

Healthcare Is On the Ballot

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Have you voted yet?

Vote. Period. Don't miss this one, and don't make excuses this time for not doing your civic duty. Don't miss this election. Early voting ends tomorrow – find out where you can vote in Dallas County here. November 6th is Election Day. Remember many people living here in our community do not have the privilege of voting, so your vote stands to represent not only your choice, but our community as a whole. Your vote also becomes part of what we end up with for our government, our referendums, and other ballot initiatives.

Your vote in the 2018 midterm election ultimately shapes the future of healthcare in this country. Hanging in the balance, yet again, is the future of ObamaCare or the Affordable Care Act. If Republicans keep majorities in the House and Senate, we can expect ObamaCare will end, bringing back the possibility of coverage problems for people with pre-existing conditions. If Democrats gain either in the House or Senate, then likely ObamaCare would stay; however, constant threats remain, including a court case (Texas vs. United States) that could reach the Supreme Court. This is why voting all the way down your ballot including judges is always important.

State elections are also critical this year. While Republicans hold solid majorities in both the Texas House and Senate, flipping a few seats in the Senate could change their three-fifth's majority which would stop the ability to bring legislation to the Senate floor without the support of Democrats. Changing seats in the House could impact the election of the next Speaker who will take over for Joe Straus. As Rep. Straus played a critical in blocking bills like the bathroom bill, moving more Republican with this election could enable perhaps a more conservative Speaker with less interest in avoiding such issues.

How Texas deals with a number of healthcare issues will also be highly dependent on the make-up of our next legislature. We still maintain the highest number of uninsured people in the nation, and to date, there is been little willingness by the legislature to consider Medicaid expansion or additional coverage for the working poor. With healthcare at the top of the list in most voter's minds, a change from Republican to Democrat could signal a need to look for more solutions around this issue. No change could be the signal that keeps the current direction steady.

A recent article in the New York Times highlighted that the Trump Administration is considering a change to the federal civil rights law by defining gender "based on immutable biological traits identifiable by or before birth." Such a change would effectively be ignoring the existence of transgender people. This would be inconsistent with our organization's values and contradictory to what science and medicine tells us. Such policy positions are emboldened by who we vote for.

So, please vote. Know that I am not telling you who to vote for, but recognize that this is critical junction, and know that healthcare will be among the most important considerations when we go to the polls this time.