

# NONPARTISAN VOTER GUIDE

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ELECTION » NOVEMBER 7, 2023

EARLY VOTING: October 23–November 3, 2023 » ELECTION DAY: November 7, 2023. Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

## Proposition

# 1

**Would make it a constitutional right for people and businesses to farm, ranch, produce timber, or manage wildlife on property they own or rent.**

### WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:

- Prevents cities from overregulating agricultural production as Texas grows and demands for food increase.
- Allows the state legislature to authorize state agencies or local governments to regulate farming practices that are necessary to protect the public.

### WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:

- Limits the power of local governments to protect the health of their communities by setting rules covering farming practices that impact animal welfare, food safety, drinking water protection, animal waste, odors and pesticide runoff.
- Allows farms to operate with less accountability.

## Proposition

# 2

**Would allow counties and cities to lower property taxes on some child care centers. This benefit would apply to child care centers: that are owned or rented; and with at least 20% of children enrolled who receive subsidized child-care services.**

### WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:

- Lower property taxes would reduce costs for child care centers, so more can remain open and more can be built.
- Having a larger number of child care centers may lower costs for working parents, allowing them to stay in the workforce.

### WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:

- Would lower property taxes for one type of business, which could increase the tax burden for other property owners.
- Benefits of this tax break may not flow to parents and child care workers.

## Proposition

# 3

**Would amend the Texas Constitution to ban a wealth tax to individuals or families now in the future.**

### WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:

- Penalizes Texans for creating wealth and starting businesses which help the economy grow.
- Would be difficult to enforce due to the complexity of determining the fair value of a person's assets.

### WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:

- Texas needs the option of a wealth tax that would shift the tax burden to those able to afford to pay more, helping to address wealth inequality.
- Limits options for the state to fund its needs in the future, such as for schools, infrastructure, mental and physical healthcare, and public safety.

**Proposition  
4**

**Would amend the Texas Constitution to allow tax cuts that were approved by the Legislature in the 2023 special session to take effect this year.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- Would save Texas homeowners an average of \$1,300 per year in property taxes, with additional cuts for property owners who are seniors and those with disabilities.
- Over \$12 billion will be sent from the state's general revenue funds to school districts so that school districts can lower tax rates. This shifts the burden of school funding away from property taxes to other sources.

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- Gives no relief for renters, who make up more than 1/3 of Texas households, many of whom are struggling with high rents.
- Does not include any new money for schools or teacher pay raises, even though Texas is ranked near the bottom in per-student spending for education.
- Shifting away from property taxes to fund our public schools could result in higher sales taxes and higher taxes on businesses.

**Proposition  
5**

**Would establish the Texas University Fund so certain state universities outside of the University of Texas and Texas A&M systems would be able to receive more state funding to become major research institutions.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- Helps higher education in Texas by providing stable funding for research in the four universities supported by the Texas University Fund.
- Research at Texas public universities helps drive the Texas economy.

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- Continues the unequal treatment of public universities in Texas.
- Provides stable research funding for only four additional public universities at this time (those funded by the Texas University Fund).

**Proposition  
6**

**Would create a Texas Water Fund to support water systems throughout the state, setting aside \$1 billion for a streamlined permitting process for water projects.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- There is a great need for projects to replace or repair aging pipes which the state estimates leak billions of gallons of water each year. Also, water and wastewater treatment plants in many communities need upgrades and/or replacements

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- The amount the Legislature has agreed to put into the fund is not enough to pay for the number of projects needed to secure Texas' future water supply needs.
- Would allow funds to be taken from state revenues to fund local water projects.

**Proposition**  
**7**

**Would allow the creation of the Texas energy fund. Money put in the fund by the Texas Legislature would be used by the Public Utility Commission to provide low-rate loans or grants to companies to build or upgrade electric generating plants in Texas.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- Additional state funding is needed to increase the reliability of the state's electric market, especially for power that can be quickly provided during extreme weather when demand is high.
- The money loaned or granted to build the electric generating plants are from the state's budget surplus funds, so electricity customers will not be paying for these plants.

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- Solar and wind projects are not eligible for loans or grants from this fund. They currently generate about 39% of Texas electricity and have reduced electricity costs in Texas.
- Natural gas-powered electric plants were among the power sources that failed during the 2021 winter storm. Despite this, they would be subsidized by the Texas energy fund if this proposition passes.

**Proposition**  
**8**

**Would create a fund which can also receive federal grants to improve broadband and telecommunication devices.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- Would expand reliable high speed internet to Texans all across the state, including in areas where private companies do not currently operate.
- Would result in better productivity and efficiency in agriculture and energy, two of Texas' most important industries.

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- Funding high speed internet expansion is not the responsibility of the government.
- Does not prioritize lower income communities for high speed internet development.
- The money in the fund is not enough to provide high speed internet to all Texans.

**Proposition**  
**9**

**Would fully fund a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for retired educators. This amount will be transferred from the state's general funds to the Teachers Retirement System so the teachers' pension fund will remain financially sound.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- Retired teachers in Texas have not received a cost-of-living adjustment in many years. Because of this, many retired teachers have difficulty covering the higher cost of living.

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- The cost-of-living adjustments proposed are not enough to offset the impact of high inflation on retirees.
- The higher payments to retired teachers do not address the current teacher shortage.

**Proposition  
10**

**Would remove property taxes on equipment or inventory belonging to manufacturers of medical or biomedical products. Texas is one of only a few states that applies a property tax on the equipment and inventory of medical and biomedical companies. In Texas, property taxes pay for local government services such as police, firefighters, libraries, and public education.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- Would remove property taxes on biomedical equipment and inventory may encourage more biomedical companies to move to Texas, creating high-paying jobs.
- The COVID pandemic exposed the risk of having key medical equipment manufactured outside of the country, showing the importance of supporting local biomedical manufacturers.

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- Because Texas does not have an income tax, eliminating property taxes on biomedical equipment and inventory will reduce funds available for local school districts and local government services.
- Reducing property taxes for one industry places more tax burden on other businesses and individuals to support their government and public schools.

**Proposition  
11**

**Would permit conservation and reclamation districts in El Paso County to issue bonds to fund parks and recreational facilities and levy property taxes to repay the bonds. Currently, there are 10 other counties in Texas already doing this.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- Allowing bonds to be issued for parks and recreation facilities will benefit the health and wellness of El Paso County residents.
- More and improved parks will encourage further economic development and growth for the region.

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- If approved by a majority of voters in a district, property taxes would be levied to pay interest and principal on the bonds issued. The voters in a district who voted against the issuance of such bonds would still be burdened with additional taxes.
- Land allocated to parks could be more economically productive if left in private hands.

**Proposition  
12**

**Would eliminate the office of the county treasurer of Galveston County. It would authorize the county to employ, contract, or designate another county officer to perform the duties previously assigned to the treasurer.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- Supporters say that abolishing the office would make the work formerly performed by the treasurer's office more efficient and cost effective.
- Abolishing the county treasurer's office may reduce the risk of misappropriation of funds such as occurred in 2018.

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- Much of the estimated taxpayer savings may shift to other departments' costs.
- Removing the office of county treasurer would impact current checks and balances between elected county commissioners, who control the budget, and the elected county treasurer, who makes financial management decisions.

**Proposition  
13**

**Would change the mandatory retirement age of judges of appellate courts, district courts, and criminal districts to 79 years or earlier, not less than 75. The current requirement is for justices and judges to retire at age 75 or earlier.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- Allowing judges to serve longer may result in a more predictable and stable judiciary.
- State judges in Texas are elected. Voters can determine whether a judge deserves to be elected. The Judicial Conduct Commission is available to address any issues with a judge's competence between elections

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- The Judicial Conduct Commission may not be able to promptly address issues with older judges who experience cognitive decline and/or lower productivity.
- Extending the age limit will keep the Texas judiciary from reflecting the demographics of the current Texas population.

**Proposition  
14**

**Directs up to \$1 billion from the current budget surplus and other sources to create the centennial parks conservation fund, a dedicated pool of money to buy land for the creation and improvement of state parks.**

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING YES:**

- State parks protect water resources and safeguard habitat for wildlife.
- State parks provide an economic boost to the outdoor recreation industry and to the rural communities located nearby.

**WHY PEOPLE ARE VOTING NO:**

- Taxpayer money should not be used to create and maintain more state parks.
- Recreation is not a proper role for the government.