

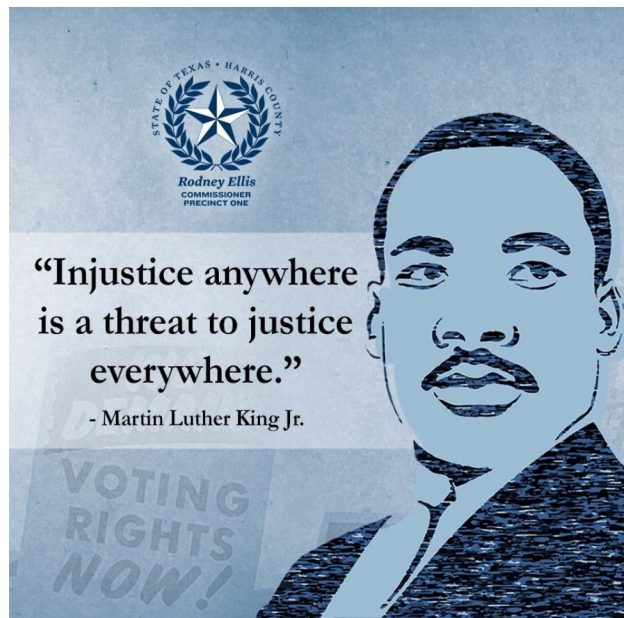


COMMISSIONER RODNEY ELLIS
HARRIS COUNTY
PRECINCT ONE



Dear Friends,

Today, as the nation remembers Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 93rd birthday, the issues that he spent his life fighting for are in peril. Fifty-three years after he was killed, we continue our quest for racial equity, economic opportunity, justice and -- perhaps most urgently -- voting rights.



Your record turnout at the polls in 2020 alarmed conservative state legislators. They are fully aware of a true democracy's power, so they have spent the past two years trying to dismantle our democracy. By proposing and enacting restrictive, harmful and suppressive laws, conservative lawmakers are making it more difficult for us to register, access ballots and vote in elections. These laws targeting our constitutional right to vote defy the tenets of democracy. Our country is stronger with public engagement and participation, not silence and suppression. I call on you to join me in renewing our commitment to protect our democracy and fight discrimination by supporting the [John Lewis Voting](#)

[Rights Advancement Act](#) in the United States Congress.

This is dire. Forty-nine states have proposed or passed laws to suppress the fundamental right of Americans to vote. Even before 2020, an international group of political scientists conducted a "[cost of voting index](#)", which found Texas to have the [most restrictive voting legislation in the nation](#).

Knowing how difficult it is for Texans to participate in our democracy, Harris County fought back with innovative initiatives and structural changes to remove barriers. In 2020, 24-hour voting, drive-through voting and the expansion of mail ballot application access by mailing the application to all voters helped make voting during a pandemic safer while also shattering Harris County voter turnout records at the same time. The next year, Harris County established the [Office of Elections Administrator](#) to reduce partisanship and increase access to voting. These efforts have resulted in an 11.6% increase in voter registration throughout the county (2,491,863 in 2021; 2,233,355 in 2017).

However, the Texas Legislature responded to Harris County's increased voter participation with voter suppression laws that ended 24-hour voting, drive-through voting and made the mail ballot application process more stringent. The state's discriminatory laws are especially harmful to voters of color and with disabilities.

Freedom riders rode, marched, stood and even shed blood to end racist and suppressive voter laws. It is our time to end modern voter suppression tactics. We need to make the same "good trouble" that Dr. King led. There are those in our United States Senate who claim tradition and protocol are keeping them from passing the new Voting Rights Act. This is the same tradition that maintained segregation, kept women out the workforce, rejected our country's linguistic diversity, and denied basic rights of so many. It is time for all of us to stand up for each other, just as Dr. King showed us.

The health of our democracy is at stake.

Sincerely,

Rodney Ellis



Harris County Precinct One
Downtown Office
1001 Preston, 9th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002
713-274-1000

