



Texas School Coalition

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Local Choice in Local Election Dates

Local school districts have flexibility in deciding when to hold bond elections, which give voters a chance to approve facility construction and improvements, and tax ratification elections (TREs), which allow voters to consider a slightly higher tax rate to support instructional initiatives. Some say that all elections should be in November, but the current flexibility in election dates is critical for districts to best serve their students and taxpayers.

Local flexibility helps local school districts manage resources responsibly.

- Districts often hold elections before school starts so they can have budget certainty.
- Many districts begin their fiscal year July 1.
- Forcing districts to hold November elections creates uncertainty during the year.
- The outcome of the TRE could lead to disruptive mid-year budget changes.

November elections interrupt the property-tax cycle.

- State law requires tax assessors to send out tax bills by October 1 or soon thereafter.
- Mandatory November elections could force assessors to send revised bills, or hold bills until after the election, giving property owners less notice regarding what they will owe.
- The November requirement could jeopardize taxpayer discounts for early payment.

Election dates do not determine passage rates.

- It has been argued that school boards want elections on low-turnout, non-November dates in order to increase the likelihood of passage.
- TRE elections tend to pass regardless of date: 79 percent passage rate since 2006.
- In November 2018, 15 of 16 TRE elections in Texas won approval from voters.
- Voters have proven they strongly support local schools throughout the year.

The current schedule for bond elections provides needed flexibility.

- State law now allows school districts to hold bond elections in May and November.
- May elections allow districts to start construction during summer.
- If all school districts are trying to sell bonds at the same time, borrowing costs could go up and the competition for vendors would drive prices higher.
- A single election date could delay security upgrades and other needed projects.

Charter schools are not constrained by election dates.

- Unlike public school districts, charter schools can issue bonds at any time.
- Currently, school districts can only hold bond elections in May and November.
- Limiting school districts to just one date allows charter schools a competitive advantage when negotiating with vendors.