



Texas Matters Principle

Free and fair elections are the foundation of representative government.

A strong election system ensures that every eligible voter has the opportunity to participate, every lawful ballot is protected and counted accurately, and voters have meaningful choices among qualified candidates.

Building public confidence requires elections that are accessible, secure, transparent, and administered fairly. Understanding how Texas elections work helps Texans participate confidently, evaluate proposed changes, and vote with confidence.

What Matters Most to...?

ME

How can I participate confidently in Texas elections?

Understanding how to register, vote for candidates who value what matters most to me, verify my eligibility, and know my rights and responsibilities helps ensure my voice is heard and my vote is counted.

US

How do we ensure elections are both accessible and secure?

Texans benefit when eligible voters can participate, ballots are protected, election laws are applied fairly, and the public understands how elections are administered. Public trust grows through transparency, accountability, and consistent application of the law.

TOMORROW

What kind of election system do we want future generations to inherit?

A healthy democracy depends on informed citizens, trusted institutions, and election systems that continue to protect both voter access and election integrity. Strengthening civic understanding today helps preserve confidence in elections for future Texans.

Why This Matters

Free and fair elections determine who represents Texans at every level of government. Election laws affect who can vote, how votes are cast and counted, who qualifies to appear on the ballot, and how results are verified.

Understanding how Texas elections work helps Texans distinguish between election administration, election security, voter access, and public confidence. It also helps citizens evaluate proposals, hold public officials accountable, and vote with confidence.

1. What makes an election accessible?

Answer

An accessible election gives every eligible voter a reasonable opportunity to register, learn what is on the ballot, cast a private ballot, and receive assistance when needed.

Accessibility can include:

- Clear registration and voting information
- Convenient and properly equipped polling locations
- Voting systems accessible to people with disabilities
- Language assistance where required
- Provisional voting when eligibility cannot immediately be confirmed
- Accommodations for eligible military and overseas voters
- Lawful voting-by-mail options
- Trained election workers

Accessibility does not mean eliminating eligibility requirements. It means making sure qualified voters can understand and follow the process without unnecessary barriers. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission identifies accessibility, accuracy, and security as complementary parts of effective election administration.

Why It Matters

Accessible elections help ensure every eligible Texan has a fair opportunity to participate. Understanding how accessibility is provided—and the policies that support it—helps citizens evaluate election proposals, understand the choices before our state, and **vote with confidence**.

2. What makes an election secure?

Answer

Election security includes the procedures, technology, personnel, and physical safeguards used to protect ballots and election systems.

Common safeguards include:

- Maintaining accurate voter-registration records
- Testing voting equipment before an election
- Controlling access to ballots and election equipment
- Documenting the chain of custody
- Using trained election workers
- Separating duties among election personnel
- Verifying and reconciling vote totals
- Conducting canvasses, audits, or recounts when applicable
- Protecting computer systems and election facilities
- Allowing authorized observers to monitor parts of the process

The goal is to ensure that ballots are cast as intended, counted accurately, and protected from interference or unauthorized access.

Why It Matters

Election security helps protect lawful votes and strengthen public confidence in election results. Understanding the safeguards used to secure Texas elections helps Texans evaluate election policies, distinguish between established procedures and public debate, and **vote with confidence**.

3. Are access and security competing goals?

Answer

They are sometimes presented as opposing goals, but a strong election system requires both.

Rules that protect election integrity should be clear, consistently applied, and designed so eligible voters can comply. At the same time, efforts to improve access should preserve safeguards that protect ballots, voting equipment, and accurate results.

The important question is not whether Texas should choose access or security. It is how the state can achieve both effectively.

Why It Matters

Confidence grows when eligible voters can participate and the public trusts that the process is accurate and protected.

4. Who administers elections in Texas?

Answer

Texas elections are generally conducted by county election officials and local political subdivisions under the Texas Election Code.

The Texas Secretary of State is the state's chief election officer. The **office provides guidance and training to election officials, certifies certain ballots, helps administer primary-election funding, and issues interpretations of election law.**

Political parties also have important responsibilities in primary elections, including administering aspects of candidate nomination under state law. Texas Election Code Chapter 172 governs parties that nominate candidates through primary elections.

Why It Matters

Knowing who administers elections helps Texans understand how elections are conducted, who is responsible for different decisions, and where to direct questions or concerns. It also helps citizens evaluate proposals to change election laws, hold public officials accountable, and **vote with confidence.**

5. How are election results checked and finalized?

Answer

Unofficial results reported on election night are not the final legal result.

After voting ends, election officials complete procedures that may include:

- Counting remaining eligible ballots
- Reviewing provisional ballots
- Reconciling voter and ballot records
- Conducting required equipment or records checks
- Canvassing the results
- Certifying the final totals
- Performing recounts or audits when required or requested under law

These steps help identify discrepancies and confirm that the reported result reflects the lawful vote.

Why It Matters

Understanding the difference between unofficial reporting and certified results can reduce confusion and misinformation.

6. How do candidates qualify to appear on the ballot?

Answer

The process depends on the office and how the candidate seeks nomination.

Candidates may qualify through:

- A political-party primary
- A party convention, when permitted by law
- An independent candidacy
- A declared write-in candidacy
- A local nonpartisan election process

Requirements may include:

- Meeting legal qualifications for office
- Filing an application by the deadline
- Paying a filing fee or submitting a petition
- Gathering voter signatures
- Complying with party rules and election law
- Filing with the correct authority

Texas publishes separate candidate guides because requirements differ by office and type of candidacy.

Why It Matters

Ballot-access rules determine who may compete for public office and what choices voters see on Election Day.

8. How are political-party nominees selected?

Answer

Major political parties in Texas generally select nominees through primary elections. Registered voters do not formally register by party in Texas, but participating in a party's primary affiliates the voter with that party for that election year under state law.

Other qualifying parties may nominate candidates through conventions, depending on their legal status and prior election performance. New or smaller parties must satisfy statutory requirements to obtain ballot access.

Why It Matters

In many parts of Texas, the primary may be the election that most strongly influences who ultimately holds office.

9. Why are open primaries important to Texans?

Answer

Texas has an **open primary system**, meaning voters do **not** register with a political party when they register to vote.

Instead, voters choose which party's primary they wish to participate in each election cycle. A voter may vote in **either** the Republican or Democratic primary, but **not both** in the same election cycle. If a primary advances to a runoff, the voter may participate only in the runoff for the same party whose primary they voted in.

Supporters of Texas' open primary system say it:

- Gives voters more flexibility.
- Encourages broader participation in primary elections.
- Allows independent voters to help choose party nominees.
- Reduces the need for permanent party registration.

Others argue that requiring voters to choose only one party's primary during an election cycle helps preserve each party's ability to select its own nominees.

Texas lawmakers periodically debate whether the current system strikes the right balance between voter participation, party rights, and the candidate selection process.

Why It Matters

Primary elections often determine who will ultimately hold public office, especially in areas where one political party is dominant. Understanding how Texas' open primary system works helps Texans know when and how they can participate, how party nominees are selected, and how they can help shape the choices that appear on the general election ballot. It also helps citizens evaluate proposals for election reform and **vote with confidence**.

10. Why are some Texas leaders proposing closed primaries?

Answer

Some Texas leaders, including Governor Greg Abbott and many Republican Party leaders, have expressed support for moving from Texas' current **open primary** system to a **closed primary** system.

In a **closed primary**, only voters who have formally registered with a political party could vote in that party's primary.

Supporters generally argue that closed primaries:

- Allow each political party to choose its own nominees without participation from voters who do not identify with that party.
- Strengthen political parties' ability to define their platforms and select candidates who reflect their members' priorities.
- Reduce the possibility of **strategic voting**, in which voters from one party participate in another party's primary in an effort to influence the outcome.
- Encourage stronger party participation and affiliation.

Critics generally argue that closed primaries:

- Exclude independent and unaffiliated voters from participating in primary elections.
- Reduce voter participation in elections that often determine who ultimately holds office.
- Require Texans to register with a political party, something Texas currently does not require.
- May produce nominees who appeal more to party activists than to the broader electorate.

Texas lawmakers would need to change state law to replace the current open primary system with a closed primary system.

Why It Matters

Primary elections often determine who will ultimately serve in public office, particularly in areas where one political party is dominant. Changes to Texas' primary system could affect **who participates, how candidates are selected, voter turnout, and the choices available in the general election.**

Understanding the arguments for and against closed primaries helps Texans evaluate proposed election reforms, understand how those changes could affect their ability to participate, and **vote with confidence.**

10. What rights do Texas voters have?

Answer

Eligible voters have the right to:

- Cast a ballot without intimidation
- Vote privately
- Receive required accessibility assistance
- Ask election workers for procedural help
- Cast a provisional ballot in certain circumstances
- Report suspected violations or problems
- Have lawful ballots handled and counted under established procedures

Specific rights and procedures depend on Texas and federal law, so voters should consult the Secretary of State or their county election office for current guidance.

Why It Matters

Understanding your rights helps you participate confidently, know what to expect at the polls, and respond appropriately if questions or challenges arise. Informed voters are better prepared to protect their rights, support the integrity of the election process, and **vote with confidence.**

11. Does Texas already have many of the election safeguards proposed in federal legislation called the Save Act?

Answer

Yes. Texas already has many election laws that are among the more comprehensive in the country. Current Texas law generally requires:

- U.S. citizenship to register to vote.
- Voter registration before the registration deadline.
- An approved form of photo identification for most in-person voters (with an alternative process for eligible voters who cannot reasonably obtain one).
- Regular maintenance of voter registration rolls.
- Secure ballot handling and chain-of-custody procedures.
- Testing of voting equipment before elections.
- Canvassing, certification, recounts, and post-election audits when required by law.

Recent federal proposals supported by President Trump, including versions of the **SAVE Act** and **SAVE America Act**, would establish additional nationwide requirements for federal elections, including requiring **documentary proof of U.S. citizenship when registering to vote** and creating new federal standards for voter identification and voter registration procedures.

Because Texas already has voter ID requirements and citizenship requirements for eligibility, many of the proposed federal provisions would overlap with existing Texas law.

Why It Matters

Understanding what Texas already requires—and what proposed federal legislation would change—helps Texans evaluate election policy based on facts rather than assumptions. It also helps citizens understand which policies are governed by state law, which could be established by federal law, and how proposed changes might affect voter registration, election administration, and election integrity. Informed voters are better prepared to evaluate these proposals and **vote with confidence**.

12. Why has the SAVE Act generated debate?

Answer

The SAVE Act would require people registering to vote in federal elections to provide **documentary proof of U.S. citizenship**. Supporters say this would strengthen election integrity by ensuring only eligible citizens register to vote.

Critics generally raise concerns about how the requirements could affect some eligible voters, including:

- **People who have changed their name**, such as after marriage or divorce, if their documents do not match.
- **People who move** and need to register or update their registration.
- **People who do not have easy access** to documents such as a passport or certified birth certificate.
- **Election officials**, who would need to implement new verification procedures.

Supporters respond that the bill includes alternative processes for verifying citizenship and believe the additional requirements are necessary to strengthen public confidence in elections.

Why It Matters

Most Texans agree that elections should be both **accessible and secure**. The debate over the SAVE Act centers on how to verify citizenship while minimizing unintended barriers for eligible voters. Understanding these tradeoffs helps Texans thoughtfully evaluate election reforms and **vote with confidence**.

13. How Can Texas Balance the Right to Vote with Protecting Election Integrity?

Answer

Texas election laws seek to accomplish two important goals:

- **Ensure every eligible voter has the opportunity to participate.**
- **Protect elections by ensuring only eligible voters cast lawful ballots and that every lawful ballot is counted accurately.**

Most election policy discussions focus on how to balance these two goals.

Supporters of stronger election safeguards generally argue that measures such as voter identification requirements, voter roll maintenance, and citizenship verification help strengthen election integrity and public confidence.

Others emphasize that election laws should also ensure eligible voters can register, understand the voting process, obtain any required documentation, and cast a ballot without unnecessary barriers.

Many Texans believe both goals are essential: elections should be **accessible to every eligible voter** and **secure enough to protect the integrity of every lawful vote**.

Why It Matters

Reasonable people may disagree about where the balance should be, but most Texans agree that elections should be both **accessible and secure**. Understanding the evidence, the purpose of election laws, and the tradeoffs involved helps citizens thoughtfully evaluate proposed reforms, understand where candidates stand, and **vote with confidence**.

14. Who has responsibility over elections?

Answer

- Texas Secretary of State – appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate
 - Governor
 - Lieutenant Governor
 - Texas Senate
 - Texas House of Representatives
 - County Clerk
 - County Elections Administrator
 - County Tax Assessor-Collector
 - County Judge and Commissioners Court
 - Mayor
 - City Secretary
 - School Board
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Vote with Confidence

As you evaluate candidates and election policy, consider asking:

Election Access

- How can Texas ensure every eligible voter has a reasonable opportunity to vote?
- How can voter education be improved?
- How should Texas serve voters with disabilities, military voters, and overseas voters?

Election Security

- What safeguards best protect ballots and election systems?
- How should Texas maintain accurate voter registration lists?
- What role should audits, recounts, and post-election reviews play?

Ballot Access

- How should candidates qualify for the ballot?
- Do current filing fees and petition requirements strike the right balance?
- How can Texas preserve meaningful voter choice?

Transparency & Public Confidence

- How can election administration become more transparent?
- What evidence should be required before claims about election problems are accepted?

- How should election officials communicate with the public?

Accountability

- What evidence supports proposed election reforms?
- How will success be measured?
- What tradeoffs should Texans understand?

Reasonable people may support different approaches to election policy. Understanding the evidence, the procedures, and the tradeoffs helps Texans thoughtfully evaluate public policy and vote with confidence.

Texas Matters Takeaway

Free and fair elections depend on both voter participation and public confidence. Eligible voters should have the opportunity to vote, lawful ballots should be protected and counted accurately, and election laws should be applied fairly and consistently.

Texas has multiple safeguards—including voter registration verification, identification requirements, equipment testing, chain-of-custody procedures, canvassing, certification, recounts, and post-election audits—to help ensure election integrity. While Texans continue to debate election policy, confidence should be based on evidence, transparency, and verifiable procedures rather than assumptions or unsupported claims.

By understanding how Texas elections work, knowing their rights and responsibilities, and evaluating proposals thoughtfully, Texans can help strengthen our democracy and vote with confidence.

Explore what matters most.

Understand the choices.

Vote with confidence.

Trusted Resources

- [Texas Secretary of State – Elections Division](#)
- [VoteTexas.gov](#)
- [County Election Offices](#)
- [Texas Election Code](#)
- [U.S. Election Assistance Commission](#)
- [Federal Voting Assistance Program \(Military & Overseas Voters\)](#)

- Local election administrators and candidate filing authorities