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Are the “Dog Days of Summer” Setting in on Harris County Taxpayers?

Series of summer special property tax rate election events coming, but still time to move them to November!

HOUSTON - Senator Bettencourt (R-Houston) is speaking out on behalf of taxpayers following the announcement by more than one taxing jurisdictions that special elections to raise property tax rates will be occurring throughout the Summer and better public policy is to hold them on the November General Election date. This is occurring so quickly that the Klein ISD Trustees are voting on a TRE election Monday, May 14.

I am worried about voter fatigue as well taxpayer’s pocketbooks!” said Senator Bettencourt. **“Rather than spend money on special elections these taxing jurisdictions still have the chance to do the right thing and schedule their proposed tax rate increase elections in November.”**

Governor Greg Abbott (R-Texas) granted permission for Harris County to hold an estimated \$2.5 billion Harris County Flood Control Proposition on a non-uniform election date on August 25th, the date of Hurricane Harvey’s landfall. In his approval letter, Governor Abbott highlighted, **“...billions of federal dollars either are currently available to Harris County or will be available to the county before it has the ability to issue the bonds requested...”**

In their letter to Governor Abbott, Harris County Commissioners Court stated, **“We must show the various federal agencies that matching funds are available now in order to apply for Harvey related grants that are already available.”**

However, the Governor also stated in his letter, **“Congress purposefully provided much of those matching dollars through Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds so that local government would not need to match the federal grants.”** This strongly suggests that waiting to hold the election in November will not stifle the flow of federal money nor change the facts that the CDBG funds do not need a local match.

At their quarterly Executive Committee meeting this week, the Harris County Republican Party nearly unanimously passed a resolution calling for *“Harris County, City of Houston, and Klein ISD governments to schedule their respective bond and/or tax cap repeal elections as part of and on the November General Election date.”* Resolution author Clint Moore stated, **“Rather than disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of voters, our elected officials should put these tax rate increase elections on the November ballot. I thought we were beyond choosing these sorts of obscure election dates, but I guess not.”**

Voters throughout Harris County may return to the upcoming May 22 Primary runoff election, a probable 9 penny June tax rate ratification election in Klein ISD the weekend of the Republican State Convention, a county bond election in August, and potentially the Mayor's announcement that he wishes to bust the voter approved property tax rate cap by November general election. **“It is a fundamental truth that our Republic functions better when more people are able to cast their ballots in a Democracy,”** concluded Senator Bettencourt.

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