESSIVE VIEWS

By Laura Bray and Luke Rosenberger

This is the first part in a series about Texas election code protections.

With all the recent hot air out of the White House and other quarters, you should know about the provisions in the Texas Election Code that protect your rights as a voter this fall and beyond. Kendall County has one of the best Elections Departments in the state of Texas. Elections Administrator Staci Decker and her staff work diligently year-round to make sure the votes of every eligible Kendall County resident—Democrat or Republican or other parties—are accurately recorded, counted and reported.

Given the COVID-19 crisis, the particulars surrounding the conduct of this fall's general election are changing frequently. The below information was accurate as of Tuesday but may have changed. Check with the Elections Department (830-331-8701) or the Texas Secretary of State (TxSoS) Elections Division (sos.state.tx.us/elections) for the most current information.

Early voting location(s) and election day polling locations will be finalized this fall. Countywide voting will continue, which means you can vote at any polling location on election day, not just the location in your precinct.

· **Voter registration deadline:** Texas requires all voters to register no later than thirty days prior to the election. The deadline to register to vote in the Nov. 3 General Election is Monday, Oct. 5. This date is especially important for new residents of Kendall County. When you update your address on your driver's license, you can check a box on the Texas DPS form that will update your voter registration with the county; it's a good idea to check with the Elections Department (KCED) a few weeks after you've updated your driver's license to be sure. Your voter registration does not automatically transfer from another county or state when you

move here. If you're not sure, call the KCED or visit the TxSoS website to check your current registration status. Make 100 percent sure to do this prior to Oct. 5. Due to potential mail delays, the Kendall County Democratic Party (KCDP) urges you to send in your voter registration form as soon as possible, or contact us and we'll send a deputy voter registrar to your house. You can also stop by the League of Women Voters' drive-up voter registration station on Main Street across from Boerne Main Plaza, every Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

· **Moving within or into Kendall County:** If you've moved within Kendall County please update your voter registration with your new address. It's quite possible you have moved to a different precinct with different local representation. However, the address on your voter registration does not have to match either the address on your driver's license or your actual current address. When you vote, the election worker will ask if the address on your voter registration is your current address. If not, you will receive a "Statement of Residence" form to complete with your current address (so the KCED can update your record), and you will be allowed to vote just as normal (in the precinct where you're registered). The election worker will not match the address from your driver's license to your voter registration. Texas Election Code protects your right to vote a full ballot, even if you've recently moved—as long as you vote in the county where you're registered.

If you've recently moved here from outside Kendall County: it's critical to update your registration before the Oct. 5 deadline. If you don't, you'll need to vote in the county where you're registered—either in-person or by mail. If you want to vote in Kendall County during early voting but haven't updated your registration, you'll only be able to vote a "Limited Ballot," (which includes statewide and national races but not local races). If you do so on election day, you'll have to vote a provisional ballot.

· **Early voting:** Normally, Texas holds early voting for two weeks prior to the general election. Due to the pandemic, Gov. Greg Abbott recently extended this period by nearly a week. This fall, early voting will begin on Tuesday, Oct. 13.

The KCED and the KCDP encourages everyone to take advantage of early voting. Since the voting is spread out over nearly three weeks instead of just one day, crowds and lines tend to be thinner and shorter, and the elections department has more staff and resources available to process voters, so your wait is shorter.

If you have questions or concerns about voting, please call 844-TX-VOTES or the KCED at 830-331-8701.

On Aug. 21, we'll cover voting by mail, Poll Watchers, and more. In the meantime, to sign up to take action, visit www.kcdems.us/act20

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