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What KC Democrats stand for

Gideon Tucker, a 19th century lawyer and politician, once wrote, “No man’s life, liberty or property are safe while the legislature is in session.”

With the Texas Legislature now “gaveled in” (through May 31, not counting any special sessions), the Kendall County Democratic Party (KCDP) will focus our activism on the following issues:

- Local control:

The Kendall County Commissioners Court (and all such courts) need the legal ability to control development in their jurisdictions. Currently, counties have little to no authority under state law to control any kind of construction project or development.

As a result, areas of unincorporated Kendall County are subject to overly dense housing developments, water-chugging and polluting concrete batching plants and other projects that adversely affect quality of life, with no ability for citizens to object and no ability for the county to restrict it.

At an October 2020 Commissioners Court meeting, Judge Darrel Lux urged citizens to contact District 73 State Rep. Kyle Biedermann and District 25 State Sen. Donna Campbell with concerns about local control.

Republicans railed for the entire tenure of Obama’s administration against its “federal overreach.” They screamed that states should be able to

PROGRESSIVE VIEWS



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take care of their own citizens without the federal government applying excessive rules. At the same time, Republicans despise cities and counties having that same level of control over their localities. When cities started passing ordinances to prevent fracking, or restricting developers from cutting trees, or requiring local businesses to pay workers for sick leave, the Republican state legislature promptly prevented such ordinances. Last year, a top Texas Republican leader was caught on tape stating, “We hate cities and counties.” (See my “Progressive Views” column “Working against local government,” November 1, 2019.) More of the same is forthcoming during the 2022 Legislative session.

Local control is a “common ground” issue between Democrats and Republicans. Nobody, regardless of party, wants a concrete batching plant next to their ranch. So we need to push the issue of giving counties more control over local development and work with the commissioners court as it “(works) with state legislators to enact changes that

would return some control over development to the local level.” (Boerne Star, October 20, 2020)

- Voting rights:

Democracy works best when lawmakers create rules to make it easier to vote, not harder. One bill (HB1026) calls for the voter registration process to be taken out of the hands of counties and, instead, be centralized with the Texas Secretary of State’s Office – a patently terrible idea that will only make it harder for Texans to register to vote.

KCDP strongly opposes this bill. Based on false claims of “rampant voter fraud” and Gov. Abbott’s declaration of “election integrity” as an emergency legislative issue, we anticipate other bills that will restrict voting rights or try to suppress the voices of segments of the voting population. We’ll fight against all of them.

Prior to a 2013 U.S. Supreme Court case, Texas was subject to “preclearance” by the U.S. Justice Department for any changes in voting. When that section of the Voting Rights Act was struck down, voting rights in Texas took a huge blow. The late Rep. John Lewis was fighting to change that.

- Gerrymandering:

The once-a-decade redistricting process happens later this year, depending on the release of the COVID-delayed U.S. Census results. (A special session is near-certain.) The maps Republicans drew up in 2010

were struck down in courts as discriminatory many times, and we expect similar efforts (and court challenges) this year.

We will join the ACLU of Texas and Fair Maps Texas to help reform the broken redistricting system and create districts that fairly and accurately represent an area’s population, not ones that allow politicians to “pick their voters” to ensure incumbent seats.

- Healthcare:

Access to quality healthcare should be a right, not a privilege, reserved for the wealthy few or for those with employer-provided health plans. As thousands lost their jobs in 2020, the pandemic demonstrated the utter folly of having one’s healthcare tied to one’s place of work. KCDP will call on the legislature to expand access to Medicaid and to improve access to rural healthcare.

Finally, many thanks to Boerne Star Publisher Jim Beaver and Managing Editor Keith Domke for reinstating the Friday political columns. KCDP appreciates the opportunity to keep our local community informed about where we stand on the important issues facing our county, state and nation. We look forward to a productive relationship.

To find out more about how to get involved, visit www.kcdems.us.

Laura Bray is Chair of the Kendall County Democratic Party.