

THE NEWSLETTER IS REVIVED!



BCDP MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

March 2021

MUNICIPAL RACES

**VOTING REGISTRATION &
ANNOUNCEMENTS!**

HAPPY ST PATRICK'S DAY!

**THIS MONTH'S ADDRESS BY
THE BCDP COUNTY CHAIR**



Out of the cold, and Marching with Fire!

Dear fellow Democrats,

San Antonio at last has the blessing of clear sunny skies and Southwestern style temperatures once more after experiencing a winter weather storm not seen in this region of Texas for quite some time. Fallacies within the independent power grid in Texas once again as in 2011, were grossly inadequate to the challenges presented by prolonged sub-freezing winter weather. The recovery efforts are still underway despite the shortcomings of the Public Utility Commission that led to some staggering electric bills for energy customers statewide. This is an issue that we all need to address because storms like these have happened in the past and it is evident that we must be mindful for what could happen in winters to come. Now is not the time for complacency, it is up to us to continue listening to the needs and concerns of our constituents so that we can put those matters into real action within the legislative bodies at all levels of government.

The fallout from January's assault on Capitol Hill are still being examined by the Biden administration's Department of Justice where we are learning more shocking revelations behind the extremist attack. Even more disturbing news shows that there were members of the GOP who were less than outraged, while others actively took part in the Capitol Hill invasion. Both Republican Senators of Texas showed a severe lack of remorse for the attack, and even less so during the power outage of this winter storm. Senator Cruz took his family away to Cancun, Mexico as his constituents were freezing from the outage. Governor Abbott himself went as far as to blame windmill green energy as the culprit, which was only complete spin against our allies of green energy. It is apparent that our leaders are failing to support us let alone their own political constituency. We now understand inevitably that there must be some drastic changes in leadership, and it all comes down to how we can mobilize to the ballot box in the campaigns that are on the horizon.

The political turmoil in this maelstrom will most likely get worse before the breaking calm, and the Biden administration will be bearing most of the brunt of it in the halls of Congress as they navigate an already turbulent wake in clearing out the remnant of the previous administration's personnel in addition to the revocation of prior Executive Orders. The mission to vaccinate Americans is underway, with the FDC approval of the Johnson & Johnson doses which are being sent out even as this writing is being published. It seems that even at the pandemic level our Governor appears to want to invite more problems than solutions. Success for President Biden will not come easy, nor will the opposition enable him to make it so. His \$1.9 trillion "American Rescue Plan" package passed the Senate by a vote of 50-49 making it obviously clear that the Republican members of Congress will continue to create a divisive stance even in the direst of circumstances of a national depression created by their own personnel. What were the concessions given so that this bill could pass? We had to nix a \$15 an hour

minimum wage and lower unemployment payments to \$300 a week. The stimulus was hard fought but working families still ended up on the wrong side of the battle. This is where we pick up the baton and use this as a reminder of what we still stand to lose.

Another wrench being thrown into the President's pandemic recovery plan is our own Governor Abbott's lifting of the statewide face mask order. It seems that the bottom of the barrel gets much deeper, and this irresponsible action will most likely put Texans needlessly at risk and it is now up to all of us to keep our mission to "M'ask what you can do for your country" ever present as we walk out in public to remind others that we are still not in the clear when it comes to the eradication of this pandemic. District 3 Council member Rebecca Viagran noted that Gov. Abbott's revocation of this order is indeed "dangerous" and "life threatening" for everyone. District 9 Council member John Courage has "written to the Governor and to H-E-B headquarters regarding the continuing dangers that we remain in because of COVID-19 and the lack of understanding on respecting the health care of everybody in the state and everybody who uses H-E-B. I'm calling them out. I'd like them to uphold the rules that they had previously had for the sake of all of us who use that facility."

Democrats, we need to address the inaction and ineptitude of elected leaders at our highest levels of state government and send a message to them by encouraging fellow Democrats in the city as well as rural areas to begin registering to vote. Everyone's vote matters, and it isn't just your vote that is needed. Bring petitions, talk to your precinct chairs and coordinators to mobilize so that we can address your concerns to your elected officials. Be the voice of change that you all so deservedly merit. We are here to serve you all, so let us start not by talking of change but by taking action to ensure that change happens. Let not any more promises be broken by our leaders, we should all take our part in being an active role in choosing new leadership. It all starts now, the ball is in our hands and the buzzer is about to sound. It is time to put democracy to work. Que vamos juntos, Unidos para la justicia y salud de todo del condado de Bexar! Adelante vamos!

Remember,

Somos mas fuertes unidos!

Monica Alcantara
Bexar County Democratic Party Chair

Some Upcoming Meetings/Events:



Membership Meeting

Meeting Date(s)

March 13, April 10, May 8, June 12, July 10,
August 14, September 11, October 9, November
13, December 11 - 2021

Meeting Time

10 am - 12 pm

Meeting Location (Address with zip code)

Zoom Meeting until further notice - Check your
email for locations after 2021 vaccine release

North East Bexar County Democrats holds
regular monthly meetings with interesting
guest speakers to address current affairs
affecting our community.

Sandra Thompson
sj_thompson@icloud.com

Comm: (210) 571-5790

Event Name:

B & F Committee Meeting

Meeting Date(s):

April 14th (Weds)

Meeting Time: 6:30

Meeting Venue: Zoom

SDEC Committee Members

Joan Simoncelli – SD 19

Richard Gonzales – SD 19

Jen Ramos – SD 21

Max Lars – SD 21

Jamie Eickhoff – SD 25

Andres Lopez – SD 25

Rose Marie DeHoyos – SD 26

Robert Vargas – SD 26

**If you have questions for me, send to
precinct3195@yahoo.com or text me at 210-
365-4462. Responses to this email go the
mailchimp group account.*

Gina Sandoval
Deputy Chair, Precinct 3

CALLING ALL CANDIDATES!

If you live in a municipality outside of San Antonio, and have been thinking about running for office, or know someone who is, please consider one of these positions in your town. Everyone listed here is NOT a Democrat, according to their voting record and is being targeted by the Texas Democratic Party. Our goal is to get as many Dems elected as possible!

Alamo Heights
Council member PLC 2 Wes Sharples
Mayor At-Large Bobby Rosenthal

Alamo Heights ISD
Board of Trustees PLC 5
Bonnie Giddens

Board of Trustees PLC 7
Perry Shankle

Balcones Heights
Council Member PLC 3 John Halpin
Council Member PLC 4 Lamar Gillian
Council Member PLC 5 Miguel Valverde

Castle Hills
Alderman PLC 1 Joe Izbrand
Alderman PLC 3 Kurt May
Mayor At Large JR Treviño

China Grove
Alderman At Large Larry Keller
Alderman At Large VACANT
Mayor At Large Mary Ann Hajek

Cibolo
Council Member Dist.4 Ted Gibbs
Council member Dist 5 Mark Allen
Council member Dist 6 Tim Woliver

Converse
Council member PLC 5 Richard Wendt
Mayor At Large Al Suarez

Elmendorf
Council Member PLC 2 Tommy Hicks
Council member PLC 4 Manuel Decena

Fair Oaks Ranch
Council member PLC 1
MaryAnne Havard
Mayor At-Large Garry Manitzas

Helotes

Council member PLC 3 Bert Buys
Council member PLC 5 Paul Friedrichs
Mayor At-Large Thomas A. Schoolcraft

Hill Country Village
Council member PLC 1 Carl A. Register
Council member PLC3 Thomas Doyle
Council member PLC5 Allison Greer

Hollywood Park
Alderman PLC 1 Michael Howe
Alderman PLC 3 Oscar Villarreal, Jr.
Alderman PLC 5 Paul Homburg III

Judson ISD
Board of Trustees District 2 Shatonya King
Board of Trustees District 3 Debra Eaton
Board of Trustees District 4 Rafael Diaz Jr.

Kirby
Mayor At Large Lisa B. Pierce
Council Member At Large
Kimberly McGehee-Aldrich

Leon Valley
Council Member PLC 1 Donna Charlesil
Council Member PLC 3 Vacant
Council Member PLC 5 Vacant

Live Oak
Council Member PLC1
Mendell D. Morgan Jr.

Council Member PLC5
Aaron Dahl

Northside ISD
Board of Trustees Dist 6 Carol Harley

Olmos Park
Council member PLC 1 Erin Harrison
Council member PLC 2 Julliana Dusek
Council member PLC 3 Sharon Plant

San Antonio ISD
Board of Trustees District 3 Debra Guerrero

Sandy Oaks
Alderman PLC1 Charales Fillinger
Alderman PLC 3 Thomas Repino
Alderman PLC 5 Michael E. Yelton, Sr.

Schertz
Council member PLC 6 Allison Heyward
Council member PLC 7 Tim Brown

Selma
Council member PLC 4 Kevin Hadas
Council member PLC 5 Jim Parm
Council member PLC6 Ken Polasek

Shavano Park
Alderman At Large
Michele Bunting Ross

Alderman At Large
Mike Colemere

Mayor At Large
Bob Werner

Southwest ISD
Board member At Large
James Sullivan, Jr.

Board member At Large
Keith Byrom

Terrell Hills
Council member PLC 3
William Ochse III

Council member PLC 4
Peter Mako

Universal City
Council Member At Large
Bear Goolsby

Von Ormy
Commissioner At Large
Deborah Ivy

Mayor At Large Sally Martinez

Windcrest
Mayor At Large Dan Reese

Community Spotlight

It's about that time again... (back in the saddle)

The time to gear up for the municipal elections is coming nigh, and the BCDP Committees for Voting & Voter Protection and Integrity are working hard on making sure that Precinct Chairs & Coordinators will be ready to assist their communities by providing materials for Voter Deputy Registrar training, Vote by Mail applications, and ballot tracking during elections. If you need any assistance, please contact your local Precinct Chair, Coordinator, or call the BCDP Office at 210-504-0507 cell, 210-332-5436 landline to find out who represents & serves in your neighborhood. The website information for the State of Texas can be found at: <https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/index.shtml> and for Bexar County at: <https://www.bexar.org/1568/Elections-Department>. Bexar County Elections Division has created a permanent hotline for reporting Voter/Ballot fraud issues or activities at 210-335-8160.

Endorsement Announcement for the 2021 San Antonio Municipal Elections

The Stonewall Democrats of San Antonio, the progressive political voice of the LGBTQIA community has recently announced their chosen endorsements for the upcoming Municipal Elections which include the following Districts:

Mayor – Ron Nirenberg
District 1 – Favorable rating for Mario Bravo & Roberto Trevino
District 2 – Jalen McKee-Rodriguez
District 3 – Mark Vargas Jr.
District 4 – Adriana Rocha Garcia
District 5 – Teri Castillo
District 6 – Maria Cabello Havrda
District 7 – Ana Sandoval
District 8 – Non-endorsement
District 9 – Candidates Refused to Respond
District 10 – Favorable rating for Gabrien Gregory & Ezra Johnson

If you would like to receive more information from the Stonewall Democrats of San Antonio (SDSA), their contact information can be found on the BCDP Area Organizations & Clubs page.



Volunteer Training Session

Precinct Chair Recruitment and Training Committee

Hello Precinct Chairs, Coordinators, Party Officers, Volunteers, and Friends. Your Precinct Chair Recruitment and Training Committee has a lot going on in the next couple of months!

We have three courses to teach precinct chairs and coordinators about best practices to GOTV (Get Out The Vote). All courses include hands-on practice. The classes are offered monthly. Please note that you MUST have activated your VAN account before class begins!

Here's this month's schedule:

Precinct Chair Training Course #1: Developing Your Precinct Saturday, March 20, 2021, 1 pm – 3 pm via Zoom

In this course, we learn about organizing your precinct to GOTV in upcoming elections. Discussion topics include:

- providing information to voters
- having volunteer get-togethers
- voting by mail
- creating lists of voters in VAN
- GOTV calendar

Deadline to Register: RSVP by March 19th to receive the Zoom link and course materials. REQUEST VAN ACCESS at this link by the same date:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe-6SKRPPtegfynm0aZXq_ziLLaVKCTPPn0e07cTOyA2Yu36Q/viewform

Campaign 2022 Kickoff Conference

On Saturday and Sunday, March 27 and 28 BCDP will launch our 2022 Campaign with a kickoff conference. The conference will include opening and closing ceremonies, and multiple training breakout sessions for precinct chairs and coordinators to attend. After most of the training sessions have ended, Deputy Chairs will meet with their precinct chairs and coordinators in a breakout session to discuss the GOTV plans for the May 1 election. Most of the sessions will be held via Zoom, but there will be an in-person event as well for precinct chairs to pick up a new Precinct Chair Tool Kit at the Headquarters.

The conference will be fun, and informative set the stage for a Democratic victory in all of our statewide races in 2022. We hope every precinct chair and coordinator will attend!

More details to follow over the next few weeks.

John Goodman

BCDP Precinct Chair Recruitment and Training Committee

2021/2022 Municipal & State Calendar (Thanks Colt)

2021

Jan 12 – May 31.....Texas Legislative Session Begins
Jan 13 – Feb 12.....Municipal Elections Filing Period Starts
April 1.....Last Day to register to vote in Municipal Elections
April 19 – 27.....Municipal Early Voting
May 1.....Municipal Election day
Sep14.....Filing Period for Primary Elections Begins
Oct 18 – 29November Election Early Voting
Nov 2.....November Election Day
Dec 13.....Filing Period for Primary Elections Ends

2022

Jan 31.....Last day to register to vote in Primary Elections
Feb 18..... Last day to apply for VBM ballot
Feb 14 – 25.....Primary Early Vote
March 1.....Primary Election Day

Voter Deputy Registrar Re-Certification

We can take the course online or in person. Per conversation with Bexar
Elections, the upcoming dates, and link for online will be available in
January. - More information to come.

TDP Online Training Tip:

All Democrats are encouraged to take the free online training courses offered by the Texas Democratic Party on their extensive Training Platform. All courses can be found at mytexaslearns.com.

New folks can sign up here:

<https://txdemocrats.litmos.com/online-courses/>

We will be rolling out content for voter registration and the 2021 municipal elections shortly, but those are not yet live. In there you will also find some of the most popular courses currently — Activism 101 and Organizing 101. Candidates, activists, organizers, and Precinct Chair VAN Courses are available.

Jamie Eickhoff

SD25 Committee Member

Texas Democratic Party

State District Executive Committee

Current Events – Winter Storm Fallout

On Monday, the State of Texas Public Utility Commission announced the resignation of Commissioner Sherry Botkin, the second PUC Commissioner to have resigned following the recent power grid failure that left 4 million Texas energy customers in one of the worst blackouts in US history stemming from subfreezing temperatures in the wake of a winter snowstorm that claimed the lives of more than 50 Texans. The head of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, CEO Bill Magness was also summarily terminated where the former head council member was earning more than \$800,000 in compensation. His replacement, new PUC chair Arthur D'Andrea is now the lone remaining commissioner on the council earning a similar compensation. We should only hope that our legislative body takes the appropriate measures to finally enact previously proposed bills to either join the national power grid or at a minimum, implement weatherization measures for the existing energy infrastructure statewide. Per PUC Chair Arthur D'Andrea and other independent analysts, some energy customers might have benefited from the decision to readjust electricity market prices during the week that the storm took place, however others might have otherwise been harmed by the move. D'Andrea stated at a recent PUC meeting (where he is the lone chair to remind readers) that "I totally get how it looks like you're protecting consumers, but I promise you you're not. You don't know who you're hurting, and you think you're protecting the consumer and it turns out you're bankrupting [someone else]." Potomac Economics, which is the independent market monitor overseeing the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) in fact did recommend that the PUC initiate a retroactive market pricing for energy customers for the period of the blackout period. In their letter to PUC they stated that the commission kept their prices for energy much too high for nearly two days after widespread outages ended the evening of February 17. Those prices according to Potomac Economics, should have been reset the day after the blackout.

The real kicker to all of this? Look no further than these very findings:

"It's up to the state legislature to require minimum weatherization standards, which it has not done, ERCOT and some state legislators like state **Sen. Bob Hall** and **Rep. Tony Tinderholt**, have argued. Hall and Tinderholt have consistently introduced legislation and called for efforts to stabilize the grid, calling attention to the problem at Texas Electric Grid summits in 2016 and 2019. Abbott and Republican leadership did not act on proposed legislation nor did they listen to their warnings, these and other legislators argue. The Texas Legislature failed to ensure that power plants could operate in extreme weather conditions, officials from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation found in a revised report." (Blankley, 2021 *CenterSquare*)

Twenty-six power generators that failed during a 2011 winter storm also failed during a similar 1989 storm, according to a review of the 2011 event written by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation. That review was highly critical of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, or ERCOT, which oversees the state's power grid, for not making sure the private owners of power generators spend enough money to weatherize their equipment so that it can operate during extreme cold weather. "The majority of the problems generators experienced in 2011 resulted from failures of the very same type of equipment that failed in the earlier (1989) event," according to the 2011 federal report. "And in many cases, these failures were experienced by the same generators." The 2011 review quotes a state review of the 1989 storm: "The near complete loss of the ERCOT grid brings an awareness that, even in Texas, plant operators must prepare for cold weather emergencies ... This awareness of and attention to cold weather problems must be continued." The 2011 report continues: "Texas has now had that second event, and the answer is clearly that the corrective actions were not adequate or were not maintained. Generators were not required to institute cold weather preparedness, and efforts in that regard lapsed with the passage of time. It is also possible that new ownership or new plant personnel lacked the historical perspective to make these efforts a priority, at least in the absence of externally imposed requirements."

Currently, San Antonio State Representative **Steve Allison** (R-District 121) is filing utility reform bills, one of those is aimed specifically at weatherization requirements. "This must not be a suggestion or request for a study or report, but a mandate that such weather protections be in place to guard against the freezing consequences Texans are currently experiencing," Allison said. The other piece of legislation Allison is working on would require the PUC to require energy providers to enact procedures for requiring public school facilities in emergency priority categories for grid and distribution purposes. Essentially it means schools would provide food, shelter, transportation and other services in a crisis.

Information courtesy of MSN, CenterSquare, MySA, WFAA ABC Dallas & The Texas Tribune News Orgs.

Secretary orders review of VA's transgender policies

By Kayla Williams, Senior Advisor OPIA, US Department of Veteran Affairs

Earlier this week, Secretary Denis McDonough ordered a review of VA policies to ensure that transgender Veterans and employees do not face discrimination on the basis of their gender identity and expression. Once completed, this review would put VA policies in line with Department of Defense policies and President Biden's executive order ensuring that transgender Americans are treated with dignity and respect and are able to live their lives free from worry that they could be discriminated against because of who they are.

The policy review that the secretary is mandating is far-reaching, requiring VA to examine the entire slate of services that the department provides to Veterans to ensure maximum equity and inclusivity, including the delivery of medically necessary, gender affirmation care and procedures.

However, some of the most impactful changes could also be the most basic, such as those that would afford Veterans the basic dignity of being recognized for how they self-identify. To that extent, changes could include ensuring that VA systems are able to accommodate a Veteran's preferred name and pronouns when interacting with VA.

Ensuring better access to VA services could vastly improve the lives of LGBT Veterans, who are more likely to report poor health conditions and suffer from multiple chronic conditions than other Veterans. This disparity is partly a result of having to face stigma and discrimination, resulting in LGBT Veterans forgoing needed medical care.

The situation becomes more acute when examining the barriers that exist for the more than 134,000 Veterans and 15,000 service members who identify as transgender. The issues facing the Veteran community as a whole are magnified significantly for transgender and gender-diverse Veterans. Ensuring access to VA care and services could have a significant impact to this underserved community. Transgender Veterans, for example, die by suicide at almost six times the rate of the general population, and access to gender-affirming health care could significantly reduce suicidality.

Homelessness among transgender Veterans also increased by 89% between 2015-2018, even though it decreased by 48% among all Veterans. A strategy for reducing homelessness that addresses the specific barriers that transgender Veterans face could effectively end the prevalence of housing instability within the community.

Finally, better access to the array of VA Veteran readiness and employment services could improve the lives of transgender workers who are at greater risk of poverty and unemployment.

VA will be welcoming to all Veterans

The good news is that the department is not starting from scratch. Although VA still has a long way to go in ensuring that transgender Veterans are afforded the full scope of VA services that other Veterans are afforded, this policy review would build on the disparate efforts and programs across the department that are currently in place to ensure that VA is welcoming to all Veterans regardless of their gender identity and expression.

All VA Medical Centers, for example, have LGBT Veteran care coordinators who work with staff to ensure that LGBT Veterans receive the same level of care even after "coming out" to their providers.

Additionally, programs like PRIDE are training VA employees to deliver a group wellness class to LGBT Veterans that teaches skills for coping with the specific challenges they face, including accessing VA care.

These programs are bridging some of the gaps in services that LGBT Veterans receive, and a 2015 survey that showed 87% of transgender Veterans being always or mostly treated respectfully indicates that we are more than ready and able to fully close that gap.

Fulfilling our commitment

A review of policies and procedures across VA would standardize the services and support that we provide to LGBT Veterans and could amplify the pre-existing programs that are already creating a more inclusive environment for all Veterans. This review, and the changes that it could herald, would bring us closer to fulfilling our commitment to care for those who shall have borne the battle.

Kayla Williams is the Senior Advisor, Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA), performing the Delegable Duties of the Assistant Secretary, OPIA



Veterans Committee

VETERANS EVENTS IN MARCH

Event Listing

- 10 March** – PVA Veterans Career Live: Employer Session – Johnson & Johnson
4 – 5 pm EST
Registration Info: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)
- 10 March** – “Effective Communication” – Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces, 6 – 7 pm EST
Registration Info: ["Effective Communication" - Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces Tickets, Wed, Mar 10, 2021 at 6:00 PM | Eventbrite](#)
- 11 March** – Houston Virtual Career Fair for Veterans, 11 – 3 pm CST
Info: [Houston Virtual Career Fair for Veterans \(careereco.com\)](#)
- 11 March** – Virtual Hiring Fair: STEM, 1 – 3 pm EST
Info: [SUMMARY - Virtual Hiring Fair: Careers in STEM \(hiringourheroes.org\)](#)
- 11 March** – Road to Recovery: Vaccines and Reopening Our Community, 2 – 3 pm EST
Info: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)
- 11 March** – Conversation with Caregivers: Substance Use, 7 – 8 pm EST
Info: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)
- 11 March** – Virtual Engage Course: Positive Parenting Initiative (18 & 25 Mar Classes Available) 6 pm CST
Registration Info: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)
- 16 March** – Mental Health First Aid, 9 – 3 pm CST, Register with POC: tanya.mac@metocareservices.org

- 16 March** – Western Region Virtual Career Fair for Veterans, 11 am – 3 pm PST
Info: [Western Region Virtual Career Fair \(careereco.com\)](#)
- 18 March** – Military Spouse Entrepreneurship Workshop: Where do I Start? 4 – 5 pm EST
Info: [SUMMARY - Military Spouse Entrepreneur Resource Program \(hiringourheroes.org\)](#)
- 18 March** – San Antonio Soldiers’ Angels Veteran Food Distribution
2 – 4 pm CST @ Cowboys Dance Hall
Info: [San Antonio Veteran food assistance | Register - Soldiers' Angels](#)
- 19 March** – From Boots to Pumps: Women Empowering Women, A Virtual Panel, 1 – 2 pm EST
Info: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)
- 23 March** – Transitioning Army & Army Spouse Career Fair, 10 am – 4 pm EST
Info: [Transitioning Army & Army Spouse Virtual Career Fair \(careereco.com\)](#)

Contact the BCDP Veterans Committee:

POC: awongpromo@gmail.com

We need donations of hygiene & blankets
Items for homeless or needy Veterans!
Drop off contributions with a marked label
“BCDP Veterans Committee” at this address:

1844 Fredericksburg Road
San Antonio, TX 78201

Thank you for helping those who served!

Additional Veteran Services

VA Welcome Kit for Veterans

Download the VA Welcome Kit to learn more about the benefits and services you have earned or call VA411 at 800-698-2411. Visit the website: <https://www.va.gov/welcome-kit/>

No Veteran Should Be Without a Place to Call Home!

Free Help for Homeless Veterans Dial 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838) for 24/7 access to VA services for homeless and at-risk Veterans. Homeless Veteran Chat Confidential, 24/7 online support for homeless Veterans and friends. Please visit <https://www.va.gov/homeless> for more information.

A Message for GI Bill® Beneficiaries

On January 5, 2021, the [*Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020*](#) (P.L.116-315) was signed into law. This new law provides for the improvement and/or expansion of various GI Bill® programs, including the following provision relating to the Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) program and how it may affect you as a GI Bill® beneficiary:

Section 4302 EXPANSION OF ELIGIBLE CLASS OF PROVIDERS OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS OF EDUCATION FOR VETERANS.

Specifically:

- 1) Expands the VET TEC Program to transitioning Service members who are within 180 days of their separation.
- 2) Eliminates the “2 years in operation” requirement; thereby increasing the number of eligible providers.
- 3) Requires instructors to be “experts” for program approval requirements.
- 4) Increases annual funding for VET TEC from \$15 million to \$45 million per year due to the high demand and usage of the program. This allows VA to provide more student Veterans the chance to gain the high-tech skills sought by today’s top employers.

What do you need to do?

At this time, no action is required from you. We will notify you as soon as funds are available, and VA reopens the application window to eligible Service members and Veterans. We are committed to providing you with regular updates through direct email campaigns, social media and outreach about VA’s effort to implement these new changes.

If you have any questions, please contact the Education Call Center at: 1-888-442-4551 between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. ET, Monday-Friday. For timely updates about the law, please visit the [Isakson and Roe Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020](#) webpage and follow us on [Facebook](#) for updates on all of your VA education benefits.

Submitted by the US Department of Veterans Affairs Education Service

Additional Veteran Services (Continued)

Veterans Staffing Network for Veteran Job Seekers

Contact the Easter Seals Veterans Staffing Network for access to job seeking services to help connect Veterans to careers with Fortune 500 companies. Visit the website for more information at <https://www.easterseals.com/DCMDVA/our-programs/military-veteran-services/veteran-staffing-net-work.html>

Free Entrance to US National Parks for Veterans and Gold Star Families

The US Geological Survey website is offering America the Beautiful Lifetime Passes to Veterans and Gold Star families of fallen service members. Disabled Veterans can order directly from the website <https://store.usgs.gov/access-pass> and pay \$10 for an Access Pass, Parking ID hangar & Information brochure. Veterans and Gold Star family members can also visit any National Park, show military identification or proof of service to receive the Lifetime Access Pass.

The USGS Lifetime Pass



Are You a Veteran in Crisis or Concerned About One?

The VA Offers same day services in Primary Care and Mental Health at 172 VA Medical Centers across the country! *Make the Connection Resource Locator Contact the Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, Chat, or Text 838255. Also visit the following websites for more resources:* <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/78063/postvention-v-a-offers-support-suicide-loss/> www.https://operationpopsmoke.com

Do you have an idea for a story, or editorial to share? Contact us!

If you would like to contribute stories, editorials or would like to give any feedback to the BCDP Newsletter, please reach out to us at: bcdpcomms@outlook.com
All submissions must be in Word or Google Docs format & presented at **least one week prior** to the upcoming publication. The Communications Committee thanks each of you readers out there for helping us improve in delivering important information out to the community!

BCDP Newsletter Team

Communications Co-Chairs.....Joe Flores	Newsletter Editors.....Thomas Booker
Sara Aranda	Guillermo Osorio

Commentaries & Editorials

A Bloody Sunday to Remember

The year is now 2021 and incredibly we still have to remind our fellow Americans about the continuing, centuries long struggle for basic voting rights that should be afforded to every citizen in the United States. To this end, I would like to highlight this newest addition to the voting rights saga with President Biden's latest executive order that was signed just this past Sunday. This was targeted with the intent of promoting voting rights amidst a Republican led repudiation of voting access stemming from the previous resident-in-chief's loss at the voting polls. The date that the executive order was signed with also universally symbolic in that it was also the 56th anniversary of "Bloody Sunday", a tragic event that saw state troopers violently beat hundreds of African American citizens marching in solidarity with the likes of civil rights leaders such as John Lewis and Martin Luther King Jr. on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. Was it any wonder why President Biden wanted to make a statement given the date he chose to sign off on the order on this specific historic day? Of course, it was to remind leaders in Congress that access to voting is a basic guaranteed civil right that should be always safeguarded regardless of political bias, affiliation, or creed. President Biden made a recorded address to the Martin and Coretta Scott King Unity Breakfast in stating that "Every eligible voter should be able to vote and have that vote counted. If you have the best ideas, you have nothing to hide. Let the people vote."

The executive order directs federal agencies to develop strategic plans to address the promoting of voter registration and participation, with the implication of applying to be a state-designated voter registration agency and the provision of recommendations regarding leave policies for federal employees to vote or even serve as poll workers. States are already ahead of the curve in that they have programs that automatically registers their eligible citizens to vote unless they choose to opt out when visiting their state bureau of motor vehicles or departments of public safety agencies which also offer other initiatives including selective service, Medicaid, and SNAP benefits. The previous administration made a point to make federal agencies refuse to make any data available which could have enabled states to register voters in this manner under the pretext that it would not be permissible due to "health concerns".

We all know this to be quite the contrary, but that is par for the course when it came to their policies. This new executive order relaxes those policies and even goes as far to expand voting access for active serving members of the military as well as eligible federally incarcerated citizens. Additionally, the order also created a steering group to address issues with Native American voting rights to expand voter turnouts in Native communities within and outside federal reservations.

Imagine, there are Republican representatives who are supposed to be your voice in government that constantly tout their patriotism over the airwaves and yet they continue to clamor against the idea of expanding the rights of one of the basic freedoms that they have yet to truly concede to the American minorities in general. Correct me if I'm wrong, but that isn't what you are paying your tax dollars into their pockets for. No one should be profiting from barring the door shut on your civil liberties let alone brag about such actions in the media. The House of Representatives passed expansive legislation that would overhaul current campaign finance laws and outlaw partisan redistricting in addition to setting uniform standards for voting. H.R. 1 is an apparent threatening piece of legislation to the GOP who would chomp at the bit to stop it dead in its tracks in the Senate. My question would have to be if this is what they were elected for? Is it so terrible to make voting provisions to guarantee no-excuse mail in voting along with 15 days of early voting for federal elections? Is it so much of a threat to basic democracy that HALF of the US Senate feels the need to fend off any thwart to their incumbency? Personally, this type of response smells of cowardice and to go even further...it is an insult to minorities who have consistently over the years had to fight tooth and nail to simply be given the same basic access to voting rights as anyone else. To bar those that have served their time within incarceration from being once again an active participant in society with a right to cast a ballot? Have we no sense of decency left in our political opposition? The blatant racism in the previous resident-in-chief's words at the recent CPAC featuring an obvious Nazi symbol for a stage summed up the overall thought process for the GOP when he alleged that Democrats wanted to register all welfare recipients to vote. I believe that some of those recipients are also Republican voters, and if they feel comfortable shaming their own constituents then I feel they have a lot to answer for should they hold the position that citizens applying for basic assistance with groceries ought to not have the basic right to have a vote in their government institutions. None of the GOP voted for H.R.1 in 2019 let alone 2021 where it passed 220-210.

We are quite possibly in a more divided place in America, not to the extreme as it was before the Civil War ensued but it is getting to a borderline that is no longer comfortable nor should it be continued to be tolerated. I believe that the time to extend the olive branch of reason and forming a dialogue with those individuals across the aisle is upon us. We **MUST** take a moral stand here for common decency to defend those who cannot vocally or politically defend themselves. This is what separates us from the predators, and we cannot idly sit by and merely chatter about what ought to be done or post constant articles or opinions on social media that should have been better spent in person with real actions that would have made all of the difference in our precincts...our communities. Selfless service is often more talked about than being enacted, and it is my hope that you readers out there will take the gut check to challenge yourself to come up with a message that might resonate with your opposition on the other aisle. Isolating yourself from opposition doesn't make you less like your counterpart, it only makes you more similar. Robert F. Kennedy once took a trip out to Southern communities where he endured the worse criticisms imaginable, and he came away all the better for it. I believe that we have the capacity to follow that example if we remember what our civil rights leaders gave up for us all simply to arrive at this particular precipice in time. Now is the time for more action with words instead of making words that have never seen action.

- Submitted by Guillermo Osorio
March 9, 2021

Disclaimer: All commentaries & opinions belong to the individual, none of these views reflect those of the BCDP or any of its affiliated elected officials.

Bexar County Democrats!

We have new swag at the Bexar County Headquarters!!

Attached are photos of the items we have for sale:



BCDP Merchandise

M"ask.... What YOU can do for YOUR Country & Win \$25!!!

THE BCDP and its Fundraising Committee is asking **YOU** to support President Joe Biden's "100-days Challenge" to wear a mask to prevent the spread of the COVID virus in America by wearing a BCDP "JFK" or "BIDEN – HARRIS"!!!

Here's how...

The BCDP is offering two "limited production" styled masks for an incredible price of \$10 of each one available! What better way to support President Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris's "First 100 days...Americans...Wear a MASK!"

Help your Bexar County Democrats in 2021, with your financial and moral support we will continue the fight to TURN TEXAS BLUE ALL THE WAY THROUGH in 2022-24!!!

The punch line folks, is basically this:

"Sixty years ago, President John F. Kennedy challenged us by asking what we can do for our country...now President Joe Biden has a clear but simple ask – wear a mask!"



BCDP Area Clubs & Organizations

Alamo City Democrats

President: Mary Ann Ramos

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Bexar County Democratic Women

President: Jennifer Longoria

Vice President: Kim Robinson

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Bexar County Tejano Democrats

Chair: Peter Vallecillo

Vice Chair: Joseph Nazarof

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Mission Democrats

Chair: Maria Davilos Salinas

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Northeast Bexar County Democrats

Chair: Zack Lyke

Vice Chair: Bob Miller

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Stonewall Democrats of San Antonio

Co-chairs: Cynthia Benton / Bryan Gerard

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Northwest Democrats

Chair: Esmeralda Rodriguez

Phone: (210) 771-6984

Vice-Chair: Barbara Moschner

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“In a sense we have come to our Nation’s Capital to cash a check. When the architects of our great republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.

This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given its colored people a bad check, a check that has come back marked “insufficient funds.”

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is not time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism.

Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice.

Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

Now is the time to make justice a reality to all of God’s children.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. *I Have A Dream* speech, August 23, 1963