



Keeping Countywide Voting as an Option

Message: Keep voluntary countywide voting in place and not put roadblocks in the way, making it unnecessarily more difficult for voters. There aren't any known incidents or realistic scenarios why countywide voting should be a security issue or linked to irregularities.

Do no harm. Don't make any needless changes to countywide voting that could reduce access to the polling places for voters.

What is countywide voting?

- About [90 counties](#) in Texas use the countywide voting program. Counties may voluntarily adopt countywide voting.
- This allows voters to cast ballots at any polling place in the county while also permitting counties to consolidate the number of voting locations offered, since voters can go to any of them.

What is the Lege considering?

- In his 2024 [interim charges to Senate committees](#), Lt. Governor Dan Patrick directs the State Affairs Committee, among other things under the topic of Maintaining Election Security to:
"...evaluate the countywide polling place program in Texas. Make recommendations to address countywide polling issues, such as increased wait times, longer travel distances, supply shortages, and reporting irregularities."
- Legislation has already been filed **including by Democrats** to eliminate countywide voting and electronic pollbooks
- Vote Centers: SB 76; SB 148
- E Pollbooks: SB 77; HB 1001

Why is this an issue?

- Texas election laws have already made it one of the most difficult states to vote in.
- The Republican leadership has continually made voting more difficult under the guise of reducing voter fraud. But this is a ruse because voter fraud is almost non-existent (and definitely doesn't exist on any significant scale)
- County wide voting has helped many voters to access the polls much more easily.
- This should not be a partisan issue. Republicans and Democrats benefit equally from countywide voting.
- Removing or modifying counties' ability to use countywide voting could endanger voters' ability to access the polls. Voters who work in a different part of town or the county from where they live, for example, could be forced to rush back into

their home precinct to get to the polls before they close - or in fact would not vote at all.

- Requiring voting only by precinct would cause logistical problems. Hays County would have to set up and staff 86 voting sites, vastly increasing expenses for staff and new voting machines and supplies.
- Every change that makes it even a little more difficult to vote can have the effect of decreasing the number of people who cast a ballot.
- We have "county wide voting" during Early Voting, with no problems. Election Day voting in this same manner is no different.
- If the law changes to allow precinct only voting, it would make it far easier to depress voting by putting fewer machines in polling places in areas with, say, college students or minorities, making their lines much longer. With the voting centers, because a variety of people vote at them, the discrimination might be a little more difficult to do.

History and Facts to back up your arguments, from Jon Leonard:

Early Voting, as long as I've been voting in Texas – 15 years – has been using the Vote Center model—that was long before Hays County went to the Countywide Vote Center model, which brought E-Day voting into the fold in 2019.

We've got more than five years of vote center experience under our belts here in Hays—with no problems. We know who voted, where they voted, and when they voted.

With the Hart-InterCivic Verity Duo system that Hays County has been using, also since 2019, we also create, process, and archive a paper ballot – and a paper trail, which also protects absolute anonymity for every voter's ballot. What was possible for years during early voting was, of course, possible on Election Day.

Establishing Countywide Vote Centers required not just the input of the parties on the County level, but a green light from Commissioners Court and ultimate approval by the Office of the Texas Secretary of State. The Election Office has been required to provide periodic updates to the Secretary of State office (SoS) regarding Countywide Vote Centers.

Election Accuracy - Prior to each election, the Election Office, consistent with the requirements of the Texas Election Code, also conducts a public Logic and Accuracy test, to be sure that programming of balloting equipment and tabulating functions are correct. This involves creating and "voting" every race in the upcoming election.

In conjunction with each voting cycle, the EO is required to conduct a public, partial manual recount – the recount could be particular to a specific precinct, a specific Vote Center, or vote type: absentee, early, or E-Day, to ensure that electronically tabulated vote totals match the paper vote totals.

Democratic Party representatives have participated in a number of partial manual recounts and the tallies have always matched. The EO does not get to choose which ballots/locations/methods will comprise the partial manual recounts—this is dictated by the office of SoS.

Countywide Vote Centers are a significantly more robust system than its predecessor, providing hard-copy verification of results, since the previous system was totally electronic, with no paper interface.

The system we are now using does not subsume a voter's choices into a QR or other code, readable only by computerized equipment; rather, it actually lists the choices made by a voter on the ballot itself, so the voter can examine her or his ballot to ensure that her or his choice(s) are correctly displayed so they can be correctly counted. And only when the voter is satisfied that her or his choices are correct, does the voter insert the ballot into the scanner for recording and, ultimately, tabulation.

Unfounded Concerns about Countywide Vote Centers appear to be based on

- a lack of understanding of the voting process itself;
- speculation, rather than an examination and unbiased assessment of evidence and data based on years of Countywide Vote Center experience in counties throughout Texas;
- a desire to return to a simpler time when most Texans stayed very close to home for work and school and could easily vote within the limited geographic parameters of a voting precinct; and
- apparently to make it harder rather than easier for Texans to participate in the electoral process.

There have been no issues with voting data in Hays County since at least three years before we transitioned to the Countywide Vote Center – and the issue had nothing to do with how or where we voted. We have had, literally, dozens of elections since then – school board, municipal, county, state and federal, party primaries, propositions, runoffs at all levels. In none of them have Countywide Vote Centers resulted in or contributed to any problems.

Additional benefit of Countywide Vote Centers we have seen a sharp drop in provisional ballots since the advent of Countywide Vote Centers. Before then, the largest single reason for voting provisionally had been that the voter turned up at the wrong precinct voting location—when a voter who resided in Precinct A showed up at the polling place in Precinct B to vote. The Texas Election Code required that those votes be ruled ineligible and not counted.

We now experience a significantly reduced volume of provisional ballots and the most frequent reason for the ineligibility of a provisional ballot is that the voter is not registered to vote in Hays County.