



Voter Guide

2017 Amendments to the Texas State Constitution (Plus FWISD Bonds)

These issues will be on the ballot on November 7, 2017
Early Voting: October 23 to November 3

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Fun Facts

- Like most states, the Texas state legislature is responsible for drawing voting districts every 10 years—after each U.S. census. Some districts end up being so gerrymandered in favor of one political party that voters of the other party end up being effectively deprived of their vote.
- The Texas state legislature meets only **once** every **two** years for no more than 140 days. (That's about 4½ months.)
- State legislators are paid \$33,800 a year (for meeting for 140 days).
- They serve either two- or four-year terms (senators, four; representatives, two).
- Legislators can be re-elected an unlimited number of times (**no** term limits).
- A legislator who serves at least eight years receives a life-time pension (\$2,875/year for every year of service).
- Changes to the constitution only get on the ballot for the next election if 2/3 of the legislature votes for the change (amendment).
- Since 1995, there's only been one other time (in 2015) when so few changes have made it to the ballot.

About Voting

Important Dates for November 2017 Election

Last day to register to vote	Tuesday, October 10
First day of early voting	Monday, October 23
Last day to apply for ballot by mail (received date, not postmarked)	Friday, October 27
Last day of early voting.....	Friday, November 3
Last day to receive ballot by mail	Tuesday, November 7

Are You Registered?

To be sure, visit <https://teamrv-mvp.sos.texas.gov/MVP/mvp.do>. Use the log-in to see your status. If you are not registered, you'll find a link on that page to fill in a form that will create an application you will print, sign, and mail.

A related site that shows your voter status information is <https://gisit.tarrantcounty.com/voterlookup/>.

About Voting by Mail

You may request a ballot by mail or download one from the internet if any of these apply:

- You will be away from your county on Election Day and during the hours that early voting is conducted
- You are sick or disabled
- You are 65 years of age or older on Election Day
- You are confined in jail (but otherwise eligible to vote)

See more information or download an application at <https://www.votetexas.gov/voting/when.html#helpful-hints-on-voting-early-by-mail>.

Once you have the application to vote by mail, fill it out and return it. You will then be sent a ballot.

In Tarrant County, you must return the application to:

P.O. Box 961011
Fort Worth, TX 76161
(817-831-8683)
(Fax: 817-831-6475)

Or, you may scan the application and email it to: votebymail@tarrantcounty.com.

See all the Texas election offices' contact information at: <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/county.shtml#T>.

What to Take to the Polls

Generally, you must have a photo ID that is current or has expired no more than 4 years previous to the time presented. These are the acceptable forms of ID:

- Texas driver license issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)
- Texas Election Identification Certificate issued by DPS
- Texas personal identification card issued by DPS
- Texas license to carry a handgun issued by DPS
- United States military identification card containing the person's photograph

- United States citizenship certificate containing the person’s photograph
- United States passport

If you don’t have any of the forms of ID with you at the polling station, you can still fill out a provisional ballot there. If you do this, you must visit the voter registrar’s office within **six calendar days** of the election to present your ID or follow one of their other procedures.

If you don’t possess any of the required forms of ID and have a reasonable impediment to obtaining one (for example: lack of transportation, disability or illness; lack of birth certificate or other documents needed to obtain acceptable photo ID; work schedule, family responsibilities, lost or stolen photo ID; or photo ID applied for but not received), you can fill out a Reasonable Impediment Declaration with alternative supporting ID.

See more details at: <https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/need-id.html#faqs>.

[Seeing Who Represents You and Where to Vote](#)

There is a great tool for Tarrant County that will show a voter’s status and related information: <https://gisit.tarrantcounty.com/voterlookup/>. This shows your precinct, representatives, county commissioner, city council, and more—even your local constable and Justice of the Peace. If you click on a link, it will show contact information for that representative.

[Seeing What You, Specifically, Will Find on Your Ballot](#)

Not all ballots are the same. Everyone will see the seven constitutional amendment propositions we describe on the following pages, but there may be other, local, issues for you to vote on (such as a bond election).

To see the ballot you will be given at the polls, visit <https://gisit.tarrantcounty.com/voterlookup/> and look under “Election Information.” Select the election and ballot you want and click “Download.”

Note that when polling locations are determined, that information will also show on this page.

Constitutional Joint Elections Tuesday, November 7 2017 ▾

Election Information:

Election Date: Tuesday, November 7 2017

Election Name: Constitutional Joint Elections

Election Type: General Election

Ballot(s): English-Spanish Sample Ballot ▾

Election Note:

Election Day Polling Location

Note: Polling place mapping data not available at this time.



Ballot Amendments

The nonpartisan League of Women Voters has an excellent Voters Guide in both English and Spanish. This guide has details as well as specific arguments to vote for or against each proposition.



You can see these at <http://www.lwvtexas.org/>.

Our own summaries of the propositions are below.

Ad Valorem Taxation re Disabled Veterans(HJR 21)

Proposition 1 Ballot Language	In Other Words
The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of part of the market value of the residence homestead of a partially disabled veteran or the surviving spouse of a partially disabled veteran if the residence homestead was donated to the disabled veteran by a charitable organization for less than the market value of the residence homestead and harmonizing certain related provisions of the Texas Constitution.	Currently, there's an exemption from taxes on a residence homestead for a partially disabled veteran or surviving spouse if the homestead was donated to them at no cost . This amendment would add an exemption if the homestead was donated at a cost . Also includes a minor technical change.

Home Equity Loan Provisions (SJR 60)

Proposition 2 Ballot Language	In Other Words
The constitutional amendment to establish a lower amount for expenses that can be charged to a borrower and removing certain financing expense limitations for a home equity loan, establishing certain authorized lenders to make a home equity loan, changing certain options for the refinancing of home equity loans, changing the threshold for an advance of a home equity line of credit, and allowing home equity loans on agricultural homesteads.	Multiple changes to home equity loan rules in Texas. This amendment would lower the fee cap from 3% to 2% but would exclude appraisals, surveys, title insurance, etc. from that cap. (The total fees could actually amount to more than 3%.) Would allow homeowners to combine existing home equity loans and house buying loans together to refinance them (under certain conditions, mainly no new money, which is prohibited today). Would allow home equity loans on agricultural use homesteads (not currently allowed). Also expands the types of entities who can make home equity loans.

Limiting Service of Appointed Officeholders (SJR 34)

Proposition 3 Ballot Language	In Other Words
The constitutional amendment limiting the service of certain officeholders appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate after the expiration of the person's term of office.	Currently, someone who is appointed by the governor as an unsalaried officer can continue to serve after their term expires, until a new person is appointed (so-called "holdover rule"). This amendment would make their term expire after the last day of the next regular state legislature session, effectively forcing the governor to find a replacement or allow the position to remain vacant.

Notice of Challenge to the Constitution and Waiting Period (SJR 6)

Proposition 4 Ballot Language	In Other Words
The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to require a court to provide notice to the attorney general of a challenge to the constitutionality of a state statute and authorizing the legislature to prescribe a waiting period before the court may enter a judgment holding the statute unconstitutional.	Forces courts to notify the state attorney general of constitutional challenges in individual court cases and wait 45 days before deciding a case. This would give the state more time to defend itself, but significantly increase case time. Most likely would also increase legal expenses for individuals. Also seen as inhibiting the judicial branch's ability to function independently of the legislative branch.

Raffles by Charitable Sports Foundations (HJR 100)

Proposition 5 Ballot Language	In Other Words
The constitutional amendment on professional sports team charitable foundations conducting charitable raffles.	<p>Currently, 10 Texas major league sports franchises that had charitable foundations as of 1/1/2016 can conduct charitable raffles at home games.</p> <p>This amendment would allow any/all sports teams (including both major and minor league professional hockey, basketball, football, baseball, soccer, motor sports, golf teams, etc.) to conduct charitable raffles at home games. It has the possibility of misuse/abuse, i.e. creating teams/events solely for purpose of conducting charitable raffles (perhaps unlikely). It also expands gambling in the state and could be a slippery slope to other types of groups requesting the ability to conduct raffles.</p>

Ad Valorem Taxation re First Responders (SJR 1)

Proposition 6 Ballot Language	In Other Words
The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a first responder who is killed or fatally injured in the line of duty.	This amendment would expand the property tax exemptions already available to veteran's families to first responder families. It would reduce the financial burden of surviving spouses (who have not remarried) of first responders killed in the line of duty. It may shift the tax burden elsewhere, though that impact should be minimal.

Permitting Financial Institutions to Award Prizes (HJR 37)

Proposition 7 Ballot Language	In Other Words
Proposing a constitutional amendment relating to legislative authority to permit credit unions and other financial institutions to award prizes by lot to promote savings.	This amendment would allow credit unions or other financial institutions (such as banks) to conduct raffles where the prize would be a deposit into a savings account established with their institution. Could encourage savings but might also cause other industries to request permission to conduct raffles, which are currently only available to nonprofits/religious organizations.

Fort Worth Independent School District

Proposition A ("Penny Swap")

Ballot Language	What a FOR Vote Means	What an AGAINST Vote Means
Approving the ad valorem tax rate of \$1.3520 per \$100 valuation in Fort Worth Independent School District for the current year, a rate that is \$0.02 higher per \$100 valuation than the school district rollback tax rate, for the purpose of maintenance and operations.	The total property tax rate for FWISD will remain the same, but the balance between the maintenance and operations rate and the debt service tax rate will change. About \$23 million in additional funds will be available to FWISD each year.	The total property tax rate for FWISD will remain the same, but no additional funds will be available to FWISD.

Although this ballot text reads like it is asking for a tax increase for FWISD, it actually leaves the tax rate exactly where it is. It would allow the District to increase the maintenance and operation (M&O) portion of the budget by two cents so that it can lower its debt service portion by an equal two cents.

By raising the M&O rate and lowering the debt service tax (DST) rate, FWISD would receive an additional \$17 million in state funds and an additional \$6 million in local funds would be moved from debt repayment to maintenance and operation funds, resulting in a total of \$23 million of new funding for FWISD.

According to the FWISD website (<https://www.fwisd.org/Page/11334>), the additional revenue from the “penny swap” will be used for facility improvements at elementary and middle schools, new buses, safety and security measures, technology improvements, HVAC and energy efficiency, and band uniforms and instruments. (You can see the budget breakdown on the [FWISD website](#). And, if property values drop in the future, some of the funds will be used to offset any funding gap that might occur.)

Resources for more information

If you’d like to see more background and delve into the math, check out:

- Fort Worth ISD 2017 Bond: <https://www.fwisd.org/Page/11333>
- Fort Worth Weekly article: <https://www.fwweekly.com/2017/09/13/better-schools-no-higher-taxes/>
- FWISD presentation about Proposition A and Proposition B: <https://www.fwisd.org/Pag201e/13236>

Proposition B (Bond Program)

Ballot Language	What a Vote FOR Means	What a Vote AGAINST Means
The issuance of \$749,735,000 of bonds by the Fort Worth Independent School District for the construction, renovation, acquisition and equipment of school buildings and facilities and the purchase of the necessary sites for school buildings and facilities, including, but not limited to, a new relief elementary school, a new Leadership Academy, the relocation of an existing school facility, classroom additions, renovations to existing high schools, capital improvements, athletics and fine arts improvements, and technology improvements, and levying the tax in payment thereof.	A vote in favor of this proposition will allow FWISD’s Board of Trustees to issue \$749 million in bonds. It does not impact the FWISD tax rate.	A vote against this proposition will stop FWISD’s Board of Trustees from issuing \$749 million in bonds. It does not impact the FWISD tax rate.

When school districts want to build a new school or buy new equipment, they issue bonds. The investors who buy school bonds provide the money, and school districts pay back the money to investors, plus interest, over an extended period (limited by law to 40 years).

There are three main spending categories in this FWISD bond package: addressing school overcrowding; specialized schools and programs; and upgrades for neighborhood high schools. You can see a breakdown of where this money is proposed to be spent at: <https://www.fwisd.org/Page/12666>.

Interesting facts

- This bond program **does not** impact tax rates.
- Fort Worth has been one of the country’s **fastest-growing** metropolitan areas for more than a decade, and **overcrowding in FWISD schools is a serious issue**.
- The average age of an FWISD building is 62. Many facilities are in serious need of renovation to accommodate a growing student population and include up-to-date technology.



- The bond program is the result of a long-term planning process undertaken by FWISD in 2015, with the involvement of educators, parents, and community leaders who worked to investigate what FWISD schools need to meet the demands of the twenty-first-century workplace.
- If the bond program passes, a community oversight board will monitor expenditures and construction progress, and report back to the FWISD Board and the State Board of Higher Education.

Resources for more information

- How school bonds work: <https://www.mytexaspublicschool.org/The-School-System/Funding/Bonds-101-Questions-and-Answers.aspx>
- *Star-Telegram* article: <http://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/community/fort-worth/article171668512.html>
- FWISD presentation about Proposition A and Proposition B: <https://www.fwisd.org/Pag201e/13236>
- School-by-school list of bond program projects: <https://www.fwisd.org/Page/12014>

About Indivisible Women Tarrant County

Indivisible Women Tarrant County (IWTC) aims to fulfill three vital needs in Tarrant County, Texas:

- provide individuals of all backgrounds with the tools and information to become active citizens, community members, and political leaders
- engage voters through voter registration, voter turnout, and civic education efforts
- collaborate with a diverse range of democratic and progressive groups to encourage lasting, positive change

This voter guide is produced as part of our effort to help citizens of Tarrant County understand and participate in every level of government, and enable them to hold their elected representatives accountable.

More resources are available on our website: www.IndivisibleWomenTarrantCounty.org.