

Equipped to Vote

A Biblical Foundation

Matthew 5:13-16 - Salt and light

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

We can be the flavoring, the preserving, and we can be light to all around. Or, we can be thrown out and trampled, hidden.

2 Corinthians 5:20 - Ambassadors for Christ

“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

Ambassadors are the voice of their government, the authority, in the foreign land they are stationed in within that embassy.

Numbers 13-14 - Twelve spies in the Promised Land

Ten of the spies came back full of fear. They refused to believe in the goodness of God and His promises to them, and they did not want to participate in the process of taking their promised inheritance because they were afraid and sowed their fear amongst the people. The Bible says only Caleb and Joshua, who were ready to go up against the enemies in the land, survived, and the other 10 all died in the wilderness. Fear and apathy left them with no inheritance!

Luke 20:21-25 - Give unto Caesar what is Caesar’s

Then they asked Him, saying, “Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth: Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, “Why do you test Me? Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?” They answered and said,

“Caesar’s.” And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Romans 13:1-2 - No authority except from God

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.”

1 Timothy 2:1-2 - Pray for our leaders

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”

When someone runs for office they are running for a position of leadership- pray for them even as they run, and regardless of the outcome. Prayer is the first and highest way we can participate in our country’s elections, and continue to cover those in leadership after the elections are completed.

Proverbs 22:6 - Train up a child

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

My testimony

America: a Republic or a Democracy?

In a **republic**, the people vote to put elected officials in offices of authority. Those officials make laws, and the republic is governed by those laws. The elected officials, as well as the people, are bound to obey the laws.

In a **democracy**, the majority and sentiment of the people rule. True democracy is ruled by the people’s feelings at that particular point in time. If an issue needs to be ruled upon, a vote is taken, and the majority decides the outcome; the law does not decide the outcome.

“A republic is the highest form of government devised by man, but it also requires the greatest amount of human care and maintenance. If neglected, it can deteriorate into a variety of lesser forms, including a democracy

(government conducted by popular feeling), anarchy (a system in which each person determines his own rules and standards), oligarchy (a government run by a small council or group of elite individuals), or a dictatorship (a government run by a single individual).” - David Barton

“Democracy will soon degenerate into an anarchy; such an anarchy that every man will do what is right in his own eyes and no man’s life or property or reputation or liberty will be secure, and every one of these will soon [mold] itself into a system of subordination of all the moral virtues and intellectual abilities, all the powers of wealth, beauty, wit, and science, to the wanton pleasures, the capricious will, and the execrable (abominable) cruelty of one or a very few.” - John Adams

“Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property, and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. Theoretic politicians, who have patronized this species of government, have erroneously supposed that by reducing mankind to a perfect equality in their political rights, they would, at the same time, be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions. - James Madison

Requirements to Register to Vote

- US Citizen
- Resident of the county you are registering in

Note for college students, you can register where your permanent address is (usually where your parents live) and you request a ballot by mail to vote, or you can register to vote in person where you live during the school year, but cannot register for both places if it is a different county.

- 18 years old
- Not a convicted felon (however, you may be eligible if you have completed your sentence, probation, and parole)
- Not declared totally or partially mentally incapacitated without the right to vote

How to Register to Vote

Texas website with voter registration information:

<https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/>

If you live elsewhere: Google search “how to register to vote in ____” and fill in your state.

- You can register in person at your county [Voter Registrar’s office](#).
- You can register by mail by obtaining an application from your county [Voter Registrar’s office](#), or pick up applications at at many post offices, libraries, Texas DPS offices, Texas Health and Human Services Commission offices, or high schools.
- You can fill out an online application which you print and mail in to your county voter registrar
- You can request an application online and it will be mailed to you

You must be registered by 30 days before an election to be eligible to vote in that election

How and Where to Vote

- Check your local news, newspaper, or search for the county voting registrar online. Locations and times for early voting and election day polls will be listed with these sources.
- Election day polls are open from 7am to 7pm in Texas
- Early voting times vary and there are less locations than on the election day
- Tom Green County (San Angelo): <http://www.co.tom-green.tx.us/page/ele.ElectionsHome>
- You are mailed a voter registration card; however, in Texas you are required to take a photo ID to the polling location and that is how you check in. Your voter registration card is proof that you are a registered voter, and it will have information about your precinct number, district information for school, city, state, and federal elections on it. The most common forms of photo ID include driver's license, passport, state ID card, or military ID card.
- For other accepted forms of ID, or if you don't have a photo ID, see here: <https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/need-id.html>

Types of Elections

- Primary elections - early March in Texas, choose which party primary to vote in
- General elections - early November, typically a Republican vs Democrat, possibly some other smaller parties or independent candidates
 - Both primaries and general elections cover county, state, and federal offices
- Municipal elections - typically non-partisan positions (city council, school board, etc)
- Special elections - usually are held because of an unexpected open elected position, or there is a runoff election between two candidates
- Texas constitutional amendments - usually are voted on with the November general elections if there are any on the ballot

How to research candidates' positions/platforms/beliefs:

Look for NON-PARTISAN voters guides (not Republican or Democrat-based organizations) for federal and state elections. A particular candidate's website is made to look polished and shiny and make their positions sound good- they are trying to market and sell themselves to voters. A non-partisan guide will compare responses from each candidate for a position so you have a side-by-side comparison. For county and local elections, often there are newspaper write ups or you can find other information on social media for those candidates.

Texas League of Women Voters <https://my.lwv.org/texas/voters-guide>
Vote411.org - Put in your street address (no apartment numbers; spell out "county road"). It will give you all candidates on your ballot and allow you to compare them and mark each one you plan to vote for. You can print this and take it with you to the polls.

Voting reminders (text or email): <https://my.lwv.org/texas/voting-elections/get-voting-reminders>

References

All scriptures are taken from the New King James Version
Liz Lemery Joy - "How to Be Salt and Light: The Christian's Guide to Voting"
Texas League of Women Voters - <https://my.lwv.org/texas>

Elected Offices Quick Reference Guide

Federal (National)

- President/Vice President: 4 year term, 2 terms maximum. Once each party has their candidate chosen in the primary elections, then that person chooses a VP running mate and they are on the general election ballot together. The President and Vice President lead the Executive Branch of government in the US.
- US Senator: 6 year term, 2 senators per state. The Senate has the exclusive power to advise and consent on presidential nominations to executive and judicial offices, to ratify U.S. treaties, and to try impeachments. With the U.S. House, the Senate adopts budgets, levies taxes, borrows money, regulates interstate commerce, provides services, adopts regulations, and declares war.
- US Representative: 2 year term, 435 total representatives, dependent on population for how many per state. Representatives introduce bills and resolutions, offer amendments, serve on committees. The House has the exclusive power to initiate bills for raising revenue, to impeach officials, and to choose the president in the event that a presidential candidate fails to get a majority of the Electoral College votes.

State (Texas)

- Governor: 4 year term. The governor of Texas is the head of the executive branch of Texas's government and the commander-in-chief of the state's military forces. The governor has the power to either approve or veto bills passed by the Texas Legislature, and to convene the legislature. The governor may grant pardons in cases other than impeachment (but only when recommended by the Board of Pardons and Paroles) or in the case of treason, with permission by the legislature.
- Lieutenant Governor: 4 year term. The lieutenant governor of Texas is the second-highest executive office in the government of Texas. This person controls the work of the Texas Senate and controls the budgeting process as a leader of the Legislative Budget Board.
- Comptroller of Public Accounts: 4 year term. The primary duty of the Comptroller's office is to collect substantially all tax revenue owed to the State of Texas. The Comptroller's office is responsible for collecting and remitting the local portion of this tax revenue to the various cities, counties, and special districts throughout the state.

- Land Commissioner: 4 year term, head of the General Land Office. The GLO manages Texas's publicly owned lands, by negotiating and enforcing leases for the use of the land, and sometimes by making sales of public lands. The agency is also responsible for keeping records of land grants and titles and for issuing maps and surveys of public lands.
- Attorney General: 4 year term. The state's chief legal officer, tasked to represent the state in civil litigation and approve public bond issues, serves as legal counsel to all boards and agencies of state government, issues legal opinions when requested by the governor and other officials, and defends challenges to state laws and suits against both state agencies and individual employees of the state.
- Agriculture Commissioner: 4 year term, heads the Texas Department of Agriculture, which is responsible for matters pertaining to agriculture, rural community affairs, and related matters.
- Railroad Commissioner: 6 year term. The railroad commissioner is one of the three-member Texas Railroad Commission. The commission has no regulatory authority concerning railroads. Instead, it regulates the oil and gas industry, gas utilities, pipeline safety, safety in the liquefied petroleum gas industry, and surface coal and uranium mining.
- State Board of Education: 4 year term. The fifteen-member board decides curriculum, standards, student testing, special education programs, and textbooks for Texas public schools. It also oversees the Permanent School Fund.
- State Senators: 4 year term, 31 total members
- State Representatives: 2 year term, 150 total members
- Texas Supreme Court Justices: 6 year term. The Supreme Court issues final decisions on civil and juvenile appeals, issues writs of mandamus (an order from a court to an inferior government official ordering the government official to properly fulfill their official duties or correct an abuse of discretion) and writs of habeas corpus (used to bring a prisoner or other detainee [e.g. institutionalized mental patient] before the court to determine if the person's imprisonment or detention is lawful), and has jurisdiction over orders or judgments of trial courts if the Supreme Court determines them important to the jurisprudence of the state.
- Court of Criminal Appeals Judges: 6 year term. A member of the court with final judgment in all criminal cases. The court must review all cases in which the death penalty is assessed. It also exercises discretionary review in other criminal cases and issues writs of habeas corpus.
- Court of Appeals Judges: 6 year term. Hear appeals on civil and criminal cases from lower courts in its district

- District Court Judges: 4 year terms, 9 total districts in the state covering over 400 courts

County

- County Judge: 4 year term, heads the Commissioner's Court
- County Commissioners (by precinct): 4 year term
- Various types of county court judges: 4 year term
- Justice of the Peace: 4 year term
- Sheriff: 4 year term
- Tax Assessor/Collector: 4 year term
- Precinct Chair: helps to grow a specific party in that area and works to get its' party's candidates elected

Municipal (Local) - Non-partisan elections, terms may be dependent on that city's charter or school district's policies

- Mayor
- City Council
- School Board
- Police Chief (San Angelo elects, other cities appoint a chief of police)
- Municipal judges (may be appointed or elected)

References

Elected offices reference guide information taken from Wikipedia

2020 Census

» THE 2020 CENSUS IMPACTS REDISTRICTING IN TEXAS!

What is the Census, and how does it impact you?

- **The Census is a count of all persons living in the U.S.** It is conducted every 10 years by the federal government, and it is mandated by the Constitution.
- **Resources for the Community:** We track changes in our population in order to know where to send resources and federal services. Census data is used to distribute over \$800 billion in federal funds annually. States use this money to pay for services and programs that are absolutely vital to the community, such as healthcare, highway funding, and education. Each person counted in your community means additional federal dollars in your community.
- **Basis for Representation:** These population changes also have an affect on our democracy. The Census count is used to determine how many seats each state gets in Congress and how district lines are drawn at every level of government.
- **Community Development:** Census data impacts planning and development in your community. It guides decisions on where to build businesses, subdivisions, schools, and roads. It is used by healthcare officials to plan resources and appropriate care for the surrounding population.

When will the Census be conducted?

Starts: March 2020

Ends: July 2020

How can people complete the Census questionnaire?

- Online
- Over the phone
- The paper form
- Or, by responding to a Census worker at your home

What the Census will send you in the mail

On or between	You'll receive
March 12-20	An invitation to respond online to the 2020 Census. (Some households will also receive paper questionnaires.)
March 16-24	A reminder letter. If you haven't responded yet:
March 26-April 3	A reminder postcard.
April 8-16	A reminder letter and paper questionnaire.
April 20-27	A final reminder postcard before the Census follows up in person.

Are Census Responses Confidential? Yes.

- All Census data are protected by federal law to be kept confidential for 72 years.
- The Census Bureau cannot share data with any other federal agency.
- All Census Bureau employees swear to a lifetime oath to protect respondent information and will be fined \$250,000 and/or face up to 5 years imprisonment for wrongful disclosure.

"It is your right to be counted! Filling out the form is fast, easy, and secure."

—GRACE CHIMENE, PRESIDENT, LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TEXAS

For more information about the 2020 Census:

<https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2019/comm/2020-everyone.html>

The above was taken from Texas League of Women Voters Non-Partisan Voting Guide for March 2020 primaries.