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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wernick Responds to Explosive Public Outcry with a Concrete Plan to Move Polling Sites to Neutral RISD Locations

District 2 candidate says the move would restore impartiality, improve voter safety, and save taxpayer money

Dallas, Texas - After an overwhelming public response to his [press release](#) showing how incumbent Commissioner Andrew Sommerman used official power to establish mosque polling locations and then campaigned on the partisan result, Dallas County Commissioner District 2 candidate Barry Wernick today offered a concrete plan to restore neutrality to the ballot box, applying the same standard to a mosque and to a church.

Wernick, a TMCA Credentialed Distinguished Mediator, said dozens of constituents contacted the campaign directly after the first release.

"Voters do not want polling locations chosen as political weapons," Wernick said. "They want locations that are convenient, accessible, and impartial. As a mediator, my job is to find workable middle ground. District 2 comes first."

"Everybody votes in a building that belongs to all of us. That is the whole idea, and the Legislature wrote it down decades ago," Wernick said. "If Sommerman offers to move only the mosques, understand exactly what that is. Moving only the mosques is the religious act. Moving the private sites together is the neutral one. I have said which one I am for, in writing, before he speaks."

The Proposal

Wernick called on Commissioner Sommerman to meet with Richardson ISD immediately to evaluate moving two current vote centers before the November election:

- Relocate the Islamic Association of North Texas (IANT) polling location at 840 Abrams Road in Richardson to the Arzell Ball Center, a Richardson ISD facility better suited for public use.
- Relocate the Ministerios Charisma polling location at 740 Melrose Drive in Richardson to the former Greenwood Hills Elementary campus, now available after the school's closure and consolidation.

"I am asking for the same thing at a church that I am asking for at a mosque," Wernick said. "If this principle is right, it is right everywhere, and it does not bend for anyone's congregation or anyone's votes."

This Is Not a New Demand. It Is What Texas Law Already Prefers.

Texas Election Code Section [43.031\(c\)](#) provides that the building selected for a polling place shall be a public building if practicable. Section [43.031\(d\)](#) permits a private building only when a suitable public building is unavailable.

Section [43.031\(a\)](#) defines a public building as one owned or controlled by a political subdivision. Richardson ISD is a political subdivision. Its facilities are public buildings and they sit in the same neighborhoods as the current sites.

"The law already says public buildings come first," Wernick said. "I am not asking Dallas County to invent a new rule. I am asking it to follow the one that is already on the books."

The public alternative costs the county less, and the school district cannot refuse it. Section [43.031\(c\)](#) requires the entity that owns or controls a public building to make it available for any election covering the territory where it sits. Section [43.033](#) bars any charge for a public building on a day it is normally open for business and makes assessing one a Class C misdemeanor. If the building is not normally open that day, the owner may recover only itemized actual expenses.

"This is a win on every front," Wernick said. "It restores impartiality, it protects voters, and it saves the county money. The Legislature already made public buildings free on purpose. There is no reason to keep writing checks to private facilities."

Wernick said IANT's ongoing campus expansion raises additional safety and liability questions for voters and for Dallas County. An active construction site is not an appropriate place to ask residents to cast a ballot.

Accountability

Wernick reiterated his demand that Sommerman apologize to District 2 voters for choosing the polling places and then bragging about the votes they won for his party. He did it twice on camera, in a [reelection kickoff video](#) and again before a [community gathering](#).

The Richardson site Sommerman took credit for is the Islamic Association of North Texas (IANT) at 840 Abrams Road. On May 2, 2025, after Isha prayers, that building hosted an event titled ["From Marxism to Islam: The Revolutionary Road to Allah."](#) organized by the Dallas chapter of the Islamic Circle of North America. Its own promotional material advertised two speakers as former Marxists who chose Islam, including Imam Jihad Abdulmumit, formerly of the Young Lords Party and the Black Panther Party.

Imam Jihad joined the Black Panther Party at sixteen, went underground in the Black Liberation Army, and served 23 years in prison for bank robbery and his involvement in the Black Liberation Movement.

Wernick said the question is not about anyone's religious beliefs, but why Sommerman chose these specific locations.

"Sommerman selected this building, took public credit for the choice, and then told his supporters what it delivered for his party," Wernick said. "Voters are entitled to know what the county picked, and to have that decision made against a published standard instead of by a politician whose own name is on the ballot."

What the County Should Produce

Wernick called on the Dallas County Commissioners Court to release three documents:

- The methodology for determining where each polling place will be located, which section [43.007\(f\)](#) requires a countywide polling place program to adopt.
- The record of every vote center added, removed, or relocated since the Commissioners Court adopted the Vote Center Advisory Committee's list on August 15, 2023, showing the date of each change and who requested it, together with the committee minutes for those decisions and the high turnout vote center list the committee said it would produce. The 2023 list is already public. What has happened to it since is not.
- The complete cost record for every polling place located in a building that is not a public building, covering each election since the county entered the countywide program, itemized and set against the county's cost for the public buildings used in those same elections.

"A public building is free on a day it is already open," Wernick said. "The county can tell us to the dollar what it is paying to use private buildings instead, and which public buildings it passed over to do it."

Wernick said the request covers every polling place in Dallas County and not only those in District 2.

"This started in District 2 because that is where I could see it," Wernick said. "But there is one methodology for the whole county, and nobody outside the Commissioners Court has ever read it. Produce it."

Legislative Fix

Wernick said he will push for changes to the Texas Election Code so this cannot be repeated, and has prepared a fourteen-provision package for the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Speaker of the Texas House.

Its central provision would give Section [43.031](#) the enforcement it lacks by requiring a county to make and publish a written finding that no suitable public building was available before designating a private one.

A second provision extends a principle already in the chapter. Section [43.031\(e\)](#) prohibits a polling place at the residence of a candidate or a close relative. The package extends that beyond a candidate's front door, using the test applied to judges: a building may not be used if a reasonable person, aware of the facts, would question whether it was chosen free of a candidate's influence. It applies to a church, a company, and a union hall on identical terms. A congregation's faith is never a relevant fact under it.

The package also requires a public comment period of at least 30 days and an open meeting before a county adopts or amends its methodology, with a written published response. It is open to every registered voter in the county on equal terms.

"Community input on a written standard is a good thing and I want more of it," Wernick said. "What it is not is authority for an officeholder on the ballot to hand-pick individual venues and then count up what they delivered for his party."

For more information on the Barry Wernick campaign, visit WernickForTexas.com