



We've All Read the Bill: How HB 6 Imperils Texas Democracy

- **Giving partisan poll watchers free rein to disrupt voting despite their notorious track record of intimidating Black voters and voters of color:** Partisan poll watchers are agents of political campaigns whose role is supposed to be limited to monitoring voting, but who have an unfortunate and well-documented history of intimidating voters in Texas, particularly those from communities of color. Yet Sections 3.01 and 3.07 of HB 6 would strip away the powers that election officials currently have to ensure that bigoted poll watchers don't harass voters or obstruct the process of voting, by prohibiting election workers from removing them from the polls except for a narrow set of conduct. Other provisions (such as Sections 3.02-.06 and 3.09) would likewise embolden these partisan actors with an ugly history to cause chaos at the polls.
- **Spreading fear to voters, election officials, and good samaritans to discourage their participation by further criminalizing Texas's electoral process, targeting election officials in particular:** Texas's elections are among the most overcriminalized in the nation, with over 100 criminal election offenses. HB 6 would make that problem even worse by creating a slew of new criminal offenses, while expanding the scope of and boosting the penalties for already existing offenses to extreme state jail and third degree felonies. More typical types of these felonies include criminally negligent homicide, burglary, kidnapping, and assault. Not only does each new criminal offense make voting scarier, but many of these offenses also target election officials specifically, who shouldn't have to live in fear that making an innocent mistake while administering elections will land them in jail.
- **Gutting the ability of election officials to communicate with Texans about voting by mail:** Section 5.04 of HB 6 would make it a felony for election officials to do anything that could be considered "soliciting" a vote by mail application. It is so broad that election officials could not even mention the mere existence of voting by mail -- or the process for applying for and submitting a mail ballot -- without fear that they will (wrongly) be prosecuted. Generic words of encouragement, such as a county posting "Don't forget to turn in your ballot applications by the deadline" on social media, would now be illegal.
- **Making it harder for Texans to get vote by mail applications:** Section 5.04 of HB 6 would also make it a felony for election officials to "distribute" a vote by mail application without a request from a voter first, a sweeping prohibition that would make it a crime to even passively distribute application forms, such as leaving them out on a table for voters to pick up. Further, county elections offices could no longer provide nonpartisan civic engagement groups, churches, or grassroots volunteers with application forms for *them* to distribute to voters without risking being prosecuted for a felony.
- **Targeting voters with disabilities and limited English proficiency:** Section 4.01 of HB 6 would require those who assist voters to disclose the medical conditions that render voting assistance necessary -- private information that the government should not require people to have to disclose in order to vote. It further mandates that those who assist voters inform the government of their relationship with the voter, even though voters have the right to choose who assists them. Section 5.04 would also threaten those who assist voters with a felony for even accidental violations of their oath.



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Organizations Signing On to This Statement

ACLU of Texas
ADAPT of Texas
ADL Texas
All on the Line
allgo
Avow
Brennan Center for Justice
Center for Civic & Public Policy Improvement
Children's Defense Fund - Texas
Civitech
Clean Elections Texas
Common Cause Texas
Common Ground for Texans
Dallas V.O.T.E.S.
Deeds Not Words
El Paso Desert ADAPT
Engage Action
Faith Commons
Faith Forward Dallas
Faith in Texas
Gulf Coast ADAPT
Houston Food Bank
Houston in Action
Indivisible TX Lege
JCRC of the Jewish Federation of San Antonio
Jolt Action
Korean American Voters League
Lake Highlands Area Moms and More Against Racism
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
League of Women Voters of Texas
Local Elections in America Project, Rice University
LULAC
March to the Polls
Mi Familia Vota
MOVE Texas Action Fund
National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Jewish Women San Antonio
OCA-Greater Houston
Personal Attendant Coalition of Texas
Planned Parenthood Texas Votes
Progress Texas
Public Citizen Texas office
REV UP Texas
SEIU Texas
Sierra Club, Houston Regional Group
Texans Against Gerrymandering
Texas AFL-CIO
Texas AFT
Texas Alliance for Retired Americans
Texas Civil Rights Project
Texas Freedom Network
Texas Impact
Texas NAACP
Texas Organizing Project
Texas Poor People's Campaign
Texas Progressive Action Network
Texas Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC-TX)
Texas State Teachers Association
UnidosUS
Voting Rights Lab
Workers Defense Action Fund
Young Black Lawyers' Organizing Coalition (YBLOC)