

THE SHORTHORN

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

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INSIDE

Board game: Road to House Majority, **see pages 4-5**

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ELECTION 2022

Political discourse and social media echo chambers

From misinformation to Twitter clapbacks, social media is reshaping how news and politics look and operate

BY DANG LE AND JONATHAN PERRIELLO
The Shorthorn editor-in-chief and life and entertainment editor

With all the content posted on her timeline during the 2016 presidential election, Amanda Jordan, advertising and social media lecturer, decided to look into political misinformation on Facebook and other social media platforms for her master's thesis.

A few days after the election, as Jordan was about to defend her 120-page thesis, she received a notification from Apple News: Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg went on record admitting his platform had a misinformation problem.

She got her master's that day, Jordan said.

Six years later, social media

has only become more vital in political campaigns and played an important part in how its users access news. This year, half of U.S. adults get news at least sometimes from social media, according to the Pew Research Center.

It has also served as an entry point for consuming news and increased already existing habits.

Biology junior Katelyn Ruehlen said she remembers back in 2009, in the early days of social media, she would gravitate toward watching TV or reading the paper. But now, with access to headlines at the click of a mouse, she is exposed to more news than she was previously, and the older modalities have taken a back seat.

While social media has a huge impact in providing readily available information, Jordan said, its downside is that there is no gatekeeper. People can post whatever they want without ramifications.

People with differing political views often try to pass information on to their family members through shared posts and linked articles without any verification or factual backing, Ruehlen said. These posts are then portrayed as fact when they are often opinion pieces, requiring people to double-check and cross-reference the information.

With the amount of access to information today, it is easy for personal bias to blend with **SOCIAL MEDIA** continues on page 8



The Shorthorn: Ronaldo Bolanos

Social media has played a vital role in political campaigning and how people access news. Half of U.S. adults get news at least sometimes from social media, according to the Pew Research Center.

TEXAS

The fallout of overturning Roe v. Wade

After almost 50 years, the installation of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* and the overturning of *Roe* allows Texans to voice their opinions in the upcoming election.

BY DANG LE
The Shorthorn editor-in-chief

As a political scientist who knows U.S. history and court history well and has taught women in politics courses, Rebecca Deen, associate dean in the College of Liberal Arts and political science associate professor, said she wasn't surprised about the overturn of abortion when former President Donald Trump got elected and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died.

"I said to myself, 'And here we have it,'" Deen said.

In the 21 months following Ginsburg's death, many important political events have occurred. Trump failed to get reelected, but he was able to confirm Judge Amy Coney Barrett into the Supreme Court right before the 2020 presidential election. By May 2021, the court agreed to consider the Mississippi case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*.

In June, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, eliminating the constitutional right to an abortion in the U.S. after almost 50 years and granting states the power to decide whether people can get an abortion. Barrett was one of the judges who agreed with the overturn.

Over the last few years and months, these events have placed the debate over abortion

rights squarely in the middle of the midterm elections season. As the Supreme Court granted states the power to determine the issue, elections in Texas and elsewhere are gaining interest and attention.

The overturn of *Roe*

The 6-3 ruling came in the *Dobbs* case, which concerned a law enacted in 2018 that banned abortions if "the probable gestational age of the unborn human" was determined to be more than 15 weeks.

The court overruled *Roe* in a 5-4 decision, as Chief Justice John Roberts agreed with the judgment upholding the Mississippi law but did not join the majority in the opinion to overturn *Roe*.

Deen said the decision is a big deal both on the basis of law and how people live their lives.

For almost 50 years, Americans have had a federally-protected right to choose if they would carry a pregnancy to term, and now it's gone.

The overturn decision was unusual, as it's rare that the Supreme Court would reverse one of its decisions, said Dale Carpenter, Southern Methodist University constitutional law professor.

Carpenter said the majority opinion, which was delivered by Judge Samuel Alito, was significant because it set up a new, constrained way to recognize rights in the future.

First, it decides that there's no right to abortion in the Constitution and that the only constitutional rights protected are those being written down, he said. Second, the opinion

50 YEARS continues on page 9

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



The Shorthorn: Ronaldo Bolanos

Campaign signs stand among each other Oct. 24 at the Tarrant County Sub-Courthouse in Arlington. The courthouse is one of seven locations that host early voting for Arlington residents.

Why local elections matter

As election season approaches, historically low voter turnout for local ballots highlights the need for them to be recognized as holding equal weight to state and national elections.

BY JONATHAN PERRIELLO
The Shorthorn life and entertainment editor

With the local, state and national elections on the ballot this November and the omnipresence of the larger political scenes, the significance of local politics can at times be overlooked.

But from electing city council members, county commissioners and school board members to voting on political issues like term lengths on this year's ballot in Arlington, local politics serves a critical role and has the unique capacity to affect the daily lives of its residents.

Voting on issues like term lengths allows people to decide how long residents want to work with local officials and affects how stable they want their government to be, architecture junior Tony Pham said. Pham, who regularly attends Arlington City Council meetings and town halls, said county commissioners and similar positions played an important role in ensuring people's health and welfare during the pandemic.

"If you want to have basic city services to be running, water, sewage, power, etc., it's local governments that are deciding these things," he said.

Air quality and fracking within Arlington properties are important issues

that residents, especially young people, should pay attention to because it is within their power to vote for the kind of city they want to live in, Pham said.

The threshold for governments to hear from its citizens is much lower at the local level, political science professor Thomas Marshall said. In 2015, Arlington residents successfully voted on a proposition that banned red light cameras. Such an issue is typically not allowed on the ballot petition at the state and national levels.

The decisions made by city governments carry as much weight as their state or national counterparts.

An argument can be made that Arlington's choice to fund major league sports stadiums has yielded a rather primitive public transit system, Marshall said.

The state and national officials don't have jurisdiction over whether potholes get fixed or if there is funding for bike infrastructure or building stadiums, Pham said. These are directly related to the city officials that residents vote into office.

In addition to the significance of its policies, local politics can also serve as an entry point to community members who

want to become more involved, whether in a neighborhood issue or running for school board, Marshall said.

City councils and school boards in Texas are nonpartisan, and typically candidates will not have Republican or Democrat on their ballots, he said. This often leads to alliances crosscutting political parties and forming them based on neighborhood grounds.

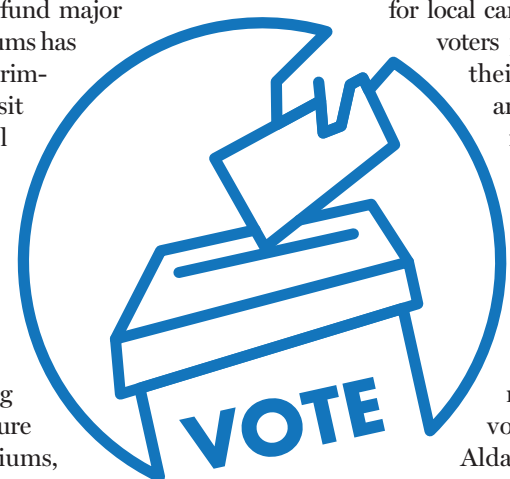
At the last mayoral election in Arlington, the party alliances were not on the ballot, and the lines of support circumvented those labels, he said.

Hurst resident Soren Aldaco said they have been working at Pollmakers in Arlington for six years, building polls for local campaigns, texting voters polls that gauge their satisfaction and has helped manage town halls.

While most people only consider presidential and midterm elections as the major political voting events, Aldaco said that the political process is ongoing, with elections occurring year-round.

Aldaco joined the company when it started doing live polling through phone

LOCAL continues on page 3



CITY OF ARLINGTON PROPOSITION A

Arlington City Council approved an ordinance to hold the Nov. 8 special election, allowing voters to vote on amendments to lengthen City Council terms from two years to three years.

Section 4. Terms of Office and Limitation of Terms: All elective officers under this Charter shall serve, commencing with the first general election held following the adoption of this amendment, the term of three years, and until their successors have been elected and qualified.

Section 9. Term Limits: No person shall serve as Mayor for more than three (3) elected terms, and no person shall serve as a Council Member for more than three (3) elected terms. Under no circumstances may any person ever serve for more than nine (9) years as a Council Member and for more than nine (9) years as Mayor. For purposes of this section and computing the limitations on terms:

(1) a Mayor or Council Member who vacates, for any reason the office before the end of the term for which he was elected shall be considered to have completed that term.

(2) an appointment or election to fill an unexpired Council Member term, or unexpired Mayor term if applicable, shall be computed as follows:

a. if fifty percent (50%) or more of the term is remaining, it shall be included in the computation of term limits; or

b. if less than fifty percent (50%) of the term is remaining, it shall not be included in the computation of term limits.

(3) Council Member terms are counted by including together terms served as both single-member and at-large districts.

The term that each person as Mayor or as a Council Member is currently filling, and all terms served prior to that current term, shall be counted for purposes of determining whether three (3) terms have been served.

This amendment shall become effective immediately upon adoption at the next municipal election, shall apply to all persons currently occupying the Office of Mayor or Council Member, and shall apply to all municipal elections conducted after the date of adoption. Any resident of the city may seek injunctive relief to enforce this prohibition.

Section 2. Mayor and City Council Members, Date of Election, Filing Fees: All regular elections for Mayor and City Council members shall be held on such date as is prescribed by State law or City ordinance not in conflict therewith. Commencing with the general election for City offices held in May 2023, the persons elected to the offices of Mayor and Council members for Districts 3, 4, 5, and 8 shall serve for a term of three years. Commencing with the general election for City offices held in May 2024, the persons elected to the offices of Council members for Districts 1, 2, 6 and 7 shall serve for a term of three years. The City Council shall have the power to call such special elections as they shall deem proper. Candidates for such offices shall pay such filing fee as may be set by appropriate ordinance of the City Council.

EARLY VOTING AT UTA

Early voting is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 26 to 28, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Oct. 29, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 30 and 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Oct. 31 to Nov. 4 at the Maverick Activities Center.

Individuals must bring one of seven forms of identification to the polling center:

- A Texas driver's license issued by the Department of Public Safety
- A Texas election identification certificate
- A Texas personal identification card
- A Texas handgun license
- A U.S. military identification card with a photo
- A U.S. citizenship certificate with a photo
- A U.S. passport (book or card)

If a resident doesn't have any of these forms of identification, they can provide substitute forms listed on the votetexas.gov website, which include a government document with the voter's name and address, a bank statement or a certified domestic birth certificate.

ELECTION 2022

Do we need experience or fresh faces in office?

Students and faculty share their views on the debate of politicians' term length

BY MALLIKA CHAHAL AND AYESHA HANA SHAJI
The Shorthorn staff

With the length of Arlington City Council terms back on the ballot, an old political debate has been again sparked in the community: how long should politicians hold office?

In August, the council approved an ordinance to hold a special election Nov. 8 to decide on amendments to the City Charter that could extend the mayor's and city council members' terms from two years to three years and extend the number of consecutive terms one can serve from two to three, according to city documents.

Term limits are the consecutive amount of terms that a person can serve, political science professor Thomas Marshall said.

The decision voters face in how long politicians should stay in office is subjective, presenting a double-edged sword: past experience versus new blood in politics, said Rodrigo Lizaola, history and political science junior.

President Joe Biden, for instance, was a Delaware senator for over 30 years before becoming vice president, Lizaola said. It can be argued that his past political experience was important, preceding his current position in the office.

He said there should be people who stay in office to oversee funding for infrastructure or health care. However, there comes a point to question politicians when they've had power for years yet have not accomplished their goals.

Marshall said one argument for limiting the number of consecutive terms one can serve is that it brings new people to office.

"Sometimes, frequent elections will bring in more people who haven't been represented before, women and minorities particularly," he said.

On the other hand, restricting a politician's time in office can reduce the experience of officeholders and cause loss of collective memory, Marshall said. People argue sometimes, the same person wouldn't be able to start or finish long-term deals that take eight or 10 years.

However, he said most governors only stay two terms or so, about eight years, before moving to a bigger office or failing to get reelected.

Ann Richards served as Texas governor from 1991 through 1995 before losing to George W. Bush, who held the position until 2000 before running for president.

After Bush, Rick Perry was elected in 2000 and stayed in office until 2015, making him the longest-serving Texas governor. Greg Abbott was elected, following Perry.

Psychology freshman Michael Anderson Jr. said he understands the need for a change in politicians. If somebody is in power for too long, their likelihood to exploit their power increases. However, limiting term lengths makes it difficult to get long-term policy processes completed, he said.

Anderson said he leans toward higher term limits because it facilitates long-term progress.

"It's very difficult to measure a leader's success because it takes so long for change to actually mobilize in a society," he said.

Officeholders can take a year or two to figure out their roles and perform their duties, Marshall said.

He said city council members typically have been active in the community for a long time, and it's usually their first elected position. However, it doesn't pay much.

Arlington City Council members get paid \$200 per month, while the mayor gets paid \$250, according to *The Dallas Morning News*.

Marshall said one has to be at a stage in their career where they can financially afford to have a

to hold office because they are more aware of social issues in a way that older politicians aren't. Younger politicians have fresh perspectives and more room to grow, whereas it feels like older politicians put on an act using their committees or advisers, he said.

Lizaola said millennials and Generation Z are particularly disadvantaged by the heavy expenses of running for office, but it is a breath of fresh air when a few young politicians jump and go for holding a political office.

He said he hopes younger people start running for office sooner rather than later.

"Because I think we're kind of running out of time in a rather dreadful way," Lizaola said. "And I don't think anyone, apart from millennials and Gen Z-ers, can understand how screwed we are."

Marshall said he thinks term lengths don't really matter much and a single city council member coming and going isn't a big deal.

"I don't think of it as a negative, I don't think of it as a positive. I think it's just irrelevant," he said.

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CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

Bring factual errors to *The Shorthorn's* attention via email to editor.shorthorn@uta.edu or call 817-272-3188. A correction or clarification will be printed in this space.

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Local

continued from page 1

calls, they said. They became friends with the CEO's daughter in junior high school and started helping when the company needed people to test the new system.

"At the time, we would just sit in a room, and we had sheets of paper in front of us. We weren't even using a system at this point, and we would call these people by dialing the phone number into the actual phone we were working on and then write down their answers manually," they said.

Over the years, working the polls and being involved at the local level has revealed how significant the political scene is, especially after seeing the younger generation's answers in the polls, Aldaco said.

When it comes to making an impact on their quality of life, young people should do more than just vote for a senator or the president, they said.

Nearly 18% of registered Texas voters cast a ballot in the 2022 primary, with 55% voting early and 45% voting on election day, according to *The Texas Tribune*. While this turnout was higher than the last six midterm primaries, it was still a less than 1 in 5 participation rate.

Voter participation in midterm primary elections is historically dismal in Texas, with less than a quarter of registered voters casting ballots most years, meaning a vast majority of registered voters don't participate.

The recognition of grassroots movements

starts from people's political involvement, Aldaco said. What started as the LGBTQ+ community wanting the right to drink in bars led to the 1969 Stonewall Riots, which blossomed into a civil rights movement that has fought for and secured marriage and other equal rights for the community.

"This is our future we are talking about," they said. "These issues are going to affect us for the rest of our lives, and whenever we don't take action on that, we end up letting people that aren't going to be around to see the consequences of their decisions make those decisions."

Local politics have more avenues for people to use and have their voices heard, Pham said. If residents reconfigured how they view local politics and issues, it might allow them to look at problems like potholes or broken light poles, and rather than being disgusted or annoyed with the government, they could reach out to people from public works and discuss the issue, Pham said.

This is especially significant when considering issues Texas has faced over the years, from mass shootings to extreme flooding and winter freezes, all of which can be partially traced back to how they were handled by local governments and state legislatures, highlighting the importance of the upcoming election if residents wish to see change, Pham said.

"These are the stakes we have to be living with right now, and whether or not we want to change that is up to the voters," he said.

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The Shorthorn: Ronaldo Bolanos

Hurst resident Soren Aldaco started working at Pollmakers six years ago. Aldaco said working the polls has revealed to them the significance of participating in the political scene.

ARLINGTON

Free rides to the polls



File photo / Peyton C. North

A Via self-driving vehicle gives test rides to attendees during a launch event March 23, 2021, in Arlington.

Riders can show their voter registration card or current Texas ID for free rides with certain services.

BY STEVEN SHAW
The Shorthorn news editor

Tarrant County is offering voters multiple options for free rides to get to the polls during early voting Oct. 24 through Nov. 4 and on Election Day, Nov. 8.

Riders can show their voter registration card or current Texas ID on all Trinity Metro services, Arlington Via and Handitran for free rides, according to a Tarrant County press release.

Participating transit companies include Trinity Metro's bus routes, ZIPZONE, ACCESS Paratransit, Catholic Charities Fort Worth Transportation Services, Northeast Transportation Service and Arlington's Via and Handitran.

To use Via, Arlington residents must download the app, enter the address of a polling

code within Via's service area and use the promo code ARNVOT-E2022F. Download the ZIPZONE app to book its services. Free ZIPZONE rides are offered to or from any identified voter center location within a zone.

Voters eligible to ride on ACCESS, Tarrant County Transportation Service, Northeast Transportation Service or Handitran should call the provider at least 48 hours before the trip to schedule their free ride to any voting locations.

Early voting locations in Arlington include:

- Maverick Activities Center in University of Texas at Arlington, 500 W. Nedderman Drive, 76019
- Bob Duncan Center, 2800 S. Center Street, 76014
- Center for Community Service, Junior League of Arlington, 4002 W. Pioneer Parkway, 76013
- City of Arlington Water Utilities South Service

Center, 1100 SW Green Oaks Blvd., 76017

- Elzie Odom Athletic Center, 1601 NE Green Oaks Blvd., 76006
- Tarrant County Sub-Courthouse in Arlington, 700 E. Abram Street, 76010
- Tarrant County College Southeast Campus, EMB-C Portable Building, 2100 SE Parkway, 76018

Tarrant County provides the full list of early voting locations and Election Day locations on the county's website.

The Tarrant County Commissioners Court approved a partnership with Tarrant County Transportation Services to pay for customer trips to voting locations, continuing the Election Transportation Program that's been offered in elections since November 2019.

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Sample Ballot

Joint General and Special Election Elecciones generales y especiales conjuntas
November 8, 2022 8 de noviembre de 2022 Page 1 of 2 Página 1 de 2
Tarrant County Condado de Tarrant Precinct 2746-110 Precincto 2746-110

Instruction Note: Please use a black or blue ink pen to mark your ballot. To vote for your choice in each contest, completely fill in the box next to your choice.
Nota de Instrucción: Favor de usar una pluma de tinta negra o azul para marcar su boleta. Para votar por su selección en cada carrera, llene el espacio cuadrado a la izquierda de su selección.

Legend of Party Affiliation
Republican = REP
Democratic = DEM
Libertarian = LIB
Green = GRE
Independent = IND
Leyenda de la afiliación del partido
Republicano = REP
Demócrata = DEM
Libertario = LIB
Verde = GRE
Independiente = IND

United States Representative, District 6
Representante de los Estados Unidos, Distrito Núm 6
 Jake Ellzey REP

Governor
Gobernador
 Greg Abbott REP
 Beto O'Rourke DEM
 Mark Tippetts LIB
 Delilah Barrios GRE
 Write-in Escribir en

Lieutenant Governor
Gobernador Teniente
 Dan Patrick REP
 Mike Collier DEM
 Shanna Steele LIB

Attorney General
Procurador General
 Ken Paxton REP
 Rochelle Mercedes Garza DEM
 Mark Ash LIB

Comptroller of Public Accounts
Contralor de Cuentas Públicas
 Glenn Hegar REP
 Janet T. Dudding DEM
 V. Alonzo Echevarría-Garza LIB

Commissioner of the General Land Office
Comisionado de la Oficina General de Tierras
 Dawn Buckingham REP
 Jay Kleberg DEM
 Alfred Molison, Jr GRE
 Write-in Escribir en

Commissioner of Agriculture
Comisionado de Agricultura
 Sid Miller REP
 Susan Hays DEM

Railroad Commissioner
Comisionado de Ferrocarriles
 Wayne Christian REP
 Luke Warford DEM
 Jaime Andres Diez LIB
 Hunter Wayne Crow GRE

Justice, Supreme Court, Place 3
Juez, Corte Suprema, Lugar Núm 3
 Debra Lehmann REP
 Erin A. Nowell DEM
 Thomas Edward Oxford LIB

Justice, Supreme Court, Place 5
Juez, Corte Suprema, Lugar Núm 5
 Rebeca Huddle REP
 Amanda Reichke DEM

Justice, Supreme Court, Place 9
Juez, Corte Suprema, Lugar Núm 9
 Evan Young REP
 Julia Maldonado DEM

Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals, Place 5
Juez, Corte de Apelaciones Criminales, Lugar Núm 5
 Scott Walker REP
 Dana Huffman DEM

Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals, Place 6
Juez, Corte de Apelaciones Criminales, Lugar Núm 6
 Jesse F. McClure, III REP
 Robert Johnson DEM

Member, State Board of Education, District 13
Miembro de la Junta Estatal de Educación Pública, Distrito Núm 13
 Kathryn Monette REP
 Aicha Davis DEM

State Senator, District 22
Senador Estatal, Distrito Núm 22
 Brian Birdwell REP
 Jeremy Schroppel LIB

Justice, Court of Appeals District 2, Place 3
Juez, Corte de Apelaciones Distrito Núm 2, Lugar 3
 Elizabeth Kerr REP
 Delonia A. Watson DEM

District Judge, Judicial District 141
Juez del Distrito Judicial, Distrito Núm 141
 John P. Chupp REP
 Stefanie Klein DEM

District Judge, Judicial District 485
Juez del Distrito Judicial, Distrito Núm 485
 Steven Jumes REP
 John Brender DEM

Criminal District Judge, Court No. 4
Juez Criminal del Distrito, Corte Núm 4
 Andy Porter REP
 Sam Williams DEM

Family District Judge, Judicial District 323
Juez de Familia del Distrito, Distrito Judicial Núm 323
 Alex Kim REP
 Frank Adler DEM

Family District Judge, Judicial District 324
Juez de Familia del Distrito, Distrito Judicial Núm 324
 Beth A. Poulos REP
 Cystal Gayden DEM

Criminal District Attorney
Procurador Criminal del Distrito
 Phil Sorrells REP
 Tiffany D. Burks DEM

County Judge
Juez del Condado
 Tim O'Hare REP
 Deborah W. Peoples DEM

Judge, County Criminal Court No. 5
Juez, Corte Criminal del Condado Núm 5
 Brad Clark REP
 Lesa Pamplin DEM

Judge, County Criminal Court No. 6
Juez, Corte Criminal del Condado Núm 6
 Randi Hartin REP
 Ebony M. Turner DEM

Judge, County Criminal Court No. 7
Juez, Corte Criminal del Condado Núm 7
 Eric Starnes REP
 MarQ Clayton DEM

Judge, County Probate Court No. 2
Juez, Corte Testamentaria del Condado Núm 2
 Brooke Allen REP
 Alisha Darden DEM

District Clerk
Secretario del Distrito
 Tom Wilder REP
 Ruby Faye Woolridge DEM

County Clerk
Secretario del Condado
 Mary Louise Nicholson REP
 Linsey Fagan DEM

County Commissioner, Precinct No. 2
Comisionado del Condado, Precincto Núm 2
 Andy Nguyen REP
 Alisa Simmons DEM

Read Both Sides of the Ballot / Leer ambos lados de la boleta

Sample Ballot

Joint General and Special Election Elecciones generales y especiales conjuntas
November 8, 2022 8 de noviembre de 2022 Page 2 of 2 Página 2 de 2
Tarrant County Condado de Tarrant Precinct 2746-110 Precincto 2746-110

Justice of the Peace, Precinct No. 2
Juez de Paz, Precincto Núm 2
 Mary Tom Cravens Curnutt REP
 Jeca Williams DEM

City of Arlington Special Election
Elección Especial de la Ciudad de Arlington

City of Arlington Proposition A
Ciudad de Arlington - Proposición A
Amendment of Sections 4 and 9 of Article IV and Section 2 of Article V of the City Charter to provide that the term of office for the Mayor and City Council Members shall be three years and to provide that a person may serve no more than nine years as a Council Member and nine years as Mayor and to provide for the staggering of terms.
Enmienda de las Secciones 4 y 9 del Artículo IV y a la Sección 2 del Artículo V de la Carta Orgánica de la Ciudad para disponer que el término del cargo para el Alcalde y los Miembros del Consejo sea de tres años y para disponer que una persona puede servir como Miembro del Consejo por no más de nueve años y nueve años como Alcalde y para disponer términos escalonados.
 For A Favor
 Against En Contra

Republican Unopposed Candidates Declared, Elected
Justice, Court of Criminal Appeals, Place 2 Mary Lou Keel
State Senator District 10 Phil King
State Representative District 91 Stephanie Kick
State Representative District 96 David Cook
District Judge, 48th Judicial District Chris Taylor
District Judge, 231st Judicial District Jesse Nevarez
District Judge, 233rd Judicial District Kenneth E. Newell
District Judge, 236th Judicial District Tom Lowe
District Judge, 297th Judicial District David Hagerman
District Judge, 371st Judicial District Ryan Hill
District Judge, 372nd Judicial District Julie Lugo
District Judge, 432nd Judicial District Ruben Gonzalez
Candidatos Republicano elegidos sin oposición
Juez, Corte de Apelaciones Criminales Lugar 2 Mary Lou Keel
Senador Estatal Distrito 10 Phil King
Representante Estatal Distrito 91 Stephanie Kick
Representante Estatal Distrito 96 David Cook
Juez del Distrito Judicial 48 Chris Taylor
Juez del Distrito Judicial 231 Jesse Nevarez
Juez del Distrito Judicial 233 Kenneth E. Newell
Juez del Distrito Judicial 236 Tom Lowe
Juez del Distrito Judicial 297 David Hagerman
Juez del Distrito Judicial 371 Ryan Hill
Juez del Distrito Judicial 372 Julie Lugo
Juez del Distrito Judicial 432 Ruben Gonzalez

Family District Judge, 322nd District James B. Munford
Family District Judge, 325th District Cynthia Terry
Criminal District Judge, Court 1 Elizabeth Beach
Criminal District Judge, Court 3 Robb Catalano
Judge, County Court at Law 1 Don Pierson
Judge, County Court at Law 2 Jennifer Rymell
Judge, County Court at Law 3 Mike Hrabal
Judge, County Criminal Court 1 David Cook
Judge, County Criminal Court 2 Carey Walker
Judge, County Criminal Court 3 Bob McCoy
Judge, County Criminal Court 4 Deborah Nekhom
Judge, County Criminal Court 8 Charles L. "Chuck" Vanover
Judge, County Criminal Court 9 Brian Bolton
Judge, County Criminal Court 10 Trent Loftin
Judge, County Probate Court 1 Chris Ponder
Juez de Familia del Distrito Judicial 322 James B. Munford
Juez de Familia del Distrito Judicial 325 Cynthia Terry
Juez Criminal del Distrito, Corte 1 Elizabeth Beach
Juez Criminal del Distrito, Corte 3 Robb Catalano
Juez, Corte de Ley del Condado 1 Don Pierson
Juez, Corte de Ley del Condado 2 Jennifer Rymell
Juez, Corte de Ley del Condado 3 Mike Hrabal
Juez, Corte Criminal del Condado 1 David Cook
Juez, Corte Criminal del Condado 2 Carey Walker
Juez, Corte Criminal del Condado 3 Bob McCoy
Juez, Corte Criminal del Condado 4 Deborah Nekhom
Juez, Corte Criminal del Condado 8 Charles L. "Chuck" Vanover
Juez, Corte Criminal del Condado 9 Brian Bolton
Juez, Corte Criminal del Condado 10 Trent Loftin
Juez, Corte Testamentaria del Condado 1 Chris Ponder

Justice of the Peace Precinct 1 Ralph Swearingin Jr
Justice of the Peace Precinct 3 William Paul "Bill" Brandt
Justice of the Peace Precinct 6 Jason M. Charbonnet
Constable Precinct 4, Unexpired Term Jason Scott Bedford
Juez de Paz Precincto 1 Ralph Swearingin Jr.
Juez de Paz Precincto 3 William Paul "Bill" Brandt
Juez de Paz Precincto 6 Jason M. Charbonnet
Agente de Policía Precincto 4 - Duración Restante del Cargo Jason Scott Bedford
Democrate Unopposed Candidates Declared, Elected
State Senator District 23 Royce West
State Representative District 90 Ramón Romero Jr.
State Representative District 101 Chris Turner
Justice of the Peace Precinct 5 Sergio L. DeLeon
Justice of the Peace Precinct 8 Lisa R. Woodard
Candidatos Democrático elegidos sin oposición
Senador Estatal Distrito 23 Royce West
Representante Estatal Distrito 90 Ramón Romero Jr.
Representante Estatal Distrito 101 Chris Turner
Juez de Paz Precincto 5 Sergio L. DeLeon
Juez de Paz Precincto 8 Lisa R. Woodard

Read Both Sides of the Ballot / Leer ambos lados de la boleta

ELECTION 2022



Indiana: Which of these is NOT the name of a primary House office building? A. Cannon B. Delta C. Longworth D. Rayburn. 9 seats.

Kentucky: How many women currently serve as House members of the 117th U.S. Congress? A. 120 B. 121 C. 122 D. 123. 6 seats.

Florida: Which year did the number of House seats increase to 435? A. 1900 B. 1913 C. 1926 D. 1930. 27 seats.

Georgia: While the U.S. House generally has 435 members of House seats, there were years when it surpassed that number. What was the highest number of House seats the Congress has ever had? A. 436 B. 437 C. 438 D. 439. 14 seats.

South Carolina: How much does the Speaker of the House get paid? A. 200,500 B. 208,500 C. 214,500 D. 223,500. 7 seats.

Oklahoma: When was the last time the Republican Party gained control of the House? A. 2009 B. 2013 C. 2017 D. 2019. 5 seats.

Pennsylvania: When was the last time an independent candidate was elected to Congress? A. 1998 B. 2000 C. 2002 D. 2004. 18 seats.

Skip a turn!

Alabama: What is the minimum age to become a state representative? A. 25 B. 30 C. 35 D. 40. 7 seats.

West Virginia: You can vote in the U.S. election as a noncitizen, so long as you're living in the U.S. A. True B. False. 3 seats.

Ohio: Who is the oldest representative to have ever served in the House? A. Ralph Hall B. Roy Blunt C. Eric Cantor D. James Wright. 16 seats.

North Carolina: How many seats did the Democratic Party lose in the 2020 election? A. 11 B. 12 C. 13 D. 14. 13 seats.

Virginia: Who was the first openly lesbian to successfully run for Congress? A. Tammy Baldwin B. Angie Craig C. Sharice Davids D. Katie Hill. 11 seats.

Vermont: Where can UTA students vote early on campus? A. University Administration Building B. Texas Hall C. Maverick Activities Center D. University Center. 1 seat.

North Dakota: Which party is currently in control of the House? A. Democratic B. Republican. 1 seat.

I VOTED! graphic with a star.

Rhode Island: How many house seats were there in the first year of Congress (1789-1791)? A. 60 B. 65 C. 70 D. 75. 2 seats.

Connecticut: In which building does the U.S. Congress meet? A. Capitol Building B. White House C. Pentagon D. Supreme Court of the United States. 5 seats.

Hawaii: The House of Representatives meets in which wing of the Capitol Building? A. North B. East C. West D. South. 2 seats.

California: Nancy Pelosi was the first woman to serve as Speaker of the House. A. True B. False. 53 seats.

Utah: Mia Love was the first Black Republican woman in Congress. Which state does she come from? A. North B. East C. West D. South. 4 seats.

Oregon: Who is the current Minority Leader in the House? A. Steny Hoyer B. Kevin McCarthy C. Elise Stefanik D. Katherine Clark. 5 seats.

Nevada: How many Democratic and Republican women are serving in each party in the House right now? A. 91 Democrats, 32 Republicans B. 94 Democrats, 32 Republicans C. 91 Democrats, 35 Republicans D. 94, Democrats, 35 Republicans. 4 seats.

New Jersey: Gerrymandering is the practice of dividing or arranging a territorial unit into election districts in a way that gives one political party an unfair advantage in elections. A. True B. False. 12 seats.

Montana: How many House seats are up for grabs this election? A. 0 B. 217 C. 218 D. 435. 1 seat.

South Dakota: Robert Hunter of Virginia was the youngest Speaker of the House to be elected. How old was he? A. 29 B. 30 C. 31 D. 32. 1 seat.

Delaware: Both the Majority Leader and the Minority Leader receive the same salary. A. True B. False. 1 seat.

Alaska: Who is the political and parliamentary leader of the House? A. Caucus chairman B. Speaker of the House C. Majority Leaders D. Minority Leaders. 1 seat.

Washington: When can people start early voting for the 2022 midterm election? A. October 24 B. October 25 C. October 26 D. October 27. 10 seats.

House Majority: BY DANG LE • ILLUSTRATION BY CLAUDIA HUMPHREY. The United States House of Representatives, also known as the U.S. House or the House, is the lower chamber of the United States Congress, with the Senate being the upper chamber. Each representative is elected to a two-year term and serves the people of specific congressional districts by introducing bills, serving on committees and other duties. Other than the 435 voting members and five delegates, there's also a resident commissioner who serves for four years. In the U.S., states are divided into congressional districts based on population, and each Congressional district is represented by one member. In this game, you and your opponent will play as two parties trying to rack up as many House seats as possible, each trying to win 218 seats and take the House Majority. To do that, you will have to correctly answer trivia questions about the House of Representatives. Don't forget to read the rules in the corner of the page before you start — it may get difficult. The states are in rough order of when the polls will close Nov. 8.

Skip a turn!

Idaho: What is the current meeting of the U.S. legislative branch? (January 2021 - January 2023) A. 115th United States Congress B. 116th United States Congress C. 117th United States Congress D. 118th United States Congress. 2 seats.

Tennessee: Who was the first and only Speaker of the House to serve as U.S. President? A. James Polk B. Barack Obama C. George W. Bush D. Calvin Coolidge. 9 seats.

Illinois: What was the highest number of House seats a party has ever had? A. 334 seats, Democratic Party B. 322 seats, Democratic Party C. 322 seats, Republican Party D. 334 seats, Republican Party. 18 seats.

I VOTED! graphic with a star.

Iowa: Patsy Takemoto Mink (D-HI) became the first woman of color elected to the House. What year was she elected? A. 1916 B. 1964 C. 1984 D. 2000. 4 seats.

Colorado: Who was the first woman to be elected in the House? A. Rebecca Latimer Felton B. Mae Ella Nola C. Alice Mary Robertson D. Jeannette Rankin. 7 seats.

Arizona: James Daniel Richardson was the first Minority Leader of the House. Which party was he affiliated with? A. Democrats B. Republican C. Green D. Unaffiliated. 9 seats.

Arkansas: How much do House members get paid annually? A. 162,000 B. 174,000 C. 196,000 D. 208,000. 4 seats.

Skip a turn!

Texas: Who is the longest-serving Speaker of the House? A. Nancy Pelosi B. John McCormack C. Samuel Rayburn D. Thomas O'Neil. 36 seats.

Kansas: Who was the first openly LGBTQ+ member to win election in Congress? A. Ed Koch B. Robert Bauman C. Gerry Studds D. Jon Hinson. 4 seats.

Massachusetts: Massachusetts has had more Speakers of the House than any other state. How many representatives from the state have served as Speakers? A. 7 B. 8 C. 9 D. 10. 9 seats.

Skip a turn!

Michigan: Michigan Rep. John Dingell, Jr. is the longest-serving representative to serve in the House. How long did he serve? A. 57 years B. 59 years C. 61 years D. 63 years. 14 seats.

Mississippi: When were the first Native American women elected to Congress? A. 2012 B. 2014 C. 2016 D. 2018. 4 seats.

Missouri: Who is the current Majority Leader in the House? A. Steny Hoyer B. Kevin McCarthy C. Elise Stefanik D. Katherine Clark. 8 seats.

New Hampshire: When is the upcoming midterm election? A. November 6, 2022 B. November 7, 2022 C. November 8, 2022 D. November 9, 2022. 2 seats.

Wyoming: What is the minimum age requirement to vote in elections? A. 16 B. 18 C. 21 D. 25. 1 seat.

RULES: What you'll need: Two people. Two teams of two or two teams of three would also work! A die. A game piece for each party. Two colored pencils, one red and one blue. How to play: Roll the die to decide who goes first. Then take turns rolling the die to move around the board and winning states by answering a trivia question. If you get it right, you get the number of seats. If you get it wrong, your opponent gets them. Correct answers are on page 8. Each time a candidate wins a state, it is no longer playable. Fill in the little circle with the corresponding colored pencils. Both players should now skip those spots and any illustration squares. The board is a loop, so you can keep going until your party wins the House Majority. Use a separate paper to tally how many seats each party has taken. The first to reach 218 seats wins the House Majority.

Maine: Shirley Crisholm was the first Black woman to serve in Congress. What year was she elected? A. 1962 B. 1964 C. 1966 D. 1968. 2 seats.

Maryland: When was the wing of the Capitol where the House meets completed? A. 1800 B. 1803 C. 1807 D. 1815. 8 seats.

Louisiana: What is the term for when a political party controls the White House, Senate and U.S. House? A. A perfection B. A trifecta C. A trinity D. A triumph. 6 seats.

Minnesota: When were the first Muslim women elected to Congress? A. 2014 B. 2016 C. 2018 D. 2020. 8 seats.

Nebraska: The Speaker of the House is second in line to succeed the President. A. True B. False. 3 seats.

New Mexico: Henry Rainey of Illinois was the oldest Speaker of the House when first elected. How old was he? A. 68 B. 70 C. 72 D. 74. 3 seats.

New York: Who is the youngest woman to be elected to the House? A. Elise Stefanik B. Jeannette Rankin C. Sara Jacobs D. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. 27 seats.

Wisconsin: Which of these documents are not allowed as a qualified document to vote in person? A. Texas driver's license B. Texas handgun license C. U.S. Passport D. Texas social security card. 8 seats.

ELECTION 2022

Saving the story of our democracy

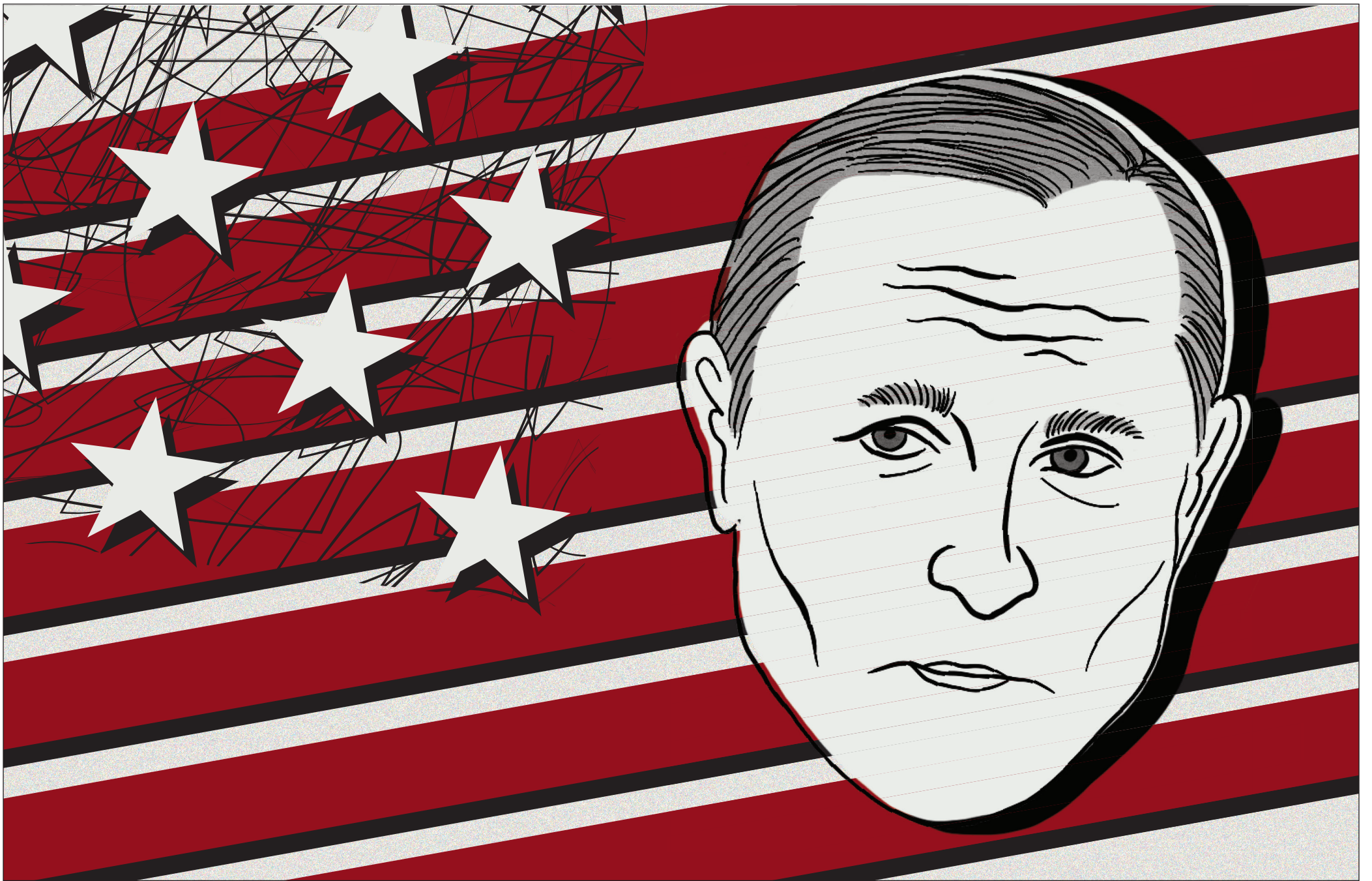


Illustration by Kelsey Wells

With political polarization to transcontinental disinformation, a growing majority in the United States has started to doubt the story, legitimacy and effectiveness of its democracy

BY STEVEN SHAW
The Shorthorn news editor

Every month that Ukrainians continue to fight against Russia's invasion of their country, a message is conveyed to the watching world: democracy comes at a price they're willing to pay.

"They're not questioning democracy. They're fighting for it every single day right now," said Brian Whitmore, assistant professor of practice, who spent years as a foreign correspondent in Eastern Europe. He now works in political science in Washington D.C., and hosts *The Power Vertical* podcast on Russian affairs.

"Democracy is a story," Whitmore said.

In the U.S., many people may have stopped believing in it.

In 2021, 85% of Americans said the U.S. political system either needs major changes or needs to be completely reformed, according to the Pew Research Center. Another study this year found 29% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents and 9% of Republicans and Republican-leaning said they trust the government just about always or most of the time.

"Everything we have is based on a story, money is based on a story," Whitmore said. "Money is just a piece of paper with a famous dead person on it and a number."

When people believe the story of money, it has value. But when they lose confidence in their currency, it collapses. The same is true with democracy, he said.

At its core, democracy is a system to mitigate human imperfection, Whitmore said. The story of democracy says the consent of the governed legitimizes a government, individuals have sacred rights and diverse societies can balance equality and liberty.

"Democracy is a good strategy, but it isn't perfect," said Kurt Weyland, UT Austin government professor. "It has very high promises and, like many things that make high promises, can't fulfill all of them."

The nation is polarized, but that will be the case whenever there are elections, said Carlos Turcios, vice president of UTA's chapter of Turning Point USA, an organization promoting conservative values on campus. Humans are flawed beings, so having passionate people and divisive elections is just part of the system.

Advancements in some people's values can leave other groups feeling behind, and democracy isn't working from their perspectives, Weyland said. When people feel politically misrepresented, they're attracted to leaders with strong personalities who claim they can cut through the gridlock and be their voice.

That's populism, which is strong, personal leadership that claims to speak for a large number of people who feel excluded, Weyland said.

Mark Napieralski, president of the Progressive Student Union at UTA — a student organization dedicated to pursuing progressive ideals — said he thinks democracy is in danger of leaders who don't like losing. When they fail, they say it was because of fraud.

"The only way to prevent that from happening is to not only [to] vote but to make sure that we form a movement, that we have organization[s] out in the community that can actually fight and struggle for our rights," Napieralski said.

Though populism is a threat, it rarely de-

stroy democracy, Weyland said.

In January 2021, even after months of denying the validity of the 2020 presidential election results, former President Donald Trump still stepped down from office.

"The American political system once more reigned in a powerful president," Weyland said.

Turcios said he thinks the state of America's democracy is fine due to it still having elections.

It's true that the nation is polarized, but divisiveness, which can be seen from both sides of the political spectrum, has been apparent in many periods in American history. The current problematic trend in America, he said, comes down to how people believe those who have different opinions than them aren't good humans.

"In the past, if you had different opinions, you still could have a barbecue," he said. "But today, you now have a lot of people where if you think differently than me, you're a bad person."

Napieralski said he thinks democracy in the U.S. is going toward a precipice. Divisiveness in the U.S. comes partly from the political process's inability to get things done.

Modern politics are increasingly complex, which has led people to feel less involved in their democracy, Weyland said.

"A lot of modern politics [don't] get decided on the local level and, in some sense, not even at the national level," he said. "Climate change and a whole bunch of issues require international cooperation."

As the distance between decision-makers and voters increases, people feel they have less input.

Populism is advancing in many Western countries, he said. Trump in the U.S., Brexit in the U.K.'s separation from the European Union, French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen and several leaders in Italy can all fall into the category. But it's not what liberal democracy originally was.

Fifty-eight percent of Americans surveyed said they were not satisfied with how their democracy is working, according to the Pew Research Center in 2021.

Liberal democracy is a marriage of convenience and compromise, Weyland said. Democracy empowers the majority while liberalism protects minorities. These ideas should respect each other and stay limited to the confines of their role.

But populism, fueled by democratic discontent, brings a leader who speaks for the majority and doesn't have to stay within the boundaries of liberalism, he said.

In America's two-party system, there will be honest disagreements about taxes, spending and health care, but not every election should be existential, Whitmore said.

"I'd love to get back to the day that was the only things we argued about," he said. "We weren't arguing about whether elections were valid or not."

Access to information, which is an important part of democracy, gives the public the ability to form preferences and evaluate their politicians, said Christopher Wlezien, Hogg professor of government at UT Austin, who researches how news coverage mediates public

responsiveness to policy.

Although the situation in the U.S. might not be ideal, Wlezien said he thinks "the glass is half full."

"There's a lot of accurate information about what government policymakers are doing," he said. "People are getting that information and they seem to be using that information, and it's also working to instruct politicians about things that the public wants."

Turcios said he thinks regulating information is a slippery slope for restricting the First Amendment, possibly allowing leaders to silence differing opinions as misinformation, and that people are smart enough to make up their own minds and do their own research.

"Most Americans would agree that speech shouldn't be regulated," he said. "That's the reason why we have free speech. If you have a bad idea or you're spewing lies, you'll get called out, but that's the beauty of freedom of speech."

Russian elections tell a different story.

A ballot box at gunpoint and a fixed election was the reality for thousands of people living in Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine on Sept.

23, as Russian soldiers went door-to-door, forcing Ukrainians to vote on the future of their country seven months after the initial invasion.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's purpose in polling, according to Ukraine and Western governments, was to falsely justify his claim to the regions despite national Ukrainian resistance, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. Once tallied by Moscow, the results reflected allegedly overwhelming Ukrainian support for the occupied regions to join Russia.

Russian leaders swiftly welcomed the outcome as a reason to proceed with annexations. Over the next few weeks, 143 countries refused to recognize the territorial expansion, with many criticizing the vote as a sham.

Most countries in the world have a democracy of some kind, Turcios said. People don't want to live in countries with no democratic process where they can't elect leaders, voice opinions or have dissenting opinions, which is unhealthy and ultimately leads to tyranny.

Watching the war in Ukraine strengthened many countries' commitment to democracy, Weyland said.

"Putin's attack on Ukraine has gone so badly and backfired so badly that it united the West and [has] shown us the importance of democracy, and created an unusual degree of agreement among Western countries," he said.

Sham elections are nothing new in Russia, said Lonny Harrison, associate professor of Russian. The country has long practiced appearing democratic through political theater, or pokazukha, meaning "just for show."

"The show legitimizes what they're trying to do," Whitmore said. "It's all about masking reality with this smokescreen."

Nothing is being decided in Russian elections, he said. Even when the Soviet Union had elections, there was just one candidate on the ballot.

But Moscow's attempts to mock democ-

racy haven't stayed in the East. For decades, Russia has tried to convince the world that all democracy is broken to legitimize its authoritarianism, Harrison said. They've long tried to inflate divisions in democratic societies and pour flames on the fire of polarization until it appears American society is so divided that it's irreparable.

They want Americans to say "politics is broken" and "everybody's lying," then not care and not vote, he said. The democratic process then falls apart.

In May 2016, on a street in downtown Houston, two rallies took place at the same place and time. One group, composed of Texas secessionists, called to "stop Islamification of Texas," and the other group rallied to "save Islamic knowledge."

Each rally was organized and promoted from across the Atlantic by two separate Russian-operated Facebook groups, and the situation eventually escalated into confrontation protests, according to *The Texas Tribune*.

Russia hasn't created divisions in American society, but they have inflamed them, Whitmore said. Using disinformation through social media, they've exploited issues like immigration, race relations and LGBTQ+ issues.

"They're very good at this," Whitmore said. "This wouldn't be so successful if we weren't so tribalized, if we weren't so polarized, if we weren't questioning our own democracy already."

Similar instances of Russian-fueled tensions are traced back to the Putin-sponsored Internet Research Agency in Saint Petersburg, which U.S. government officials defined as "the notorious Russian 'troll farm,' where people pose as Americans on social media and address divisive U.S. political issues to 'sow discord in the U.S. political system,' according to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Intelligence.

Even pre-internet, the Soviet Union used disinformation to influence Western society, Whitmore said. In the '80s, starting with an article in a small pro-Soviet Indian newspaper, Soviet operatives planted the lie that AIDS, which was then a mysterious new disease, was created by the Pentagon.

Over the next few years, the myth spread internationally. By April 1987, the story had appeared in the major newspapers of more than 50 countries, according to *The Washington Post*. The story lived on in the U.S. A 2005 study reported almost half of African Americans believed that HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, was artificial.

Through this kind of disinformation, Russia has tried to destabilize the U.S.'s information ecosystem, Harrison said. The government's goal isn't to promote or to pick one political side, but it wants to muddy the waters with so many conflicting narratives that nobody knows what's real.

"It's not like we're helpless," Whitmore said. "Fighting this war really begins at home. The counterattack to this war really begins on us, again, believing our story."

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EDITORIAL

Voters should think about fair elections process for upcoming Texas midterms

The new redistricting maps, allegedly considered gerrymandered, are in effect this year

A year after multiple civil rights organizations sued the state of Texas for alleged racially discriminatory redistricting practices, millions of Texans will head to the polls to cast their ballot in consequential midterm elections.

The Shorthorn Editorial Board implores voters to elect politicians who believe voters have the right to choose their representatives and not the other way around. It is likely many Texans do not have fair or accurate political representation, and the outcomes of the upcoming midterm elections may not truly represent the beliefs of the state's voters.

It's imperative that voters be more active in elections. Consistently high voter turnout could help

of Columbia and Puerto Rico, according to previous Shorthorn reporting. Each state, district or territory then uses that data to redraw district lines in a process known as redistricting.

Historically, gerrymandering is alleged to impact minority communities most severely.

Even though only 40% of Texans identify as white per the 2020 census data, this demographic group dominates all congressional, state House and state Senate levels in terms of eligible voters in the newly-drawn districts and outnumbers Hispanic-dominated communities 3 to 1, according to previous Shorthorn reporting. There are not any Black-dominated or Asian-dominated congressional districts.

Unfair political representation can contribute to a gap in how people vote at the federal level versus the political makeup of the

pregnancy, despite 83% of Texans believing the medical procedure should be allowed in some form, according to a UT Austin poll in August. Gerrymandering could be contributing to a lack of politicians in the state legislature who share the same views.

Yet, in 2021, Gov. Greg Abbott and Republican state legislators passed House Bill 1280, which has completely banned most abortions in the state. The Supreme Court in June overturned federal rights to abortions and returned the decision to the states.

This shows the importance of how gerrymandering can affect Texas, as the laws enacted do not seem to represent what most people want. Texans will only get the representation that reflects their beliefs by voting for candidates who

THE ISSUE:

Many Texas voters do not have accurate political representation due to the newly-drawn redistricting maps.

WE THINK:

Voters should have the right to choose who represents them, not the other way around.

TAKE ACTION:

People should vote for candidates who support fair political representation.

combat the effects of gerrymandering — the process of manipulating the boundaries of electoral districts to intentionally favor one political party over the other.

Voter turnout in the U.S. has consistently lagged behind most developed countries. The 2020 presidential election saw a turnout rate of 66.8% in the U.S. among the voting-age population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. However, Israel's 2020 elections had a turnout rate of 77.9%, South Korea's 2017 elections 77.92% and Australia's 2019 elections 80.79%, according to the Pew Research Center.

Turnout rates among voters in the U.S. are even lower during midterms, which are elections held in the middle of the president's four-year term. In recent decades, while around 60% of the national voting-eligible population cast their ballot in presidential elections, only 40% do so during midterms, according to FairVote.

While it's important to recognize the barriers many communities face when trying to vote, like long voting lines, limited hours at polling locations and a lack of accessible voting options, it's clear the U.S. can and should do better in regard to voter turnout to mitigate the impact of gerrymandering.

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts a national population count and provides the data to all 50 states, the District

state's legislature. In the 2020 presidential election, 52.1% of Texans voted for former President Donald Trump, while 46.5% voted for eventual winner Joe Biden.

However, when looking at the political makeup of the Texas Legislature, there's a gap in a similar distribution of votes. In the Texas House of Representatives, Republicans and Democrats make up 55% and 45% of the body, respectively. In the Senate, Republicans make up 58%, and Democrats consist of 42%.

While these numbers may seem inconsequential, and many voters vote for both Democrats and Republicans, gaps like this demonstrate a potential disconnect between the policies voters support and the political makeup of legislative bodies.

For example, Texas has banned abortions in all cases except for life-threatening medical emergencies and at all stages of

believe in fair political representation and will pass legislation to that effect.

The allegedly racially discriminatory maps in Texas, which are now being legally challenged by the Department of Justice, were drawn and passed by the state legislature and signed into law by Abbott.

Our political system doesn't have to be this way. There are fairer ways of determining how voters will be represented in government.

In England, a nonpartisan public body reviews parliamentary constituencies, what Americans consider districts, and recommends changes. Government ministers and officials do not have direct input or control

over the work of the body, according to the Boundary Commission for England website.

In Canada, the redistricting process was highly partisan, much like it is in the U.S., until a 1964 law was passed that moved control of the process out of the hands of their parliament and under the purview of a nonpartisan group of electoral commissions from each province.

The Shorthorn Editorial Board urges everyone, especially young voters who can make a difference in the outcome of the elections, to show up for the upcoming midterms and cast their ballot for candidates who believe in fair and accurate political representation.

Fair political representation and the reformation of how districts are drawn can only happen if more people turn out to the polls during

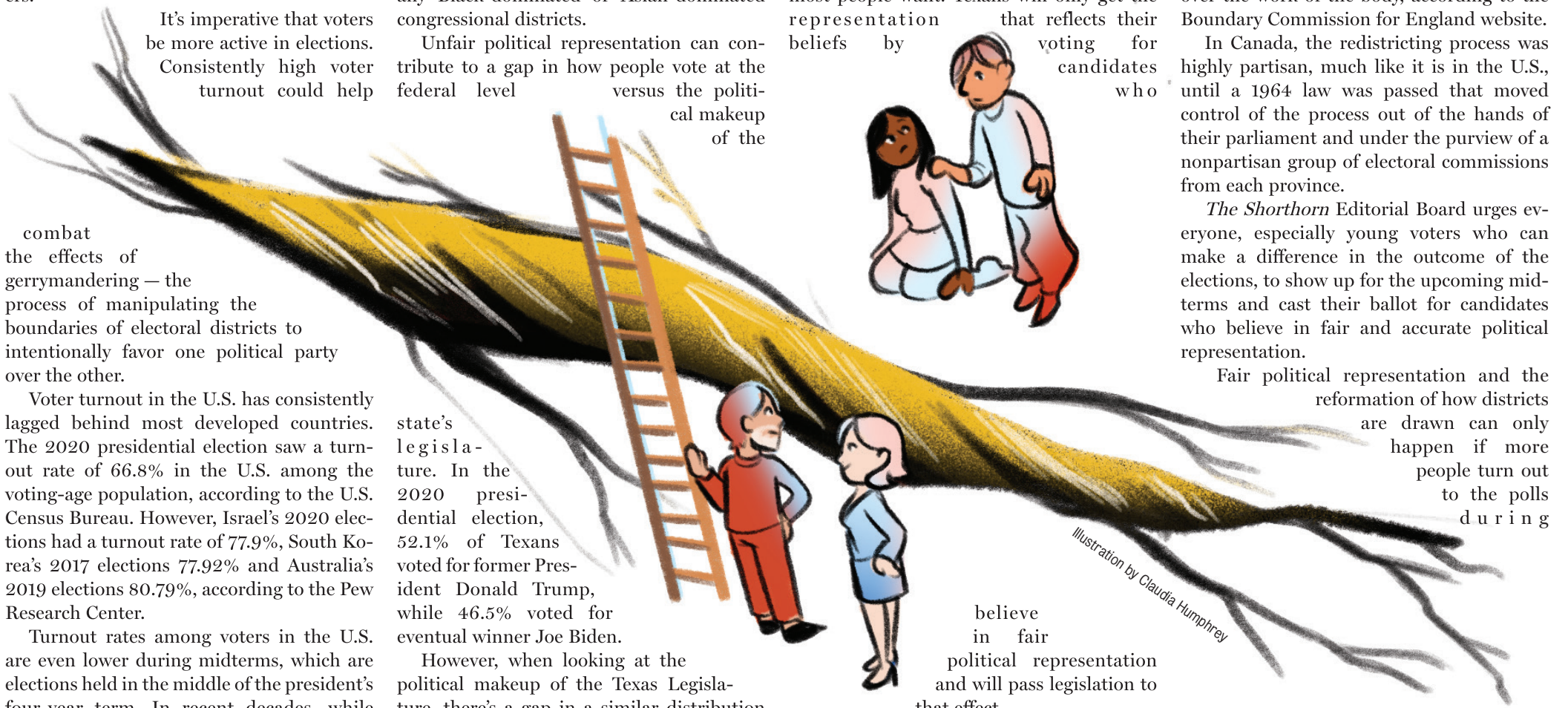


Illustration by Claudia Humphrey

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ELECTION 2022

Beto O'Rourke vs Greg Abbott: Perspective on key issues

A look into how the candidates view abortion, gun control, immigration and economy

BY MANDY HUYNH
The Shorthorn managing editor

As the governor's race approaches the homestretch, Texas Democratic gubernatorial candidate Beto O'Rourke and incumbent Republican Gov. Greg Abbott attempt to gather support to pull ahead in the election for the state's highest office.

O'Rourke has garnered support among young voters and recently surpassed Abbott in fundraising. But a new Texas Politics Project at UT Austin poll shows the current governor has pulled ahead among likely voters. The poll found that 54% of Texans would vote for Abbott, compared to 43% for O'Rourke.

There are multiple issues on voters' minds, specifically gun control, immigration, abortion and the economy. Here's a breakdown of each candidate's stance on the topic.

Gun control

Gun control debates were reig-

nited following a mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, which left 19 students and two teachers dead.

House Bill 1927, which took effect in 2021, made it legal for any person 21 or older to carry a handgun without a license if the resident isn't prohibited by state or federal law from possessing a gun, they have not been convicted of certain specific offenses within the preceding five years or are not on certain premises.

Abbott believes in protecting the Second Amendment, according to his campaign website.

"We need to get to the bottom of what is really ailing our communities, and that is the mental health that is leading people to engage in school shooting," he said during the Sept. 30 gubernatorial debate.

During O'Rourke's UTA visit Sept. 28, he said he will raise the minimum age to purchase a gun to 21 and implement universal background checks and red-flag

laws, which allow authorities to temporarily confiscate firearms from people who are deemed to be a danger to themselves or to others.

"We need change," he said during the gubernatorial debate.

Immigration

O'Rourke recommends focusing on technology like sensors and surveillance towers to enforce the border, according to his website. He also supports establishing more legal methods to cross the border to deter illegal immigrants.

During the debate, O'Rourke said Texas needs to work on a guest worker program to meet community labor needs.

Abbott launched Operation Lone Star in March 2021 to respond to the rise in illegal immigration, according to the Texas Indigent Defense Commission website. In May 2021, the governor issued a disaster declaration for the Department of Public Safety to use available resources to enforce all applicable federal and state laws to prevent criminal activity along the border.

Abbott said under the Biden administration, there have been more illegal immigrants. The state will continue moving migrants to different communities with a policy, written or unwritten, that discourages local law enforcement from reporting the immigration status of individuals, known as "sanctuary cities."

Abortion

The Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* on June 24, eliminating the constitutional right to an abor-



Gov. Greg Abbott addresses the media during a press conference at city hall June 2, 2021, in Dallas.

tion in the U.S., according to previous *Shorthorn* reporting. Following the decision, House Bill 1280, signed by Abbott last year, took effect Aug. 25, outlawing abortions in Texas.

In the past, Abbott has not supported abortion. Following the overturn, the governor released a statement stating the Supreme Court made the right decision.

During the debate, Abbott said women can access emergency contraception, like Plan B, and the state pays for these contraceptives.

During his visit to UTA, O'Rourke condemned Texas' recent anti-abortion legislation.

"I will fight to make sure that every woman makes her own decisions about her own body, her own future and her own health care," he said during the debate.

Economy

The state's economy ranks as the second most important issue among

voters at 14%, according to a poll from Texas Politics Project at UT Austin this month.

O'Rourke has promised to create "high-skill, high-wage unions jobs" in the energy industry, according to his website. His other priorities are reducing the cost for small businesses and lowering property taxes.

Abbott promised to cut taxes to deliver a tax relief package, according to his website. Business franchise and property tax were cut under his leadership.

In the debate, Abbott said property tax relief is central to the election, and he will never raise property taxes. He will drive down the ability of the local government to raise taxes.

Voters will decide Nov. 8 who will reside in the governor's mansion for the next four years.

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Presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke speaks to the crowd at the "Rally Against Fear" on Oct. 17, 2019, at The Theatre in Grand Prairie.

Social Media

continued from page 1

the line of truth, Ruehlen said. This can also take the form of outdated articles being passed off as new information or taking information out of context to fit a new narrative. People need to be diligent about ensuring that they are getting the right information.

"If people just knew the facts for what they are, and there wasn't a bunch of talking around things or cherry-picking certain details and omitting certain things, I feel like that could actually help," she said.

Unlike when Jordan was developing her thesis, she said that today, political misinformation and social media are huge areas of study because users may not even realize they're consuming false information.

"You're gonna go to the polls to make your voting decisions based on misinformation that you think is correct, which is actually probably more dangerous than being uninformed," Jordan said.

While the platform does provide an opportunity to expose users to different perspectives by giving everyone a platform for expression, the ability to customize who and what sources they follow creates a situation where people are trapped in a bubble with others of the same viewpoint, Ruehlen said. This can widen the already

severe divide between the two prevailing ideologies in the U.S. political scene.

Social media algorithms encourage cognitive dissonance, Jordan said. The algorithm shows people content based on who they follow and what content they engage with, so they will continue to see the same misinformation due to their social media habits indicating their political leanings.

The person then never encounters either opposing viewpoints or factual information, Jordan said.

Education sophomore Nyla Ruffin said she gets her news from Apple News or friends' posts on Snapchat or TikTok and will click on the links to read the actual article before going back and reading the comment section. If it is a topic she is really interested in or disagrees with, she will do her own research and dig deeper, she said.

"I feel like everyone should always check their sources like go to a higher-up or directly to where it's coming from," Ruffin said.

A study developed by Harvard Kennedy School in 2020 showed that 71% of surveyors agreed that social media companies should provide fact-checks of statements from politicians, with 86.9% of Democrats and 56.97% of Republicans agreeing.

People might also consider cross-referencing the information on social media against different sources or dig for information by going directly to news source websites instead of relying on social media as the only news outlet, Ruehlen said.

Jordan said that it's difficult to correct the misinformation, as humans tend to hate to admit that they're wrong because of a sense of vulnerability. To some, facing information that contradicts what they originally believed is difficult, as that means they would have to admit they've believed falsehoods.

"The more polarized an individual is, whether it's left-leaning or right-leaning, the more likely you are to consume and then share misinformation," she said.

Social media is a great opportunity to give people a platform so long as their opinions don't cross the boundary of disrespecting others and circulating false information, Ruffin said. Those with a following whose voice is extremely popular have to be extra careful about the things they say online.

"You're gonna go to the polls to make your voting decisions based on misinformation that you think is correct, which is actually probably more dangerous than being uninformed."

Amanda Jordan

advertising and social media lecturer

or anything like that."

Social media has the ability to not only provide a space where more voices can be heard, but it also keeps certain demographics in check, making it easier for people to recognize and speak out against discrimination, Ruehlen said.

"There are things that are hidden away that end up affecting our daily lives, how we do things, that we wouldn't have this information on if we didn't have [social media] today," she said.

Sharing private troubles on social media has also allowed people to introduce more relatable perspectives into the issues happening, Jordan said. Before, one may think that they're alone in dealing with certain issues, but social media plays a role in connecting people who have similar needs and helping them rally with one another.

People who share news on social media also have a responsibility to ensure that the information is correct. Otherwise, it becomes a game of telephone, and the facts become watered down, Ruehlen said. That can be extremely harmful to certain communities, like older generations who are not as technologically capable as their younger counterparts.

People who have been using the same traditional news channels or newspapers

for their entire lives have built trust in that source. When they see those same names thrown around on social media posts, they automatically assume they can trust the information attached, Ruehlen said.

But the risks associated with regulating the platform could outweigh the risks of misinformation.

Ruffin said regulating information would eventually shift a free speech platform into one that only allows a single perspective that everyone must

follow. The growth of social media in political campaigns is prevalent. In 2008, Jordan said most candidates weren't using social media, and former President Barack Obama's campaign was one of the first to use it to its advantage. Now, a campaign needs to have a social media presence.

Jordan said she has also seen Gen Z-ers completely "own" politicians for saying something backward or hypocritical on social media. In the past, such politicians would have gotten away with spreading false information at a debate, but now people can check their accuracy.

In August, Olivia Julianna, a 19-year-old Texan political activist, raised over \$2 million for abortion care after both, directly and indirectly, exchanging blows with Florida Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz on Twitter. The congressman previously said in a speech that overweight and unattractive women don't need to be worried about getting pregnant.

"I think everybody's kind of tired of the fighting and ready to, like, 'let's get some stuff done,'" she said. "You're starting to notice that there's a little bit of shift there. Candidates who are sharing information and trying to be as helpful as they can and reach their constituents are starting to see a bit more traction than those who are just using it as a tool for fighting."

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HOUSE MAJORITY KEY (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Alabama: A; Alaska: B; Arizona: A; Arkansas: B; California: A; Colorado: D; Connecticut: A; Delaware: A; Florida: B; Georgia: B; Hawaii: D; Idaho: C; Illinois: A; Indiana: B; Iowa: B; Kansas: C; Kentucky: D; Louisiana: B; Maine: D; Maryland: C; Massachusetts: B; Michigan: B; Minnesota: C; Mississippi: D; Missouri: A; Montana: D; Nebraska: A; Nevada: A; New Hampshire: C; New Jersey: A; New Mexico: C; New York: D; North Carolina: C; North Dakota: A; Ohio: A; Oklahoma: C; Oregon: B; Pennsylvania: D; Rhode Island: B; South Carolina: D; South Dakota: B; Tennessee: A; Texas: C; Utah: C; Vermont: C; Virginia: A; Washington: A; West Virginia: B; Wisconsin: D; Wyoming: B.

50 Years

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decides that it should be overruled because it's not up to the court to make decisions on various abortion regulations, rather than the legislature.

Finally, it grants power to states to do whatever they want, from banning abortion from the moment of contraception to allowing abortions up until the moment of birth.

"That's a potentially significant shift in the way the court views constitutional rights — that they do not evolve over time; they are static," Carpenter said.

Kyrie Minor, UTA's Turning Point USA chapter chair, said she was happy when she heard the Supreme Court's official decision in June, but she realized that while this is a victory, the pro-life movement has work to do, which is to take care of the children and the mother.

Thais Loaeza, president of both Women in Law and La Sociedad Hispánica, said she didn't think the overturn of *Roe* was real. She thought it was a women's right that people would have moved on both politically and socially from the past.

"This is one of those moments that people are gonna look back on and say, 'How did we live like this? Why did this happen? If we had advanced so much, why is this still a problem now?'" Loaeza said.

What people think about abortion

Opinions on abortion can be complicated depending on how the question is framed, Deen said. While people are not receptive to unlimited access to abortion at any point during pregnancy, they can be more open to terminating it during the early trimester.

Therefore, some may find the Supreme Court's decision shocking due to it being potentially more restrictive than what they would support, she said.

"I would rather [the ban] across the board be 10 weeks minimum," Minor said. "But if they wanted to just ban it completely, I would be OK with that."

Growing up in the conservative town of Katy, Texas, Loaeza said she had to stop attending church regularly with her family due to its anti-abortion stance and has told her mother she would only go during certain holidays. When news about the overturn circled, Loaeza and her mother had many conversations about women having the rights to do what they want over their bodies while her father just listened.

But it wasn't that easy in the beginning, as it took her many years for them to have civilized discussions about



File photo / Alexis Austin

Chemistry senior Frances Dijeh, accounting senior Will Gough and mechanical engineering freshman Edward Dijeh march as part of the UTA University Catholic Community at the North Texas March for Life on Jan. 16, 2016.

abortion, she said.

"There's a lot of things that are said to be political but shouldn't be. Like, a right over our bodies shouldn't be a political concern for men," Loaeza said.

Five of the current nine justices serving on the Supreme Court were nominated by presidents who lost the popular vote in their first term — three by Trump, two by former President George W. Bush. Four out of the five justices who voted to overturn *Roe* were men, according to *The Los Angeles Times*.

Minor said she doesn't care who made the decision since it was a good one, and the judges are there to interpret the Constitution to the best of their abilities.

When Minor was growing up, she used to be a "diehard hippie liberal," she said. The switch came when she began her senior year in high school, starting from the debate on whether transgender women are women. A while later, she began watching the abortion procedures on YouTube, which she said "kind of messed me up."

Now, Minor carries around 10-week model fetuses in her purse whenever people bring up abortion discussions.

In 2019, a majority of law school students were women, with 53.3%, an increase from 48.4% in 2000, according to the American Bar Association in 2020. However, by 2020, only 37% of lawyers were women. Among the 103 female lawyers surveyed, 70% said they were leaving or had considered leaving the legal profession.

As one of many women entering the law workforce,

Loaeza said she is nervous because there's not a lot of women, let alone women of color or Latinas, going into law, but she's also excited to make that difference and go above what people expect of her. She also tells her Women in Law members that just because they don't see many representations in the workforce doesn't mean that it should stop them.

"That only means that imagine years later, people are sitting in this exact room, and our picture can be up there," Loaeza said. "We can be the ones up on that board, we can be the representation. So just because we aren't currently being represented doesn't mean that we have to stop now."

While it is a quirk of the system, and he does believe people are starting to disapprove of the court, Carpenter said five justices being appointed by presidents winning with a minority of the popular vote is not as significant as how the court has ruled particular issues.

He thinks the justices are regarded as illegitimate because of what they've cast their votes on more so than who nominated them, he said.

As each justice gets appointed to the court over time, Carpenter said that they have different views of how they would view the Constitution. Therefore, the U.S. has gone from a court that expanded constitutional protections for Black people and other racial minorities to now deciding to leave certain matters for the state legislatures to decide.

While Trump nominating three justices is one of the tipping points for the overturn of *Roe*, Deen said the reason why this all became possible

was the grassroots movement of the pro-life supporters.

Once *Roe's* precedent was out, evangelical Christians became politically engaged and rallied around presidents like Ronald Reagan, she said. Then, they trained politicians to move through the ranks of elected office and established the Federalist Society to train law school students and to develop important players in national politics.

"It took them a while to ramp up, but ramp up they did," Deen said.

The subsequent effects

Following the Supreme Court's decision, voters in Kansas rejected a proposed state constitutional amendment that would have restricted all rights to an abortion in the state. It's the first state to vote on abortion rights since the *Dobbs* ruling.

While Minor thinks abortion should be illegal, she said that she doesn't force her opinions on others and that people have the rights to vote against anti-abortion legislation. And when people reject anti-abortion legislation, she has work to do.

"We need to convince the people that they're taken care of. We need to take care of the kids. We need to take care of the mothers. We need to take care of these families," she said. "Then I think all of this anti-abortion legislation will work in the best possible way it can."

Since the overrule, Minor said she and her organization have partnered with Pro-Life Mavericks to set up programs and volunteer with different programs and a pregnancy crisis center in Fort Worth. One of

the available initiatives is medical fees being covered for those who have low incomes.

Deen said she was surprised about what happened in Kansas, but she's unsure that it would translate into what would happen in Texas considering the former state is smaller geographically and the latter state also has a different Constitution and election laws.

In 2021, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1280, also known as "trigger law," which took effect Aug. 25 this year. The law automatically bans abortions unless the mother faces death or "a substantial impairment of a major bodily function."

Both the *Roe* overrule and the implementation of the trigger law have caused discourses regarding abortion laws across Texas. The day following the Supreme Court's decision, people gathered outside the Tarrant County Courthouse to protest in support of abortion rights.

Last month, multiple organizations, such as Progressive Student Union, Pro-Life Mavericks and UTA's Turning Point, gathered on campus to either protest or support the ruling. Prior to the protest, students from both sides expressed doubts about how important abortion issues are to voters.

According to an October poll by the University of Texas/Texas Politics Project, 73% of Texas voters said abortion is either "somewhat important" or "very important" for the 2022 midterm elections. The issue is ranked fifth in the "most important problem facing the State of Texas" poll, behind border security, immigration, inflation and political corruption.

Both Carpenter and Deen said that they are unsure how much abortion will factor in voters' minds in the upcoming election.

While he thinks the unpopularity of the decision affects the Kansas results and realizes people may not like the court's decision, Carpenter said they have a lot of issues to vote for, such as the economy, inflation, illegal immigration or crime, come November.

Deen said she's interested to see how and whether this energy

behind progressive issues will continue over time, as there are many "single-issue voters," whether that be abortion, climate change or gun laws for every election cycle.

If pro-choice advocates want abortion rights, Carpenter said, they have to focus on state elections and electing majorities in state legislatures and in governor's races so these officials can enact less restrictive abortion laws.

"They're gonna have to get politically active in the states and not so much at the national level," he said.

While Deen said it's good that people become more educated and pour all their energy into the gubernatorial race, she thinks all the attention was put onto the race because former Democratic Rep. Beto O'Rourke had the best chance to win a statewide office from his party, even if it's an uphill battle right now.

The governor doesn't write laws and doesn't have as much power as the lieutenant governor has in shaping state laws, as they, along with the Speaker of the House of Representatives in Texas, are the real power brokers in terms of lawmaking, Deen said.

"I can understand when people are interested, jacked up, paying attention, especially young voters, totally get it. Does it exactly match up to what the governor can do? Not so much," she said.

"We need to convince the people that they're taken care of. We need to take care of the kids. We need to take care of the mothers. We need to take care of these families. Then I think all of this anti-abortion legislation will work in the best possible way it can."

Kyrie Minor
UTA's Turning Point USA
chapter chair



File photo / Kayla Stigall

Students hold up signs March 18, 2015, while asking people walking by to sign their petition to take down the cross demonstration put up by the Pro-Life Mavericks on the Central Library mall.

ELECTION 2022

Five issues to watch during 2022 elections

As the 2022 Election Day approaches closer, here are the policy issues that could make a difference as voters go to the polls

STORY BY DANG LE
The Shorthorn editor-in-chief

ILLUSTRATION BY KIRBY TEEGARDEN
The Shorthorn staff

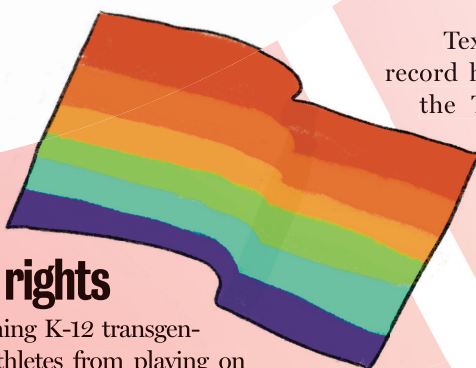
LGBTQ+ rights

From banning K-12 transgender student-athletes from playing on teams corresponding to their gender identity to Abbott enforcing the opinion that gender-affirming health care for transgender youth is child abuse, the Texas political landscape is driving many LGBTQ+ youth away from the state, according to previous Shorthorn reporting.

By May 2022, the discussion of favoring laws that would protect transgender people still create division nationwide, according to the Pew Research Center. While 64% of respondents support protecting transgender people from discrimination in jobs, housing and public spaces, only 10% oppose and 25% neither favor nor reject those laws.

However, 58% show support for laws that require transgender athletes to compete on teams that match the sex assigned at birth, 41% show support for laws requiring transgender individuals to use public bathrooms that match the sex assigned at birth and 41% favor laws that make it illegal for public school districts to teach about gender identity in elementary schools.

As more voting-eligible population in Texas identifies as members of the LGBTQ+ community — 11.6% in 2020, 12.3% in 2022, 16.0% in 2030 and 19.9% in 2040, according to an estimation by Human Rights Campaign — the opposing stance between two political parties on gay rights issues may make a difference in the upcoming 2022 elections.



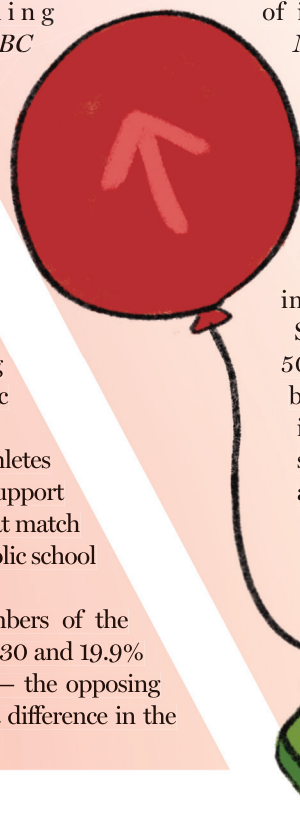
Inflation

Texas' June inflation rate is at a record high this year at 8.6%, according to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts website. But the issue is not exclusive to the state, as the nation hit a 40-year inflation rate high in June at 9.1%. Only 29% of adults approve of President Joe Biden's handling of inflation, according to News/Ipsos poll published in August.

In the poll, 33% of respondents agreed that the Republican Party handled inflation better, while only 23% trusted the Democratic Party on the issue. But 36% of respondents said neither political party did a good job with the inflation policy issue.

Since Abbott took office, Texas has added more than 500,000 new jobs and cut property taxes by more than a billion dollars, according to the governor's website. O'Rourke, instead, proposes on his website plans to bring down costs for small businesses, to raise the minimum wage and to expand access to apprenticeships, career and technical education programs.

The inflation rate continues to be a hot topic in the state, with over 2,000 respondents to a Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston survey published Oct. 6 believing that, on average, the general rate for the next 12 months will be 8.6%. They also believe that 45.6% of Texans believe the rate will keep increasing in the next five to 10 years. Therefore, it will be one of the ultimate factors in determining the upcoming election's outcome.



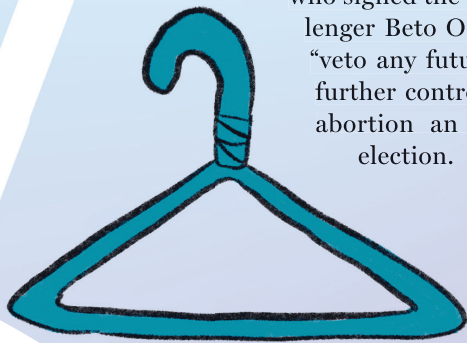
Abortion

In June, the Supreme Court made a landmark decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, the federal right to an abortion, and give the power back to the states. Thirty days after the official judgment, Texas enacted a trigger law that automatically banned all abortions unless the mother faces death or a "substantial impairment of a major bodily function," which was signed by Gov. Greg Abbott in 2021.

A few days before the ruling, the Pew Research Center said 61% of U.S. adults — 80% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning and 38% of Republicans and Republican-leaning — said abortion should be legal in all or most cases, according to its survey conducted in March.

However, a landslide victory for abortion access in conservative Kansas, where voters rejected a ballot that would have allowed the Republican-controlled legislature to tighten restrictions or ban abortion outright in the state, in August may give Republicans the shake-up and Democrats the hopes that the issue could mobilize enough voters in their favor.

While Kansas and Texas have different voter demographics and structures, the contrasting stance between Abbott, who signed the trigger law act into law, and challenger Beto O'Rourke, who has promised to "veto any future legislation that seeks to further control women," should make abortion an issue to watch this election.



Gun ownership

In May, a school shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, which killed 19 children and two teachers, once again sparked conversations about the current laws regarding gun ownership in Texas. Soon after, background checks for gun purchases in Texas rose, but it wasn't the largest jump in background checks this year, according to data from the federal government.

Just over a month after the Uvalde shooting, President Joe Biden signed bipartisan gun safety legislation into law, which expands background checks for prospective gun buyers between the ages of 18 and 21, incentives states to create red flag laws and gives states more funding for school safety and mental health resources.

However, there is still a wide partisan division on whether gun laws affect the number of mass shootings, according to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center between June 27 and July 4. Seventy-six percent of Democratic or Democratic-leaning voters say new gun laws will lead to fewer mass shootings, and 20% believe they will make no difference. Conversely, 80% of Republican and Republican-leaning voters say they may make no difference or would lead to more mass shootings.

In May, O'Rourke crashed Abbott's press conference about the statewide response to the Uvalde shooting. Considering the Democratic gubernatorial candidate doesn't support ownership of an AK-47 and AR-15 and proposes stricter background check laws, and Abbott had signed campus carry and open carry laws during his tenure, gun ownership is another issue that should draw Texan voters to the polls.



Health care

Texas has both the highest number and highest percentage of uninsured residents in the nation. While the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act expanded Medicaid eligibility to lower-income families in 36 states on or before Jan. 1, 2021, Texas is not one of those. In 2021, 18% of Texans were uninsured, double the national rate, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

The number of uninsured Texans may determine the state's economy, according to the Texas Alliance for Health Care report in 2019. The lack of insurance increases absenteeism and presenteeism among the employed and may make people drop out of the labor force due to poor health conditions.

By 2040, over 6.1 million Texans are projected to be uninsured, leading to a loss of \$178.5 billion due to both lost earnings and the value of poor health attributed to the lack of insurance, according to the report. The issue doesn't just affect low-income families, as 14% of families with income above \$100,000 had reported problems paying medical bills, some of which had used up most or all of their savings and cut back on food, clothing and basic household spending.

According to the Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston survey of registered Texas voters, health care is ranked as the top most important policy issue for 10% of registered voters — 17% of Democratic primary voters and 2% of Republican primary voters. The issue will play a factor in determining registered voters' support for a particular party or candidate in the upcoming election.

