

GoodPolitics

PRESENTS

# Elected Offices: Explained

IN COLLABORATION WITH



# What do your elected officials do?

We've worked with our partners at KUT and La Politica to produce a comprehensive list of every job description on the ballot in Travis County, Texas.

At the end of the day, politicians are running to do a job, and we're the boss. So, like any effective boss, if we want to hold them accountable, knowing what job they are running to do is a good start.

Use this guide as a reference to better understand the folks who represent you—from U.S. Senator to County Commissioner. We believe in informed, confident voting.

Like everything we do, it's nonpartisan and meant simply to inform you. So read it, share it, and let us know if you have any questions. We're here to help.

# SENATE + HOUSE

## U.S. SENATE

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
6 YEARS	TEXAS

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

Every state in the U.S. elects two people to represent them in the U.S. Senate, which is the upper chamber of Congress. They are elected statewide for six-year terms. Texas Sen. John Cornyn is up for re-election this year.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

U.S. Senators are elected to the federal government to represent each state. Senators' main job is to create, debate, and vote on bills that affect the entire country. They also have the sole power to approve appointments to the President's cabinet and nominees to the Supreme Court.

## U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
2 YEARS	DISTRICTS WITHIN EACH STATE

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

Texas has 36 seats in the U.S House of Representatives, which is the lower chamber of Congress. Their terms are two years. Austin is divided into 5 different Congressional districts.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives are elected to the federal government to represent districts within each state. Like senators, their main job is to create, debate, and vote on bills that affect the entire country. Representatives advocate for policies that would be beneficial to the citizens of the district to which they were elected.

# U.S. HOUSE DISTRICTS

TERM LENGTH 2 YEARS

## DISTRICT 10

### AREAS REPRESENTED

Covers parts of north and east Austin and stretches to parts of Bastrop and all the way to northwestern parts of Houston.

### ABOUT THIS POSITION

The District 10 House seat is one of Texas' 36 seats in the US House of Representatives, which is the lower chamber of Congress. It covers parts of north and east Austin and stretches to parts of Bastrop and all the way to northwestern parts of Houston.

## DISTRICT 17

### AREAS REPRESENTED

Stretches from Central Austin to Waco and College Station

### ABOUT THIS POSITION

The District 17 House seat is one of Texas' 36 seats in the US House of Representatives, which is the lower chamber of Congress. It stretches from Central Austin to Waco and College Station.

## DISTRICT 21

### AREAS REPRESENTED

Runs from Southwest Austin down to through San Marcos to northern parts of San Antonio, and includes Johnson City and Fredericksburg.

### ABOUT THIS POSITION

The District 21 House seat is one of Texas' 36 seats in the US House of Representatives, which is the lower chamber of Congress. It runs from Southwest Austin down to through San Marcos to northern parts of San Antonio, and includes Johnson City and Fredericksburg.

## DISTRICT 25

### AREAS REPRESENTED

Runs from Tarrant County in North Texas down the western halves of Travis and Hays Counties

### ABOUT THIS POSITION

The District 25 House seat is one of Texas' 36 seats in the US House of Representatives, which is the lower chamber of Congress. It runs from Tarrant County in North Texas down the western halves of Travis and Hays Counties.

## DISTRICT 31

### AREAS REPRESENTED

Includes all of Williamson County and most of Bell County to the north.

### ABOUT THIS POSITION

The District 31 House seat is one of Texas' 36 seats in the US House of Representatives, which is the lower chamber of Congress. It includes all of Williamson County and most of Bell County to the north.

## DISTRICT 35

### AREAS REPRESENTED

includes parts of six counties. Running from the Eastern part of Travis County down to the Eastern part of Bexar County

### ABOUT THIS POSITION

The District 35 House seat is one of Texas' 36 seats in the US House of Representatives, which is the lower chamber of Congress. It includes parts of six counties. Running from the Eastern part of Travis County down to the Eastern part of Bexar County.

# TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TERM LENGTH

2 YEARS

AREAS REPRESENTED

DISTRICTS WITHIN TEXAS

## ABOUT THIS ROLE

The Texas House is the lower chamber of the state Legislature. It consists of 150 members, who are on the ballot every two years. Along with the state Senate, it drafts and passes laws, policies and budgets. It meets for 140 days during odd-numbered years.

## JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of the Texas House of Representatives are elected to the state legislature to represent 150 districts within the State of Texas. Like members of the U.S. Congress, Texas Representatives create, debate, and vote on bills that affect the entire state. They also propose constitutional amendments to submit to voters, and they make decisions about the state budget.

## TEXAS HOUSE DISTRICTS

TERM LENGTH 2 YEARS

### DISTRICT 47

#### AREAS REPRESENTED

Represents a large area of far west Austin and a tiny slice of the southern part of the city.

#### ABOUT THIS POSITION

House District 47 is one of 150 single-member districts for the Texas House of Representatives. District 49 comprises a large area of far west Austin and a tiny slice of the southern part of the city.

### DISTRICT 49

#### AREAS REPRESENTED

Stretches from Sunset Valley and into northern Austin, covering much of the area west of IH 35.

#### ABOUT THIS POSITION

House District 49 is one of 150 single-member districts for the Texas House of Representatives. District 49 stretches from Sunset Valley and into northern Austin, covering much of the area west of IH 35.

### DISTRICT 51

#### AREAS REPRESENTED

Covers a large swath of southeast Austin, including the area around the airport.

#### ABOUT THIS POSITION

House District 51 is one of 150 single-member districts for the Texas House of Representatives. District 51 covers a large swath of southeast Austin, including the area around the airport.

# COURTS

## TEXAS SUPREME COURT

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
6 YEARS	TEXAS

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

Texas Supreme Court is the state's court of last resort for civil matters. The caseload of the Texas Supreme Court is determined by whether the court decides to grant a review of a judgment. The Court usually takes only those cases that present the most significant Texas legal issues in need of clarification. The court is made up of eight justices and one Chief Justice, who are elected to six-year terms in partisan elections.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Deals with lawsuits between people, businesses and organizations as opposed to criminal cases. Much of the Supreme Court's time is spent determining which petitions for review will be granted, as it must consider all petitions for review that are filed.

## CHIEF JUSTICE

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
6 YEARS	TEXAS

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

A chief justice or judge refers to the presiding justice of either the Supreme Court of the United States or a state supreme court. Chief justices of the state supreme courts act as head of the judiciaries in their states, in addition to serving as a justice on the court.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Oversees the Texas Supreme Court, but has an equal vote in decisions. The Chief Justice assigns the other justices administrative duties.

## JUSTICE PLACES 6, 7, 8

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
6 YEARS	TEXAS

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

Place numbers indicate one of the eight justice seats in the Texas Supreme Court. While each Justice is assigned a "place," they are elected statewide. The place designation has no significance beyond where they are listed on the ballot.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Deals with lawsuits between people, businesses and organizations as opposed to criminal cases. Much of the Supreme Court's time is spent determining which petitions for review will be granted, as it must consider all petitions for review that are filed.

# COURTS

## COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
6 YEARS	TEXAS

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

The Court of Criminal Appeals is the highest criminal court in Texas. It is composed of a Presiding Judge and eight judges who are elected statewide. Although all nine seats are elected at large, the Presiding Judge seat is separately designated from the other seats. Places 3 and 4 on the court are up for grabs in November.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

The court has ultimate say over criminal appeals, including death penalty cases.

## THIRD COURT OF APPEALS

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
6 YEARS	AUSTIN AREA

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

The Texas Third Court of Appeals is one of 14 intermediate appellate courts in Texas. The court consists of six justices—one chief justice and five justices—hearing cases from 24 counties.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Has intermediate appellate jurisdiction of both civil and criminal cases appealed from lower courts in the 24 counties. In civil cases, it has jurisdiction where judgment rendered exceeds \$100, exclusive of costs, and other civil proceedings as provided by law. It has jurisdiction in criminal cases except in post-conviction writs of habeas corpus and in cases where the death penalty has been imposed.

# COURTS

## DISTRICT CIVIL COURT JUDGES

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
4 YEARS	VARIES

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

District civil court judges preside over civil (non-criminal) cases. Most district courts deal with civil and criminal matters.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

The District Civil Court Judges preside over civil cases, like divorces, land disputes, contested elections and civil cases with damages greater than \$200. They also serve the entire county for four-year terms. Judges for the 53rd, 98th, 126th, 200th, 345th, 353rd, and 390th civil district courts are on the ballot this year.

## DISTRICT CRIMINAL COURT JUDGES

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
4 YEARS	VARIES

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

13 of Texas' 458 District Courts are designated criminal district courts, which means they deal specifically with criminal cases.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

The District Criminal Court Judge preside over felony cases. Each district court judge serves the entire county for four-year terms. Judges for the 167th, 390th, 427th, 450th and 460th (all representing Travis County) criminal district courts are on the ballot this year.



# COURTS

## TRAVIS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
4 YEARS	TRAVIS COUNTY

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

The district attorney is appointed by the governor to serve a four year term. Their role can vary by county, but they generally deal with felony criminal offenses and they represent state agencies.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

The District Attorney of Travis County is responsible for prosecuting felony crimes, assisting law enforcement with investigations, and presenting cases to a grand jury.

## TRAVIS COUNTY ATTORNEY

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
4 YEARS	TRAVIS COUNTY

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

The county attorney is elected to a four year term, and they only exist in counties that do not have a criminal district attorney. They generally prosecute misdemeanor criminal cases, enforce election violations, and represent county officials in lawsuits related to their duties.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

The Travis County Attorney prosecutes misdemeanor crimes, obtains protective orders for domestic violence victims, obtains involuntary commitments for certain mentally ill people and gives legal advice to County officials.

# COURTS

COUNTY COURTS AT LAW	
TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
4 YEARS	TRAVIS COUNTY
ABOUT THIS ROLE	
<p>The Travis County Courts at Law hear civil and criminal cases. There are 9 courts of law in the county, and each has a different specialty.</p>	
JOB RESPONSIBILITIES	
<p>The County Courts at Law preside over Class A (up to 1 year in jail, \$4,000 fine, or both) and Class B (up to 180 days in county jail, \$2,000 fine) misdemeanor cases. There are seven such courts in Travis County that deal with criminal cases, but only No. 4 is on the ballot this year.</p>	

JOB TITLE	COUNTY JUDGE
TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
4 YEARS	EACH COUNTY
ABOUT THIS ROLE	
<p>The county judge is the presiding authority on the commissioners court, which serves as the governing body of the county.</p>	
JOB RESPONSIBILITIES	
<p>County judges help govern county government. They're influential in providing safety protection, public transportation, parks, hospitals and buildings, providing zoning, waste, water and permit regulations, and levying and collecting taxes for county and municipal organizations. The county judge does not have judicial powers.</p>	

## COUNTY CONSTABLE

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
<b>4 YEARS</b>	<b>TRAVIS COUNTY</b>

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

Travis County is served by five constables who are elected by district to four-year terms. A constable is "an authorized peace officer and is the chief process server of the justice court."

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

County constables are the law enforcement arm of Travis County. They can issue traffic citations, serve as bailiffs in justice of the peace courts and forcibly evict someone per court orders.

## TRAVIS COUNTY SHERIFF

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
<b>4 YEARS</b>	<b>TRAVIS COUNTY</b>

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

The sheriff enforces criminal laws, manages the county jail, and provides security for the courts. They are elected to a four year term.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

The Travis County Sheriff enforces criminal law, manages the Travis County jail, including the Travis County Correctional Complex in Del Valle as well as providing security for the courts. They are elected to a four year term.

## TRAVIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
4 YEARS	TRAVIS COUNTY

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

The county commission is the primary legislative body for the county. It consists of four commissioners (elected by district) and one county judge, who presides over the commission. All members serve four year terms.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

The Travis County Commissioners are responsible for drafting and passing policies and budgets for the county government, similar to a city council member. There are five county commissioners divided up by geographic district. Precinct 3 includes much of Western Travis County.

## RAILROAD COMMISSION

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
6 YEARS	TEXAS

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

Has intermediate appellate jurisdiction of both civil and criminal cases appealed from lower courts in the 24 counties. In civil cases, it has jurisdiction where judgment rendered exceeds \$100, exclusive of costs, and other civil proceedings as provided by law. It has jurisdiction in criminal cases except in post-conviction writs of habeas corpus and in cases where the death penalty has been imposed.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Regulates the oil and gas industry, natural gas utilities, pipeline safety, the natural gas and hazardous liquid pipeline industry and surface coal and uranium mining in Texas. The commission is also responsible for research and education to promote the use of liquefied petroleum gas as an alternative fuel.

# BOARD OF EDUCATION

## BOARD OF EDUCATION DISTRICT 5

TERM LENGTH 2 YEARS

AREAS REPRESENTED

Includes Blanco, Caldwell, Comal, Gillespie, Guadalupe, Hays, Kendall, Kerr, Llano, Mason, San Saba and parts of Bexar and Travis counties.

ABOUT THIS POSITION

The District 5 Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) Member represents Blanco, Caldwell, Comal, Gillespie, Guadalupe, Hays, Kendall, Kerr, Llano, Mason, San Saba and parts of Bexar and Travis counties. The SBOE consists of 15 members who are responsible for managing the state's K-12 education.

## BOARD OF EDUCATION DISTRICT 10

TERM LENGTH 2 YEARS

AREAS REPRESENTED

Includes Williamson and Bell Counties, as well as parts of Travis, Freestone, Waller and Burnet Counties.

ABOUT THIS POSITION

The District 10 Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) Member represents Includes Williamson and Bell Counties, as well as parts of Travis, Freestone, Waller and Burnet counties. The SBOE consists of 15 members who are responsible for managing the state's K-12 education.

## AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
4 YEARS	CITY OF AUSTIN

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

The Austin City Council has legislative purview over the city of Austin.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

City council determines the city budget, local taxes, amendment of laws, and creation of ordinances and policies. These policies include things like zoning (which determines what is built in the city) as well as governing the many departments that comprise the city -- everything from the police department to parks to Austin's energy and water utilities. Under the current council-manager form of government, city council offers policy direction which the city manager then implements.

## AUSTIN MAYOR

TERM LENGTH	AREAS REPRESENTED
4 YEARS	CITY OF AUSTIN

### ABOUT THIS ROLE

Austin's mayor is the only member of the Austin City Council elected by the entire city.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Though the mayor of Austin is elected at-large, and therefore has a higher profile, the position is otherwise fairly identical to other members of city council, save a few procedural powers like running and convening meetings.

# Elected Offices: Explained

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## GoodPolitics

La Politica was founded by a group of Progressive Latinas who wanted a space to support, elevate, and educate our hermanas/xs. We envision a world where Latinas/xs always have a seat at the political table. Our goal is to create opportunities to discuss the issues we face in the Austin community, and move from words to action.

**Issues for Latinas, by Latinas.**

KUT and KUTX create experiences that deepen understanding and connect people. We are committed to authenticity, craft, context and the unique power of the human voice in all its forms.

GoodPolitics makes the democratic process approachable, human and fun. We believe every American plays a vital role in building a more equitable country, and we're here to help you get started.

# **Have questions about voting or the upcoming election?**

We're here to help! DM us on [Instagram](#) or  
[Twitter](#) @ourgoodpolitics.

For all things Election 2020 visit  
[ourgoodpolitics.org](http://ourgoodpolitics.org).

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