

NONPARTISAN VOTERS GUIDE

SPECIAL CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ELECTION » MAY 7, 2022

Property Tax Limits » Property Tax Exemption

EARLY VOTING: April 25–May 3, 2022 »
ELECTION DAY: May 7, 2022. Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

» EMPOWERING VOTERS. DEFENDING DEMOCRACY.

» WHY AMEND THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION?

The current Texas Constitution was written in 1876 and has been amended over 500 times. Compare that to the United States Constitution, which has only 27 amendments.

Why does the Texas Constitution have so many amendments? Rules for how state and local governments should run are very specific in the Texas Constitution, unlike in the US Constitution. Therefore, our state lawmakers often have little freedom to make changes to laws without amending the state constitution. In order to change the Texas Constitution, a proposed amendment must pass both houses of the Legislature by a 2/3 majority, and then be approved by a majority of Texas voters.

All propositions that appear on your ballot must originate in the Legislature. Unlike some other states, the Texas Constitution cannot be amended by citizen-led ballot initiatives, referendums, or petitions.

We typically vote on a slate of amendments in the fall of odd-numbered years, following the spring Legislative session. For 2022, this special election was called to consider two proposed amendments approved by the Texas Legislature in special summer sessions, which occurred too late to be included in the November 2021 election. Most constitutional amendment elections cover a wide range of topics, but this election focuses on property taxes.

Voting on amendments is your right and fulfills your duty as a Texas citizen, giving you a direct voice in our state government.

Watch a short YouTube on the history of the Texas Constitution: *The Texas Constitution*

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» ABOUT THIS *VOTERS GUIDE*

This Voters Guide is funded and published by the League of Women Voters of Texas. The League never supports or opposes political candidates or political parties.

» ONLINE *VOTERS GUIDE*

The online, interactive version of the *Voters Guide* is at VOTE411.org. By entering your address, you can get helpful voter information, and view the ballot propositions, with explanations and arguments for and against. If there is a local League in your community, you can also find information on any local races.



» SIGN UP FOR VOTING REMINDERS!

To get voting reminders on your phone, text LWVTX to 80123.



» SUPPORT THE *VOTERS GUIDE*

Help us fund the cost of this valuable resource for Texas voters by making a secure donation online at lwvtexas.org, or by mailing your generous donation to the League of Women Voters of Texas, 1212 Guadalupe #107, Austin, TX 78701.



» *VOTERS GUIDE* POLICY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ELECTIONS

To create this Constitutional Amendment *Voters Guide*, each ballot proposition is researched and written by League volunteers. We strive to:

- Create fair and balanced coverage of the proposed amendments by reviewing enabling legislation, using a variety of resources and reaching out to authors and/or sponsors, supporters and opponents; and
- Use understandable and unbiased language.

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The League appreciates information on the proposed constitutional amendments provided by the House Research Organization <https://hro.house.texas.gov/>.





» BE A TEXAS VOTER!

The League of Women Voters of Texas fights for the freedom of ALL Texans to vote. Your vote is your voice . . . below are the ways to exercise your right to vote. Whichever way you choose to vote, be sure to first check your voter registration status at VoteTexas.gov! You must be registered before you can vote!

» VOTE BY MAIL

If you applied to vote by mail . . .

- Ballots are mailed out 30 to 45 days before an election or 7 days after the county election office receives an application.
- When you receive your ballot, be sure to
 - Mark your ballot using a black or blue pen;
 - Place your ballot in the ballot envelope and seal it;
 - Place the ballot envelope in the carrier envelope;
 - Complete all information on the carrier envelope (including your contact information, your voter ID number and the last four digits of your social security number), seal it, and sign the flap of the carrier envelope.
- See lwvtexas.org for more details and helpful information.
- Mail in your ballot as soon as possible. It must be received by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.
- Track your ballot at VoteTexas.gov!

If you want to hand deliver your vote by mail ballot . . .

- You may hand deliver *your* marked ballot in person to the county election office on Election Day while polls are open.
- You must show *your* photo ID when delivering the ballot, and sign a form.

» VOTE EARLY IN PERSON

- You may vote early at any voting location in your county.
- Find polling places at VOTE411.org or on your county election website.
- If you have a disability, you may request to move ahead of other voters in line.

- If in line before the poll closing time, you must be allowed to cast a ballot.

» VOTE ON ELECTION DAY

- In some counties, you can vote at any polling place. In other counties, you must vote at your precinct.
- Find polling places at VOTE411.org or on your county election website.
- If in line before the poll closing time, you must be allowed to cast a ballot.

» VOTE IN PERSON USING CURBSIDE VOTING

- If you are physically unable to enter the polling place without personal assistance or likelihood of injuring your health, you may ask that an election officer bring a ballot to your car.
- After you mark your ballot, give it to the election officer or hand it to a companion to deposit in the ballot box for you.
- It is best to call ahead so election officials will expect you!

» VOTE EVEN IF YOU ARE A SUSPENDED VOTER

You can still vote if your voter registration is in suspense! “Suspense” means that your county voter registrar needs to confirm your voting address.

» VOTE A LIMITED BALLOT IF YOU HAVE MOVED BUT NOT RE-REGISTERED

If you have moved to a new county and have not re-registered in the new county by the registration deadline, you may be eligible to vote a limited ballot in your new county. A limited ballot is one that allows you to vote on candidates and measures that are on the ballot for both your former county and your new county, such as statewide and national races. Voting a limited ballot is only available during early voting at the main early voting polling place.



» VOTER ID: WHAT TO TAKE TO THE POLLS

You may use one of seven forms of photo ID, listed below.

- Texas Driver License
- Texas Election Identification Certificate
- Texas Personal Identification Card issued by the Department of Public Safety (DPS)
- Texas Handgun License issued by DPS
- US Military Identification card containing the person's photograph
- US Citizenship Certificate containing the person's photograph
- US Passport (book or card)

Note:

- IDs may have expired up to four years.
- Persons 70 years or older may use an expired ID, regardless of expiration date.
- ID address does not have to match the voter registration address.
- The name on the photo ID should match the voter registration card or be "substantially similar." If the names don't match exactly but are substantially similar, the voter will initial a box for a similar name when signing in to vote.

Registered voters without photo ID, who cannot reasonably obtain one, may sign a form (described below) and present the original or a copy of one of the following documents with the voters name and address to vote a regular ballot:

- Texas voter registration card
- Certified birth certificate

- Current utility bill
- Bank statement
- Government check
- Paycheck
- Any other government document such as an out of state driver's license or expired Texas driver's license.

The form to be filled out by registered voters without a photo ID is a "Voter's Declaration of Reasonable Impediment or Difficulty." The voter must mark on the form one of the following reasons for not providing a photo ID:

- Lack of transportation
- Disability or illness
- Lack of birth certificate or other documents needed to obtain an acceptable form of photo ID
- Work schedule
- Family responsibilities
- Lost or stolen identification
- Acceptable form of photo ID applied for but not received.

Voter Harassment

- Election officials cannot question a voter about the use of an ID type.
- Poll watchers may never question a voter about Voter ID issues.
- If you are harassed, call the Election Protection Voter Hotline! See **page 7** for the contact information.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION

PROPOSITION 1

“The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for the reduction of the amount of a limitation on the total amount of ad valorem taxes that may be imposed for general elementary and secondary public school purposes on the resident homestead of a person who is elderly or disabled to reflect any statutory reduction from the preceding tax year in the maximum compressed rate of maintenance and operations taxes imposed for those purposes on a homestead.”

» EXPLANATION:

The Texas Constitution puts a ceiling on school property taxes paid by homeowners who are disabled or at least 65 years old. This means that for disabled and elderly homeowners, certain property tax rates cannot be higher than what they were the year they first qualified for this exemption. Since school property taxes make up most of a homeowner's tax bill, their property tax bills are essentially frozen unless improvements are made to their residence or they move.

In 2019, the Texas State Legislature passed a law which provided a property tax reduction to many homeowners. However, this reduction did not apply to disabled or elderly homeowners because under the Texas Constitution, their tax rate is frozen.

Proposition 1 would amend the Constitution to allow disabled and elderly homeowners to receive the benefits from the 2019 property tax reduction that other homeowners received. This amendment would result in freezing their tax rate at a lower rate. This will allow all homeowners to benefit from the lower tax rates passed in 2019.

The law related to this proposed amendment requires that the state reimburse school districts for revenues lost due to this proposition.

» ARGUMENTS FOR:

- The proposed amendment would provide significant property tax relief to disabled and elderly homeowners.
- This amendment would allow more people to benefit from lower tax rates passed in 2019.
- Many individuals who are disabled or elderly live on fixed incomes. The proposed amendment would provide them with financial relief as well as budget certainty.

» ARGUMENTS AGAINST:

- Opponents argue that this proposition does not resolve the problem of relying on property taxes to fund public schools.
- While school districts are to be reimbursed by the state for any revenues lost, the proposed amendment could reduce funds for public schools if proper formulas are not put in place.
- There may be other Texans more in need of tax relief, and some homeowners in the groups given tax relief by this proposition may not be in need.

PROPOSITION 2

“The constitutional amendment increasing the amount of the residence homestead exemption from ad valorem taxes for public school purposes from \$25,000 to \$40,000.”

» EXPLANATION:

Currently, homeowners are able to reduce the market value of their primary residence by \$25,000 when calculating their annual school property taxes. The proposed amendment would increase the amount of that reduction to \$40,000. This could lower homeowners’ annual property tax bills.

The law related to this proposed amendment requires that the state reimburse school districts for revenues lost due to this proposition.

» ARGUMENTS FOR:

- This amendment would save homeowners money in the form of property tax relief.
- This proposition should not impact public school revenues because the state would be required to make up any shortfall.
- This decrease in property taxes would particularly help low to moderate-income homeowners.

» ARGUMENTS AGAINST:

- The proposed amendment could reduce public school revenues if the formulas put in place by the state do not fully reimburse the local school districts for the losses.
- This property tax reduction will cost the state money if they reimburse lost revenue to school districts. The cost to the state will depend on the laws passed to make up any shortfall.
- The proposed amendment does not benefit those who are not homeowners, including renters who send their children to public schools.



» HELPFUL CONTACTS AND WEBSITES

League of Women Voters of Texas

lwvtexas.org

Secretary of State

VoteTexas.gov

Your County Election Website

lwvtexas.org/find-your-county-election-website

Election Protection

866OURVOTE.org

Voter Hotlines!

- English: 866-OUR-VOTE or 866-687-8683
- Spanish: 888-Ve-Y-Vota or 888-839-8682
- Asian: 888-API-VOTE or 888-274-8683
- Disability Rights TX: 888-796-VOTE or 888-796-8683

Republican Party

texasgop.org

Democratic Party

txdemocrats.org

Libertarian Party

lptexas.org

Green Party

txgreens.org



EMPOWERING VOTERS. DEFENDING DEMOCRACY.

The LWV is a nonpartisan political organization and is one of America's most trusted grassroots organizations!

We aim to:

- Achieve a free and fair democracy
- Increase participation in government
- Expand voter participation in Texas
- Create a League that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive.



» TEXAS LOCAL LEAGUES

Learn more about our local Texas Leagues and how they help shape today's important issues by visiting lwvtexas.org.

Amarillo	Comal Area	Fort Bend County	Midland	Tarrant County
Austin Area	Cooke County	Hays County	Montgomery County	Tyler/Smith County
Bay Area	Corpus Christi	Hill Country Texas	Richardson	Victoria
Baytown	Dallas	Houston	Rio Grande Valley	Waco Area
Cy-Fair	Denton	Irving	San Antonio Area	Wichita Falls
Collin County	El Paso	Lubbock County	South Central Texas	Williamson County





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