



THE ELEPHANT'S EAR

Ellis County GOP's Monthly Newsletter Get informed!

April 2023 Edition

A Message from the Chair

Ellis County Republicans,

Things are beginning to move fast with our City Council and School Board races. Election day is May 6th. Early voting will be held April 24-29 and May 1-2. You may go to the Ellis County Elections Website to find the nearest polling location to you. The candidates running the races will be at our next GOP meeting on April 4th. This will be an opportune time to get to know the candidates. Candidates who are present will be allowed 2 minutes to speak on their race. The social hour will begin at 5:30 p.m. and the business meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. We will meet at the Afters 1511 Ovilla Rd. Waxahachie, TX. We will be discussing Legislation and Election Integrity.

Hope to see you there,
Randy Bellomy
Chairman
Ellis County Republican Party

Legislative Update

The Texas Legislative session is well under way!

I want to thank everyone who is sending emails and making phone calls. Your voice is making a difference.

There is still time for any of you out there that want to be involved and help with Action Alerts! We even have a "handy dandy" public comment link for the Texas House that will automatically register you for or against a bill. The Texas House has made it easy.

We only have 61 days until Sine Die (which is the last day of session). Email me at texaspoliticstx@gmail.com to be added to the list.

This session the Texas Senate is showing great Conservatism. In my opinion, they are the most conservative governing body in America right now. Great bills are passing and the Republicans are unified in the resolve to pass strong legislation. It all starts with strong leadership.

For example SB15, Save Women's Sports Act by Middleton, SB162 Birth Certificate law by Perry, and SB14 Banning Trans Gender Mutilation by Campbell have all passed out of the Senate and will head on over to the Texas House. These are not the only great bills to pass the Texas Senate but a few I know we care about.

All the great bills passing out of the Texas Senate will now head on over to the Texas House, and I think it is safe to say that the Texas House is where good bills go to die.

On Wednesday the Texas House Calendars Committee had a meeting and they will be getting bills sent to them very soon. We do have a new Calendars Committee Chair, Dustin Burrows. I am excited to see his actions this session.

We must be vigilant to be a voice not only to get strong House bills passed but to ensure that the Senate bills pass and do not get watered down in the House.

It is going to be a very wild and crazy ride here on out...with lots of Action Alerts. So be sure to join us and help Keep Texas, Texas.

Kathy Ponce
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texaspoliticstx@gmail.com

Ellis County GOP Precinct Corner

[Precinct maps and Chair listing found HERE.](#)



As I write this, we are only 22 days from the start of early voting (April 24th). Please visit the ["Vote" page on the the Ellis County GOP website](#) where you can download:

"Generic" Sample Ballot for Ellis County

Early Voting Polling Locations/Times

Election Day Polling Locations/Times

In Person Voting instructions

or view a short video showing the voting process in Ellis county.

Now is the time to reach out to the candidates you support and volunteer to help. Help can be more than simply making a donation. Your help will be welcome to block walk, make phone calls, host meet and greets, or electioneer when the polls are open.

How often do you complain or hear others complain about decisions made by members of your city council, school board or utility board? This election is your opportunity to turn that complaint into action. The Joint General and Special Election held this time last year saw 14,024 votes cast from over 127,000 registered voters. That is a turn out of only 11.01%. In other words, 88.9% of the registered voters in Ellis County chose not to participate in the election of their city council, school board, mayor, etc... Does this mean that 88.9% of the registered voters don't care?

If you are reading this, you are most likely among the 11.01% that not only care but care enough to vote. We need each of you to take this a step further and inform your neighbors, friends and family to get informed, get involved and get out to vote!

I look forward to seeing many of you (and your invited guests) at our monthly meeting. Start the evening off with some great food from the [Missing Link BBQ](#) (BYOB) while you visit with fellow Ellis County Republicans. This is a great opportunity to meet with your elected officials and Ellis County Republican leadership to include your precinct chairs. Stick around for the Ellis County Republican Party Executive Committee meeting as we discuss our ongoing efforts to Keep our County Red. The agenda includes informative presentations

regarding the Red Oak ISD and Waxahachie ISD Bonds and discussion of SB990. In addition we will hear from many of the candidates in the upcoming May 6th local elections.

Date: Tuesday, April 4th

Time: 5:30PM Social and Supper Hour (BYOB) 6:30PM Meeting

Food Available from: [Missing Link BBQ](#).

Please patronize the food vendor. They are providing this service without any guarantee or cost to the Ellis County Republican Party.

Location: [The After Church, 1511 Ovilla Rd, Waxahachie, TX 75167](#)

One Team, Many Fights!

J.J. Brookshire

Chair - Communications & Marketing Sub-committee & Pct 1034

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[PS: Please encourage your fellow Ellis County residents to visit the Ellis County GOP website and subscribe to the Elephant's Ear](#)



Just Do the Right Thing

I was talking to my daughter the other day and explaining to her that doing the right thing is easy but it is not always popular. As a leader in other positions that do not have to do with politics, I often have to do things that are unpopular with the crowd that I am serving, but that I know are the right decisions. As anyone in any sort of leadership position knows, doing things that cause friction amongst a minority are often the right decisions, and conversely doing things to appease the squeaky wheel are often the easy way out at the moment with long-term consequences. It seems as though we have been in a situation for quite some time now, where we ask our elected officials to do the right thing and actually vote the way they say they will when they are running as candidates. With local elections as well as the State Legislature in session, we must remain vigilant to hold our electeds accountable for the decisions they are choosing to make that impact us at a state level and at the local level. I along with others have voted in a way that we felt was best for our state, best for our county, and best for our country. I along with others have helped numerous candidates become elected as well as have backed those same candidates up when they chose to make unpopular decisions. I'm well aware that not every elected official takes the time to read this newsletter, which is fine. We all have our limits as to what we allow ourselves to do in a 24-hour period. But to those elected officials who do choose to read what is written here, I charge you to do the right things. I charge you not to take the easy way out on all decisions. I charge you to vote the way that you said you would as a candidate and to bring to the table those things that we, the people, elected you for in the first place. So do the right thing and stand for the right thing. It might be unpopular, some times, but it is easy.

Holly Freeman

Editor

For more ways to stay Red visit www.elliscountygop.org

*Please note: The following is in regards to the proposed SB990 and HB5231 bills. This is written by and is the **opinion of Eric Blake Precinct 1036 chair**. This topic will be discussed at the upcoming Ellis County Republican Party Executive Committee meeting on April 4th.*

In opposition to [SB990](#) and [HB5231](#)

The Republican Party of Texas voted last convention to have as one of its legislative priorities for 2023 be the topic of "Election Integrity". Our legislators have been hard at work trying to advance several bills to give voters more confidence that fraud is not a factor in Texas elections, although some bills are better than others. There is a fine line between "voter integrity" and "voter suppression", and if we are not careful, we can end up with laws that actively penalize good voters, rather than prevent bad voters. I have been a precinct chair in Ellis County for several years now, and have been serving as a poll-worker (sometimes a clerk, sometimes a site election judge) ever since 2018, back when Ellis County still had precinct-only voting on election day. And I have always tried to increase voter turnout - I am a strong believer that our country, state, county, and cities work best when we know the will of the majority, and not merely the will of the select few who can be bothered to show up. I keep my certification as a Volunteer Deputy Registrar active, so that I can help do voter registration drives at various events in the county.

Let me start by stating that I work as a computer programmer by profession, and as a result, I do not trust anyone that claims they have perfect election software for computer-only voting ([click here to see a great comic summarizing my experience](#)). In my opinion, the ONLY reliable election results are those that can be audited by a human. When Ellis County was deciding between two different vendors in 2018 on who to use to upgrade our county voting equipment, I was very vocal about that fact, and very pleased that our county paid attention to my worries and chose a solution that has a paper trail that can be audited by a human, even when one of the vendors was trying to tout an electronic-only option as one of their products. It is sad to me that back then, there were counties in Texas that did not have a paper trail with a one-to-one match to every election ballot, where you are forced to blindly trust that the computer software in that county has accurately tabulated everyone's vote. But I am pleased to note that in 2021, Texas law was amended to require all 254 counties to move towards a system with a paper trail; at this point, at least 230 counties have already complied (Ellis was already compliant), and the rest will be getting there soon.

However, I will also state that a paper trail audit is not the same as a hand count. Human error is a real thing, and computers are great at automating the tedious tasks where tired humans can go wrong. Computer-assisted voting is not the same as computer-only voting. A computer-printed ballot is generally going to be more legible than a hand-marked ballot (if you remember the term "hanging chads" from Florida, you'll understand why making the human audit easier is important). Yes, in Ellis County, your ballot has a bar code that is counted by a computer, as well as a human-readable representation of how you voted; and I have had voters express their concern that a bar code is not human-readable. If their ballot were JUST a bar code, I'd be worried. But remember, the only reason there is a bar code is that computers can count bar codes faster and cheaper than text, which lets us quickly tabulate a tentative number on election night. Furthermore, Texas law already says the vote is not certified until the County HAS also performed a hand-audit comparison of the election machine numbers to the human counted ballots from a subset of the ballots cast. You can go to the Elections Office and utilize the Freedom of Information Act to request to see the results of those audits, and you will see that the computer bar code numbers have always matched the hand-count of the human-readable lines. And if for any reason we ever doubt the computer results, we CAN do a hand-count of 100% of the actual paper ballots, rather than just the statistically significant subset done in our state-mandated audit for ensuring that our machines have not been tampered with (it's more expensive and more time-consuming, but it is reassuring that we have the option).

I've also heard people claim that "since we can't trust software, we should get rid of computers altogether, and go back to the old way of marking and counting everything by hand." But I disagree with that. While software in isolation cannot be trusted, neither can people in isolation. The more redundancy we have in the system, while still preserving voter anonymity, the more witnesses we have that the numbers being reported match each other and the will of the people. What's more, going back to hand-counting would mean that we no longer have tentative numbers available on election night, which is a major step backwards. If you ever want to know more about how our county equipment works, PLEASE go visit the Elections office in Waxahachie and ask for a hands-on demonstration - our election officials are more than happy to share with you all the ins and outs of what happens behind the scenes to keep your ballots secure and accurate and why we can trust the machines with human supervision. They have had to put up with a number of questions from me, and have always been able to answer my questions to my satisfaction.

Next, let me tell you what I have observed as a poll-worker over the years. In 2018, when Ellis County still had precinct-level voting, I was working at the election site at Walnut Grove Middle School in Midlothian, and of the many voters that visited my site that day, roughly 20 voters were not at the correct precinct. For every one of them, I was able to give them a slip of paper telling them where they had to drive, as well as give them the option to vote provisionally with the caveat that their vote might not count because they were in the wrong precinct. Several chose to spend more time going to the right place, several chose to vote provisionally (I'm not on the ballot board, so I don't know if their votes counted or were rejected), but more importantly, I had one voter who got so visibly mad at the situation that they basically said "Fine, then I won't vote today" and stormed out. Also, if a voter showed up close to 7pm when the polls close, there was no physical way they could drive to their correct polling location. In other words, we were actively disenfranchising voters who did not show up at the right location, despite our best efforts to educate people about the one location that their precinct should vote in.

In 2019, Ellis County got new voting equipment, and with it, we also asked Texas if we could join the growing list of counties authorized to do county-wide polling (Lubbock County was the first to start it, a couple years earlier). According to Texas law, after a trial run in the Municipal elections in May 2019, we then had to meet before the County Commissioner's court to offer public testimony on whether the state should grant us permanent rather than provisional county-wide polling status. I attended that particular Commissioner's Court meeting, and offered my own testimony along with hearing from quite a few other citizens, all of whom spoke very positively about the change. In particular, my own testimony that day was about one couple, recently moved in, who showed up at my polling site (that time, at the Midlothian Church of Christ), stating that they had already been to one wrong address (they had gone to the Midlothian Civic Center on Main Street, not realizing the difference from the Midlothian Conference Center on the 287), and that my site was their last try for the day. I was more than happy to tell them that yes, because of county-wide voting, they had reached a place where they could vote; while at the same time noting that if we were still in precinct-only voting, they would be in the wrong place and have to make another trip. Given that they stated they were done hunting for locations, they would have been disenfranchised if it weren't for county-wide polling. So imagine my surprise when I learned about Senator Hall's [SB990](#) and Rep Tinderholt's counterpart [HB5231](#) that wants to repeal election-day county-wide voting across the entire state of Texas, all in the name of "voter integrity". As far as I can gather, the weak rationale in proposing the bill is a claim that "it is harder to validate that voters aren't voting twice if the way a voter is checked in relies on the internet - and precinct-only voting lets us use a paper pollbook with no internet connection where we can guarantee a voter's signature appears only once". But what they are not understanding is that early voting is also a county-wide process. There are some counties in Texas small enough to have only one early-voting polling site (in those counties, every precinct does early voting in the same building) - but Ellis county is not one of those counties (we have too many citizens to fit in one site). And it is BECAUSE of internet pollbooks, not IN SPITE of them, that we already CAN guarantee that a voter cannot vote in more than one location.

Here's how our county-wide voting works: we HAVE to have a pollbook check-in system that is connected to the internet (albeit behind lots of safeguards that it can't be randomly accessed by non-authorized users). Why? Because if a voter shows up in a Midlothian polling site at 8am, signs in to vote, then drives to a Waxahachie polling site at 9am, we NEED some way for the Waxahachie site to reject that second attempt as a voter trying to vote twice. Yes, back when we had precinct-only voting, you could only sign in at the one location where your name appears on the precinct roll (at any other site, you had to vote provisionally). But ALL that having the logbooks internet-connected does is let the various sites share information in real time, to prevent duplicate voting, so that we can run voting in more than one site at the same time. The pollbooks are NOT connected to the ballot marking machines; once you have a ballot in hand, there is no further use of the internet. We do not, and cannot, track how you voted - your ballot is anonymized according to the Texas laws on having a distinct serial number on every ballot, where you select a ballot out of a pile of at least three, without the judge tracking which serial you selected. And if you are ever worried that the electronic pollbooks are wrong (let's suppose that someone was indeed able to hack the voting system, despite the layers of best software practices in place to make that extremely difficult), you STILL have the right to vote provisionally.

As always, the paper trail is king: the electronic pollbook speeds up check-in, but if you do not trust the pollbook, you can use the slower means of a paper-only check-in for a provisional ballot and your vote will still be counted once the paper trail is verified. Another thing to be aware of: in every election, YOUR tax dollars are being spent to rent out every polling site. Some places are generous and let the county hold elections at a discount rate compared to what you would pay personally for the same use of that space, but the fact remains that elections cost money to run. The more polling sites you have, the more money it costs the county. If we are forced to give up county-wide polling, the county will be forced to contract out even more polling sites than before, because of the increased number of precincts created by the 2020 redistricting. What's more, it is no longer practical for the county to use public schools as a polling site (which formed a lot of the precinct-only polling sites in 2018). County-wide polling has allowed the county to save money on elections by focusing on major vote centers that can service voters from multiple precincts at convenient distances to all residents, and we would lose that benefit if county-wide polling is eliminated. I will not deny that isolated cases of intentional voter fraud have occurred in the past, and that there are a few bad actors out there will still attempt to game the system, but I will also stand strong in my statement that we have much bigger problems we should be focusing on. The vast majority of documented and prosecuted cases of voter fraud are in the range of one or two votes, and generally it is possible to confidently state that the bad votes cannot impact the overall outcome of the election; and our judicial system is already equipped to order a revote in the rare case that a case of fraud could have a mathematical chance of even affecting an outcome.

There is a much bigger impact possible in elections where voter turnout is increased, than in an election where we have stronger guarantees that the already minimal attempts at fraud were reduced. Sadly, this is not the first time Senator Hall has proposed bad bills in the name of "election integrity". Back in 2021, SB1 added a requirement championed by Hall that by 2026, counties will have to switch from the current election equipment that uses USB storage drives to track the electronic count over to write-once media (such as CDRM). But while write-once technology may exist, it has never been certified for use in election equipment, something that itself takes a long time to do; here's an interesting article about an estimated taxpayer cost of more than \$100 million, every year rather than just a one-time upgrade, to buy new equipment that doesn't even exist yet, in order to comply with the current wording of the law in 2021's SB1 ([Click here to read The Texas Tribute story](#)). Hopefully, we can convince legislators to roll back the bad requirements on the grounds that our current solution with USB sticks is already secure enough and not worth the

taxpayer expense to get rid of. Yes, a USB stick can technically be re-written - but that's not the full story. Election law already requires a strong chain-of-custody to the USB sticks present in elections; when all state-mandated guidelines are followed (and I can attest that poll-workers are trained to follow those guidelines), these election result drives are physically inaccessible except at well-documented points in time when there is more than one authorized personnel observing the handling. It does not matter if a media can technically be rewritten if it cannot be logistically rewritten.

We need to quit wasting tax dollars on attempting to solve a theoretical problem that does not exist in practice. While my plea in this article is to have you reach out to your elected officials to make sure we do not lose county-wide polling places due to Senator Hall's misguided efforts in SB990 to roll back progress, I also have some strong opinions on other voting-related bills out there, but where this article does not have room to go into details. Feel free to reach out to me and learn more about what I think makes a good or bad election bill.

Eric Blake
Chair - Precinct 1036
1036@elliscountygop.org.

Food for Thought

[Harrison: HB3999](#)

[Scorecard: Texas School Superintendent Salaries Soar](#)

[Washington Post: Trump Indictment](#)

[Bob Hall: Texas Freedom Coalition](#)

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When you become a Legacy Circle member of the Republican Party of Ellis County you will be a vital part of helping us build a powerful and influential presence.

Your contribution will help keep Ellis County and the great state of Texas, RED!

Your valuable contribution will go directly to providing a permanent location for our GOP Headquarters in Ellis County which allows us to do the following:

1. Hold our GOP monthly meetings open to all citizens
2. Have training for Precinct Chairman and volunteers
3. Host our 'Get Out The Vote' efforts at election time
4. House our resources such as our candidate campaign signs and literature
5. Be a center for town hall meetings to educate and inform our citizens

There are several levels of membership – please choose the one that is right for you!

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