Political Advertising and Elections

The Board of Trustees approved the Order Calling a School Building Bond Election at the August 21, 2017 meeting. Employees should become familiar with the “dos and don’ts” for political advertising as the District prepares for the November 7, 2017 bond election.

1. **What is a school bond?**
   Much like a home mortgage, a bond is a contract to borrow money and repay it with interest. State law requires school districts to only use bond proceeds to finance new school construction, renovations and additions to existing facilities, equipment, technology and the purchase of land. Bond proceeds cannot be used to pay administrative costs, teacher or staff salaries or other maintenance and operational costs of the district.

2. **Where can I find information about the proposed bond package?**
   Additional information regarding the 2017 Bond Package can be found online at [http://www.katyisd.org/sites/bonds/](http://www.katyisd.org/sites/bonds/).

3. **Can Katy ISD staff members participate in campaigning during bond referendums?**
   Yes. District employees can certainly urge a “yes” or “no” vote as a private citizen, outside of their role as a staff member and outside their contract hours.

   Employees may not use District resources (including staff or student time) for anything that would be considered political advertising. Political advertising is any type of communication that advocates a particular outcome in an election. However, Employees may share factual information related to the bond, such as materials prepared on the 2017 Bond Package website and the information herein when communicating about the election. Employees may inform members of the public where and when to vote (and even encourage them to vote), so long as the employee is not specifically telling someone how to vote (yes or no).

   In short, when advocating for a particular outcome in a bond referendum employees should not use district resources and should make comments independent from their role in the District.

4. **What type of information can employees share while on District time, using District resources?**
   Before sharing information, reflect and ask “is this factual communication without advocacy?” If so, employees are welcome to communicate with other staff members, parents or community members.

   Staff members may share facts or answer questions about a bond election through campus websites, campus newsletters, e-mails or other written communication. Communication cannot advocate the passage or defeat of the proposed bond referendum.
Some appropriate information to share may include:

- The 2017 Bond Package website at http://www.katyisd.org/sites/bonds/
- Proposed projected costs
- Voting times and locations
- Growth rates
- Performance data
- Student capacity
- Age/condition of buildings
- Tax rate effects (anticipated zero percent tax increase)
- Estimated use

Remember, employee email is considered a District resource. It is possible that advocacy emails may be sent to employees, but it is important that staff members do not forward any advocating emails to avoid inappropriate political advertising.

5. **How can employees campaign as a “private citizen?”**

Staff members are considered private citizens outside of school hours, off school property, while using their own resources, and after making it clear that they are not acting as a staff member.

As a private citizen, employees can campaign and state opinions through personal websites, e-mail, or any other written or oral communication. Employees may also display campaign materials (buttons, signs, posters) anywhere outside of the school. Bumper stickers on cars parked in school parking lots are also allowed.

However, employees may not use their capacity with the District in such support. If an employee wants to be identified in political advertising, he/she may state: Jane Doe, educator, 12 years experience rather than Jane Doe, Katy ISD (or name of campus) teacher for 12 years.

6. **What are some examples of inappropriate political advertising that would use District resources?**

Examples include:

- Advertising on teacher websites or newsletters, urging a “yes” or “no” vote
- Creating or forwarding emails supporting or opposing a proposition
- Displaying or distributing campaign materials
- Using the internal mail system to share advocacy materials
- Utilizing district equipment such as copiers, printers, computers or telephones
- Spending public funds for political advertising
- Participating in campaign fund-raising during staff time

Employees should avoid advocating phrases that include a “call to action:”

- “Vote YES!”
- “Best Solution”
- “Put Children First”
- “It’s the Right Thing”
- “Show That You Care About Education”
- Words such as “need,” “benefit,” or “important”
7. How and where can I vote?

**Early voting -**

*Fort Bend County Early Voting Locations and Hours*

- **Tompkins High School**, 4400 Falcon Landing Blvd, Katy
  
  Monday – Friday October 23-27 – 10am to 7pm  
  Saturday October 28 – 8am to 5pm  
  Sunday October 29 – 12pm to 5pm  
  Monday – Wednesday October 30-November 1 – 10am to 7pm  
  Thursday and Friday November 2-3 – 7am to 7pm

- **Cinco Ranch Library**, 2620 Commercial Center Drive, Katy
- **Irene Stern Community Center**, 6920 Fulshear-Katy Road, Fulshear

  October 23-28 and October 30-November 1 – 8am to 5pm  
  November 2-3 – 7am to 7pm

*Harris County Early Voting Locations and Hours*

- **Katy: Katy Branch Library** 5414 Franz Road, Katy, 77493
- **North Katy: Lone Star College - Cypress Center** 19710 Clay Road, Katy, 77449
- **Harris County MUD No. 81**, 805 Hidden Canyon Road, Katy

  October 23 - October 27: 8:00 am - 4:30 pm  
  October 28: 7:00 am - 7:00 pm  
  October 29: 1:00 pm - 6:00 pm  
  October 30 - November 3: 7:00 am - 7:00 pm

*Waller County Early Voting Locations and Hours*

- **Waller County Courthouse**, 836 Austin, Hempstead
- **Waller ISD Administration Building**, 2214 Waller Street, Waller
- **Waller Co. Library Brookshire Branch**, 3815 6th Street, Brookshire

  Monday – Friday October 23 – November 3 – 8am to 5pm  
  Saturday October 28 – 9am to 1pm  
  Thursday and Friday November 2-3 – 8am to 8pm

*In addition to the sites noted above, voters can vote at any early voting location within their respective county. For a complete list of early voting locations, please see the Katy ISD website.

**November 7, Election Day Voting Locations**

*Fort Bend County Election Day Voting*

- McMeans Junior High School, 21000 Westheimer Pkwy., Katy 77450
- Irene Stern Fulshear Community Center, 6920 Fulshear-Katy Rd., Fulshear 77441
- Merrell Center, 6301 S. Stadium Lane, Katy 77494
- Seven Lakes High School, 9251 S. Fry Rd., Katy 77494
• Cinco Ranch Branch Library, 2620 Commercial Center Dr., Katy 77494
• Beck Junior High School, 5200 S Fry Rd., Katy 77494
• Beckendorf Jr High School, 8200 South Fry Rd., Katy 77494
• Tompkins High School, 4400 Falcon Landing Blvd., Katy 77494

Waller County Election Day Voting
• Igloo, 777 Igloo Road, Katy – Precinct 418
• Katy Cane Island Event Center, 2100 Cane Island Pkwy., Katy – Precinct 419-420

Harris County Election Day Voting - Locations can be found on the Katy ISD website.

Early Voting Clerks and Addresses for mail in ballots:

Harris Co.
Stan Stanart
Harris County Clerk
Attn: Elections Division
P. O. Box 1148
Houston, TX 77251-1148

Fort Bend County
Early Voting Clerk
Fort Bend Elections
301 Jackson St
Richmond, TX 77469

Waller County
Early Voting Clerk
816 Wilkins Street
Hempstead, TX 77445

8. Where can I find more information?
Contact any of the Counties Voting Clerks or the Texas Ethics Commission at http://www.ethics.state.tx.us/pamphlet/B09pad_sch.pdf.