

Wes Benedict For Williamson County Judge Leave of Independent Voters Survey

1/26/2022

1. Two State Supreme Court rulings (the so-called Boeing and the Houston Partnership rulings) allow all sorts of contracts the government holds with private businesses to be sealed from public view. The government or the private entity simply must claim a record's release would lead to a competitive disadvantage – not a decisive disadvantage, but any disadvantage. This locks out citizen review of government spending involving untold hundreds of millions, if not, billions of taxpayer dollars. See more here at Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas ([FOIFT](#)).

QUESTION: How committed are you to requiring public transparency of the terms and amount of public funds spent on all contracts between governmental entities and private companies?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ N/A

Other (please specify)

OK

2. The next four questions are about electoral reforms.

QUESTION: Please rate your support for giving Texans more choices at the ballot box by enacting fair rules for independent candidates and minor parties to get on the ballot. ([More at LIV.](#))

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ N/A

Other (please specify)

OK

3. QUESTION: Please rate your support for protecting the rights of citizens to propose reforms by petition for a public vote in municipalities enshrined in the Texas Constitution in 1912 and extending those rights to petition for a public vote on statewide issues, enjoyed by citizens in 26 states. Note: Electoral reforms for term limits, gerrymandering reform and rank choice voting have been enacted through citizen's petitions. (More [here](#) Municipal Petition rights and [here](#) for Statewide I&R.)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ N/A

Other (please specify)

OK

4. QUESTION: Please rate your support for ending “gerrymandering” – the manipulation of district boundaries to favor the party in power – with an independent nonpartisan (not “bi-partisan”) citizen redistricting process. ([More at LIV.](#))

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ N/A

Other (please specify)

OK

5. QUESTION: Please rate your support for a ranked-choice voting system, a system in which voters rank candidates by preference, the effect of which is tamping down on negative campaigning (“dirty tricks”) and saving money by eliminating costly and confusing runoffs. (More at [Rank Choice Voting for Texas](#))

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ N/A

Other (please specify)

OK

6. The next two questions are about ending "pay-to-play" (aka "cronyism") in Texas State Agencies:

QUESTION: Please rate your support for before serving on a State Commission (Railroad Commission which regulates oil and gas, Public Utility Commission, Texas Water Development Board, and the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality), commissioners should be required to divest from shares or bonds in the industries they regulate. (Proposed by the nonprofit Commission Shift for the Railroad Commission - [see their full report.](#))

N/A

Other (please specify)

OK

7. **QUESTION: Please rate your support for restoring public confidence in elected officials by closing the revolving door with a permanent ban on lobbying by former commissioners of their prior agency. (See Open Secrets [here](#) and this report by Texans for Public Justice, [especially pg. 44.](#))**

N/A

Other (please specify)

OK

8. The next two questions are about ending taxpayer giveaways (aka "corporate welfare") in Texas: In 1987, Texas voters narrowly passed [HJR 5](#), listed as [Proposition 4 at 51.65%](#), which authorized the legislature to provide for the creation of economic development programs and to make loans and grants in connection with such programs. The amendment authorized tax abatements for corporations that would otherwise violate the Texas Constitution's "equal and uniform" taxation requirement. [This](#) recent Houston Chronicle article details substantial abuses of 380 and 381 incentive agreements employed by cities and counties. [This](#) article details School Board's chapter 313 subsidy abuses and Texas State Comptroller Glenn Hager's transparency transgressions. (Also see [LIV's article](#) on Samsung Subsidies.)

QUESTION: To what extent to you support giving Texans the opportunity to vote on repealing the constitutional provision authorizing tax abatements for corporations (Proposition 4, HJR 5).

N/A

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ○

Other (please specify)

OK

9. **QUESTION: Please rate your support for legislation allowing any affected taxpayer standing (the right to sue) when their taxpayer dollars are obviously being abused by a public subsidy program in Texas and requiring more scrutiny by the Attorney General?**

N/A

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ○

Other (please specify)

OK

QUESTION: To what extent do you support changing state law to reform property and sales taxes going to fund real estate development projects through tax increment zones unless developers show by clear and convincing evidence that there is an overwhelming public benefit and public funds are the only way to get any development.

N/A

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ○

Other (please specify)

OK

QUESTION: To what extent do you support prohibiting mass movement of groundwater before other options, including conservation, have been vigorously implemented and it can be reasonably asserted by local groundwater authorities that it will not harm local supply, the aquifer(s) and related surface waters (tributaries, streams, rivers...). Give Groundwater Conservation Districts clear authority to, when necessary, reduce production. ([Visit LIV water page.](#))

N/A

Other (please specify)

OK

12. **QUESTION: To what extent do you support Introducing legislation modeled on State Rep. John Cyrier’s [HB 3996](#) for a limited Sunset Review of San Antonio Water System, including a detailed performance audit of the Vista Ridge water pipeline project and an analysis of how the project was approved and its impact on receiving and donor communities. (See [SAWS Accountability Act, Paragraph 5](#). The SAWS Accountability Act petition for a public vote in 2020 received 12,000 signatures of San Antonio municipal voters.**

N/A

Other (please specify)

At this time I don't understand this sufficiently to respond.

OK

13. **QUESTION: To what extent do you support redirecting river authorities (i.e. LCRA, Lower Colorado River Authority) from participation in groundwater development to their core mission of sustaining surface water flow and protecting the surface-groundwater exchange. See LIV Advisor, James Murphy, Esq. [testimony to Sunset Commission, 2018](#).**

N/A

Other (please specify)

At this time I don't understand this sufficiently enough to respond.

OK

14. The following is one question related to the failure of the Texas Grid in February, 2021.

QUESTION: To what extent do you support the Governor and the Legislature, with full participation of all relevant stakeholders and experts (excluding special interests which reaped profits off the grid failure) should work together to establish an INDEPENDENT COMMISSION to:

1. **To determine steps that should be taken to ensure such a failure does not occur again, and**
2. **To make an accurate assessment of the damage caused and the number of lives lost, and**
3. **To perform a complete accounting on the approximately \$50 billion that was charged during the crisis and to provide a plan to claw back the unjustified profits.**

N/A

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ○

Other (please specify)

OK

QUESTION: To what extent do you support a more robust source of private investment by developers to pay more for the costs of new infrastructure (roads, water, public safety, etc.)? This would include additional impact fees on new developments and allow counties, not just cities, to impose impact fees on new developments. (Hint: Compare the fast-growth state of Florida's impact fees to Texas. Florida imposes a set of ten impact fees, including for new police, new fire and new school facilities. Texas imposes only four impact fees and no fees for police, fire and schools. ([See Impact Fee Graph displayed on this LIV page.](#))

N/A

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ○

Other (please specify)

OK

16. We support the independent and small farmers of Texas and hope you do too. Our friends at the nonprofit [Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance](#) suggest this question to protect local farms:

QUESTION: COVID has shown that the corporate consolidation of our agricultural and food systems poses a significant threat to food security in this country. Both shortages and inflationary prices have been closely connected to the dominance of mega-corporations that use the regulatory system as a tool for disadvantaging small businesses. To what extent will you support changes to the regulatory system to address the current scale-prejudicial barriers for small farmers and food businesses?

N/A

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ○

Other (please specify)

OK

QUESTION: To what extent will you support efforts to educate officials and the general public, to develop policy, and support legislation that will protect private property rights in Texas from eminent domain abuse. (LIV follows the efforts of [Texas Landowners for Eminent Domain Reform](#) to inform our efforts.)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Other (please specify)

OK

18. If you are a candidate or voter who wants to stay in touch, please fill this out.

Name

Wes Benedict

Office you are running for in
2022

Williamson County Judge

Website

wesbenedict.com

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County

Williamson

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