

November 2023 Voter Guide

Bastrop County TX

There are two topics on this election. One is a single local issue and the other topic is state wide Constitutional Amendments.

Local Issue:

Eliminate the elected position of Bastrop County Surveyor.

The County Surveyor duties have effectively been transferred to the County Clerk's office. The Bastrop County Surveyor, Mike Olson didn't even file for the position in 2022. While the County Commissioner's court appointed him County Surveyor, the Court has provided in this election to eliminate the position. The elimination of the position is supported by the appointed Bastrop County Surveyor.

The Bastrop County Republican Party recommends voting in favor of elimination of this position.

Constitutional Amendments:

Opinions are offered by several groups. The groups are identified with source documentation (link to source). A summary will be shown at the end of this Guide.

Texans for Fiscal Responsibility:

https://www.texastaxpayers.com/need-to-know-a-look-at-the-texas-constitution-amendment-propositions-on-the-ballot/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=ncl_amplify&utm_campaign=230817-the_fiscal_note_8182023&utm_content=ncl-m9cjcHAXgv&_nclid=m9cjcHAXgv&_nhids=wKDsz4w

Need to Know: A Look at the Texas Constitution Amendment Propositions on the Ballot

August 15, 2023 - [Andrew McVeigh](#)

[88th Legislative Session](#), [Constitutional Amendments](#), [Property Tax](#), [Spending](#)

This November, Texans across the State will go to the polls to vote on fourteen (14) amendment propositions to the Texas Constitution. These proposed amendments were passed by two-thirds of both the Texas House and the Texas Senate and require a majority of voting Texans to vote in favor of them to be officially added to the Texas State Constitution.

Here we will give a brief breakdown of the proposed amendments, and our recommendation on how to vote on each:

Proposition 1 (HJR 126)

Ballot Language (the language that will appear on your ballot): "The constitutional amendment protecting the right to engage in farming, ranching, timber production, horticulture, and wildlife management."

Explanation: This amendment will explicitly protect the right to engage in "generally accepted" farm, ranch, timber, horticulture, and wildlife. It does not, however, prohibit the Legislature or authorized state agencies from regulating such activities for specific purposes.

Vote Recommendation: "FOR" – We recommend voting in favor of this amendment, to further protect and enshrine private property rights into the Texas Constitution.

Proposition 2 (SJR 64)

Ballot Language: "The constitutional amendment authorizing a local option exemption from ad valorem taxation by a county or municipality of all or part of the appraised value of real property used to operate a child-care facility."

Explanation: This amendment would allow cities and counties to exempt all or part of the appraised value of a childcare facility's property from taxation.

Vote Recommendation: “AGAINST” – We strongly recommend voting against this amendment. Carving out property tax exemptions for businesses always result in higher tax burdens for other businesses, especially homeowners, who must pay more in taxes to make up the difference in lost tax revenue.

Proposition 3 (HJR 132)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment prohibiting the imposition of an individual wealth or net worth tax, including a tax on the difference between the assets and liabilities of an individual or family.”

Explanation: This amendment will prohibit the Texas Legislature from imposing any type of wealth tax on an individual or family (a tax based on net wealth).

Vote Recommendation: “FOR” – We recommended voting in favor of this amendment. Texans are already taxed too much, and taxing individuals or families based on their total wealth is immoral and would be an abuse of the State’s taxing authority.

Proposition 4 (HJR 2 – Second Special Session)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to establish a temporary limit on the maximum appraised value of real property other than a residence homestead for ad valorem tax purposes; to increase the amount of the exemption from ad valorem taxation by a school district applicable to residence homesteads from \$40,000 to \$100,000; to adjust the amount of the limitation on school district ad valorem taxes imposed on the residence homesteads of the elderly or disabled to reflect increases in certain exemption amounts; to except certain appropriations to pay for ad valorem tax relief from the constitutional limitation on the rate of growth of appropriations; and to authorize the legislature to provide for a four-year term of office for a member of the board of directors of certain appraisal districts.”

Explanation: This amendment would officially authorize the property tax relief package that was passed by the Legislature during the second special session. While many Texas politicians have claimed that this relief is the largest in Texas history at \$18 billion, that is unfortunately not true. It is the second largest in history, amounting to \$12.7 Billion in new relief (the largest was in 2007). Additionally, while this will provide some temporary relief, because of inflation, rising appraisals, and increasing local government budgets, most of the relief will be very short-lived.

Vote Recommendation: “FOR” – While recognizing that most of this relief will not be permanent and most Texans will continue to struggle under the crushing weight of property taxes, some relief is better than none. We recommended voting in favor of this amendment.

Proposition 5 (HJR 3)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment relating to the Texas University Fund, which provides funding to certain institutions of higher education to achieve national prominence as major research universities and drive the state economy.”

Explanation: This Amendment would rename the national research university fund as the Texas University Fund (TUF) and would establish an ongoing revenue source from the accrued interest of the economic stabilization fund.

Vote Recommendation “AGAINST” – Taxpayers already fund higher education by billions of dollars every year. Higher education already receives enough public support, not to mention that most of them are essentially publicly funded, leftist indoctrination centers.

Proposition 6 (SJR 75)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment creating the Texas water fund to assist in financing water projects in this state.”

Explanation: This amendment would create the Texas Water Fund to help finance water projects in Texas.

Vote Recommendation: “NEUTRAL” – While clean water is a very important resource, this amendment nonetheless will expand government and the spending of taxpayer dollars. We remain neutral.

Proposition 7 (SJR 93)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment providing for the creation of the Texas energy fund to support the construction, maintenance, modernization, and operation of electric generating facilities.”

Explanation: This Amendment would create the Texas Energy fund to provide grants and loans of taxpayer money to private energy companies, for new construction or maintenance. These grants and loans would essentially act as corporate welfare or government bailouts for energy companies.

Vote Recommendation: “AGAINST” – We recommend voting against this amendment because corporate welfare and government bailouts for companies are not the proper role of government.

Proposition 8 (HJR 125)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment creating the broadband infrastructure fund to expand high-speed broadband access and assist in the financing of connectivity projects.”

Explanation: This amendment would create the broadband infrastructure fund, to help expand broadband access in Texas, by spending billions in taxpayer dollars.

Vote Recommendation: “AGAINST” – Since this fund would essentially act as corporate welfare for broadband companies, and the money used in the fund should be returned to the taxpayers in the form of property tax relief, we recommended voting against this amendment.

Proposition 9 (HJR 2)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment authorizing the 88th Legislature to provide a cost-of-living adjustment to certain annuitants of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.”

Explanation: This amendment would provide a cost-of-living adjustment to the retirement payments of retired Texas Teachers.

Vote Recommendation: “NEUTRAL” – While this amendment would spend billions in taxpayer dollars, we also recognize that retired teachers have not had a cost-of-living adjustment, to keep up with inflation, in many years.

Proposition 10 (SJR 87)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation equipment or inventory held by a manufacturer of medical or biomedical products to protect the Texas healthcare network and strengthen our medical supply chain.”

Explanation: This amendment will provide medical and biomedical manufacturing companies (private businesses) with potentially billions of dollars in tax breaks. This is a tax break carve-out that will increase the tax burden on small businesses and homeowners.

Vote Recommendation: “AGAINST” – Since this will inevitably increase the tax burden on homeowners and small businesses to make up the difference in lost tax revenue, we strongly recommend voting against this amendment.

Proposition 11 (SJR 32)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to permit conservation and reclamation districts in El Paso County to issue bonds supported by ad valorem taxes to fund the development and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities.”

Explanation: Currently, El Paso does not have the authority to issue bonds to fund the development or maintenance of parks and recreational facilities. This amendment would remedy this restriction for El Paso County.

Vote Recommendation: “NEUTRAL” – While bonds inevitably mean increases in taxes on taxpayers, this amendment is local in nature and only affects El Paso County. We remain neutral.

Proposition 12 (HJR 134)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment providing for the abolition of the Office of County Treasurer in Galveston County.”

Explanation: This amendment would simply abolish the position of county treasurers in Galveston County.

Vote Recommendation: “FOR” – The current Galveston County Treasurer ran on a platform of abolishing the position (getting rid of his own job). This is a local issue, and one less government official means a smaller government overall. We support this amendment.

Proposition 13 (HJR 107)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment to increase the mandatory age of retirement for state justices and judges.”

Explanation: The current mandatory retirement age for State Justices and Judges is 75 years old. This amendment would raise the mandatory retirement age to 79 years.

Vote Recommendation: “AGAINST” – While the average life expectancy has increased, and the State could experience benefits from more experienced Judges serving longer, there is always the risk of more elderly Judges overseeing important parts of our Judicial system. As we have seen on the federal level cognitive decline is a real problem and could jeopardize justice.

Proposition 14 (SJR 74)

Ballot Language: “The constitutional amendment providing for the creation of the Centennial Parks Conservation Fund to be used for the creation and improvement of state parks.”

Explanation: Would create a fund to use taxpayer dollars to maintain, improve or create new State parks through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

Vote Recommendation: “AGAINST” – While conservation of natural resources and areas is important, there are other ways than spending billions of taxpayer dollars to maintain or create new State parks. We oppose this amendment.

True Texas Project

<https://truetexasproject.com/nov2023-elections/>

In November, Texans will be asked to go to the polls and vote on 14 constitutional amendments. Of those, seven will cost Texans a LOT of money. Since its adoption in 1876, the constitution has been amended 517 times. It’s become a semi-annual event. **But beware!** Seven of this year’s propositions are to set up a “fund” for one thing or another. **This is the legislature’s way of breaking the constitutional spending limits without having to actually break the spending limits.** *The 2023 budget that was passed by both chambers is the largest increase in spending in Texas history.* If these 7 amendments pass it will add \$12 billion to that total.

True Texas Project recommendations for 2023 Constitutional Amendments

*****NOTE: Our original post for Prop 5 had some incorrect numbers in the “cost to taxpayers” area. They have now been corrected and we apologize for the errors.*****

Detailed explanation for all amendments:

Proposition 1 – HJR 126 “The constitutional amendment protecting the right to engage in farming, ranching, timber production, horticulture, and wildlife management.”

Cost to Taxpayers: According to the TLO fiscal analysis, this amendment has no fiscal implications other than cost of publication.

The amendment does not prevent the legislature or authorized state agencies from regulating these activities for specific purposes in the future.

Vote Recommendation: FOR– This amendment would protect farmers and ranchers whose land falls within municipal jurisdictions from being forced out of business by over reaching municipal ordinances. While we believe in local control, many municipal governments have abused their authority. Food production must be protected. (Note: in another state, this type of amendment was defeated by the leftist green activists who are happy to end farming and ranching to protect the environment).

Proposition 2 – SJR 64 “The constitutional amendment authorizing a local option exemption from ad valorem taxation by a county or municipality of all or part of the appraised value of real property used to operate a child-care facility.”

Cost to Taxpayers: This amendment has no fiscal implications to the state other than the cost of publication. However, it does have fiscal implications for cities and counties who adopt the exemption.

This amendment allows cities and counties to exempt appraisal values of childcare facilities from property taxes.

Vote Recommendation – AGAINST – exempting certain types of businesses from taxes puts a greater burden on the remaining taxpayers. Exemptions like this have governments picking winners and losers.

Proposition 3 – HJR 132 “The constitutional amendment prohibiting the imposition of an individual wealth or net worth tax, including a tax on the difference between the assets and liabilities of an individual or family.”

Cost to Taxpayers: According to the TLO fiscal analysis, this amendment has no fiscal implications other than cost of publication.

This amendment will prevent the legislature from imposing wealth tax on individuals or families.

Vote Recommendation – FOR – we would always be opposed to a wealth tax. Texans are already taxed at every level of earning and spending, and a wealth tax would be a tax on success.

Proposition 4 – HJR 2 from the second special session “The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to establish a temporary limit on the maximum appraised value of real property other than a residence homestead for ad valorem tax purposes; to increase the amount of the exemption from ad valorem taxation by a school district applicable to residence homesteads from \$40,000 to \$100,000; to adjust the amount of the limitation on school district ad valorem taxes imposed on the residence homesteads of the elderly or disabled to reflect increases in certain exemption amounts; to except certain appropriations to pay for ad valorem tax relief from the constitutional limitation on the rate of growth of appropriations; and to authorize the legislature to provide for a four-year term of office for a member of the board of directors of certain appraisal districts.”

Cost to Taxpayers According to the TLO fiscal analysis, this amendment has no fiscal implications other than cost of publication. However, it does have fiscal implications for the taxing governments.

This is the “tax relief” bill from 2nd special session. It contains 4 parts: (1) temporary limit on appraisal value of non-homesteaded properties; (2) increase homestead exemptions for school taxes to \$100,000; (3) exempt certain appropriations to pay for tax relief from the constitutional growth limitation; and (4) authorizes the legislature to provide for a 4-year term of office for a member of the board of certain appraisal districts.

Vote Recommendation – FOR – This tax relief bill will provide very little, very short-lived tax relief, which will quickly be eaten up by inflation, appraisal increases, and governments’ reluctance to control spending and lower tax rates. But since some tax relief is better than none, we recommend voting FOR.

Proposition 5 – HJR 3 “The constitutional amendment relating to the Texas University Fund, which provides funding to certain institutions of higher education to achieve national prominence as major research universities and drive the state economy.”

Cost to Taxpayers: This amendment will cost about \$208 million the first year (taken from the rainy-day fund), and then about \$100 million per year after that.

Vote Recommendation – AGAINST – This is one of the “fund” amendments to keep spending off-budget. We already fund higher education by billions each year, and they have become primarily leftist indoctrination meccas. We recommend voting against.

Proposition 6 – SJR 75 “The constitutional amendment creating the Texas water fund to assist in financing water projects in this state.”

Cost to Taxpayers: This amendment will cost taxpayers \$1 Billion.

Vote Recommendation – AGAINST – This is one of the “fund” amendments to keep spending off-budget. The state is already spending money on financing water projects and not solving the problem. This fund is socialistic and is government ownership of means of production.

Proposition 7 – SJR 93 “The constitutional amendment providing for the creation of the Texas energy fund to support the construction, maintenance, modernization, and operation of electric generating facilities.”

Cost to Taxpayers: This amendment will cost taxpayers \$5 Billion.

Vote Recommendation – AGAINST – This is one of the “fund” amendments to keep spending off-budget. This fund would incentivize construction, maintenance, modernization, and operation of electric generating facilities. It provides loans and grants to electric generating companies, picking winners & losers. We already subsidize renewable and traditional electric generation with about \$6 Billion per year.

Proposition 8 – HJR 125 “The constitutional amendment creating the broadband infrastructure fund to expand high-speed broadband access and assist in the financing of connectivity projects.”

Cost to Taxpayers: This amendment will cost taxpayers \$1.5 Billion.

Vote Recommendation – AGAINST – This is one of the “fund” amendments to keep spending off-budget. This amendment is corporate welfare. We lobbied against this legislation during the session as crony capitalism and government interference in markets.

Proposition 9 – HJR 2, regular session “The constitutional amendment authorizing the 88th Legislature to provide a cost-of-living adjustment to certain annuitants of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.”

Cost to Taxpayers: This amendment will cost taxpayers \$5 Billion

Provides a cost-of-living adjustment to the teachers who are receiving retirement benefits.

Vote Recommendation – NEUTRAL – Everyone likes teachers! It’s hard to say no to helping them cope with inflation since they have not had a raise in several years. But it will cost the state billions.

Proposition 10 – SJR 87 “The constitutional amendment to authorize the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation equipment or inventory held by a manufacturer of medical or biomedical products to protect the Texas healthcare network and strengthen our medical supply chain.”

Cost to Taxpayers: This amendment will cost taxpayers \$29 million in the first 2 years, then approximately \$40 million annually.

Like proposition #2, this amendment grants property tax exemptions to a certain industry – medical supply equipment.

Vote Recommendation – AGAINST – exempting certain types of businesses from taxes puts a greater burden on the remaining taxpayers. Exemptions like this have governments picking winners and losers.

Proposition 11 – SJR 32 “The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to permit conservation and reclamation districts in El Paso County to issue bonds supported by ad valorem taxes to fund the development and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities.”

Cost to Taxpayers: According to the TLO fiscal analysis, this amendment has no fiscal impact to the state other than the cost of publication. It potentially could have a financial impact on the citizens of El Paso County in the form of higher property taxes to support bonds.

In 2003, the constitution was amended, giving conservation & reclamation districts in certain counties the ability to issue bonds for parks and recreation. El Paso was not included, so this amendment adds El Paso County to the counties enumerated in the legislation.

Vote Recommendation – AGAINST – we generally oppose all bonds, and this amendment would provide additional capacity for El Paso County to increase taxes to fund parks and recreation facilities with new bonds.

Proposition 12 – HJR 134 “The constitutional amendment providing for the abolition of the office of county treasurer in Galveston County.”

Cost to Taxpayers: According to the TLO fiscal analysis, this amendment has no fiscal impact for the State. Galveston County anticipates savings if the amendment passes.

This amendment would abolish the position of County Treasurer in Galveston County, which was requested by the current County Treasurer of Galveston County in the last campaign. In order for the amendment to pass, it needs not only a majority vote of the whole State, but also a majority vote in Galveston County.

Vote Recommendation – FOR – The current Treasurer campaigned on a promise to eliminate his position, which prompted this legislative action. Since one less government position means less government, we support this amendment.

Proposition 13 – HJR 107 “The constitutional amendment to increase the mandatory age of retirement for state justices and judges.”

Cost to Taxpayers: Indeterminate, since we cannot know how many judges would elect to serve longer.

This amendment raises the current mandatory retirement age for State Justices and Judges from 75 to 79.

Vote Recommendation –AGAINST– The legislation says “*expiration of the term during which the incumbent reaches the age of 79 years or such earlier age, not less than 75 years*”. As a result, some judges could serve into their 80’s since the retirement is required, not when the judge turns 79, but at the expiration of the term in which he/she turns 79. Extending this retirement age is a severe roadblock to young attorneys challenging long-term incumbent judges.

Proposition 14 – SJR 74 “The constitutional amendment providing for the creation of the centennial parks conservation fund to be used for the creation and improvement of state parks.”

Cost to Taxpayers: This amendment will cost taxpayers \$1 Billion.

Vote Recommendation – AGAINST – This is one of the “fund” amendments to keep spending off budget. There are other ways to create and improve state parks. This amendment is just an excuse to spend more money without having it show up in the budget.

From our friend, Bill Peacock, regarding the 7 “fund” amendments (establishing a “fund” for.....”):

None of these amendments would do much, if anything, to solve problems we are facing or improve the Texas economy. They are simply corporate welfare, with a little university welfare thrown in, designed to deceive voters into thinking they are serious solutions to our problems. Also, in almost every case, the Legislature is telling us they don’t trust markets—and the people in them—to work out solutions to our problems; they will fix the problems for us. Additionally, they take all this money out from underneath the constitutional limit on spending growth. It is just a free pass for the Legislature to spend our money.

Not only are these constitutional amendments greatly flawed, but they also will take out of circulation close to \$12 billion Texas could use to buy down the property tax. That would double the amount the Legislature is likely to provide this year.

A group we usually follow is the Texas Public Policy Foundation but they make no conclusions on yea or nay to each amendment. They pose pros and for your consideration:

<https://www.texaspolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2023-ConstitutionalAmendmentGuide.pdf>

Similarly, a group we don’t usually follow did another pros and cons analysis - The League of Women’s voters. You will find their comments, on occasion, slightly more liberal than most, but here is their info you can sift out the issues key to you.

https://s3.amazonaws.com/ClubExpressClubFiles/979482/documents/LWVTX-VG-2023-11-ENG-web_fn_1823306827.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIA6MYUE6DNNCCDT4J&Expires=1696430150&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DLWVTX-VG-2023-11-ENG-web_fn.pdf&Signature=fCY9gd1QttP2587eUapifwo5Xf8%3D

Go down to about P6 to start the propositions.

Constitutional Amendments Grid

Prop #	Topic	Texans for Fiscal Responsibility	True Texas Project		
1	Agricultural Property Rights	+	+		
2	Tax break for Child Care facilities	-	-		
3	Prohibit wealth tax	+	+		
4	Homestead Exemption \$100,000	+	+		
5	Texas University Fund	-	-		
6	Texas Water Fund	0	-		
7	Texas Energy Fund	-	-		
8	Broadband Fund	-	-		
9	COLA for Teacher Retirement	0	0		
10	Med/biomed tax exemption	-	-		
11	El Paso can Issue Bonds	0	-		
12	Galveston County Treasurer elimination	+	+		
13	Judge Retirement Age	-	-		
14	Parks Conservation Fund	-	-		