

 <p><b>CCART LegeLog</b>          vol. 14 no.1 Clear Creek Assoc. of Retired Teachers,          Editorial Board: Ginny Darling, &amp; Vee &amp; Frank          Stansfield, Randy Elms, Chair, James Bailey</p>	 <p>Sept. 13, 2016</p>
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## Voting by Mail

Voting by-mail is an option for registered voters if you are 65 on Election Day. But it also is available to any voter who plans to be out of county during the election period or if disabled. And the beauty is there's no voter ID needed for this method. Both Harris and Galveston Counties are ready to get your application. Go to [harrisvotes.org](http://harrisvotes.org); click on "voting by mail" or, if you live in Galveston County, google [galvestonvotes](http://galvestonvotes.org); click on "Elections Division" to print out a copy of the application. Do it this week; your completed application must be in the County Clerk's office by Friday, **October 28** and your completed ballot must be in the Clerk's office by election day. Here are the respective addresses:

## Candidate Lineup for November 8

### State Representative District 129

Republican **Dennis Paul** [[dennispaul.com](http://dennispaul.com)]  
 Paul has visited at CCART meetings several times.  
 No Democrat is running.

### State Representative District 24

Republican **Greg Bonnen** ([drgregbonnen.com](http://drgregbonnen.com))  
 Dr. Bonnen has visited a CCART several times.  
 No Democrat is running.

### State Representative District 29

Republican **Ed Thompson** (<http://edthompson29.com>)  
 Thompson has served on the Pearland ISD Board of Trustees.

### State Representative District 23

Republican **Wayne Faircloth** ([votefaircloth.com](http://votefaircloth.com))  
 Faircloth is a State Farm Agent in Dickinson.  
 Democrat **Lloyd Criss** ([lloydcriss.com](http://lloydcriss.com))  
 Criss is the father of Susan Criss and former state representative.

### State Senate District 11

Republican **Senator Larry Taylor** ([larrytaylor.com](http://larrytaylor.com))  
 Sen. Taylor has visited CCART many times.  
 No Democrat is running.

### Congressional District 14

Republican **Randy Weber**, ([randyweber.org](http://randyweber.org))  
 Weber is the incumbent.  
 Democrat **Michael Cole** ([mikecole.us](http://mikecole.us))  
 Cole is a history teacher in Orange.

### Congressional District 22

Republican **Pete Olson** ([olsonforcongress.com](http://olsonforcongress.com))  
 Olsen is a graduate of Clear Lake High School.  
 Democrat **Mark Gibson** ([markgibsonforcongress.com](http://markgibsonforcongress.com))  
 Gipson is a businessman in Ft Bend County.

### Congressional District 36

For voters who live south of Ellington, east of Highway 3 with the exception of a narrow strip from Bay Area Boulevard to Pineloch east to Diana, you are part of Congressional Dist. 36.  
 Republican **Brian Babin** ([babinforcongress.com](http://babinforcongress.com))  
 Babin is a dentist and former Woodville mayor.  
 Babin has no Democratic opponent

Stan Stanart, Harris County Clerk, Attn: Elections Division P.O. Box 1148, Houston, TX 77251-1148	Dwight D. Sullivan County Clerk P.O. Box 17253 Galveston, TX 77552-7253
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**Sample ballots are available at [harrisvotes.org](http://harrisvotes.org) or at [galvestonvotes.org](http://galvestonvotes.org), or just google "Galveston County Clerks's Office."**

## Early Voting Begins October 24

### Early Voting Hours of Operation

October 24 - October 28:

8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

October 29:

7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

October 30:

1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

October 31 – **November 4:**

7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.



The Clear Creek area early voting location remains at the **Freeman Branch Library, 16616 Diana Lane**. Remember: A driver's license, passport, hand gun license, military ID or citizenship papers are acceptable as a voter ID. However, any utility bill or bank statement with your name and address has been recently ruled as also acceptable. In Galveston Co. it will be at **North County Annex**, on Calder Road, **Bacliff Community Center, Dickinson Community Center**, 2714 Highway 3, **Clear Creek ISD Ad. Bldg. Board Room, Creekside Intermediate** behind the Gym and **Friendswood City Hall**, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

## Some Advice from Harris Co. for Returning a voted mail-in ballot

1. Read all the instructions;
2. Use BLACK or BLUE ink for marking ballot;
3. Place voted ballot in the Ballot Envelope & seal it;
4. Place Ballot Envelope in the enclosed pre-addressed County Clerk carrier envelope;
5. Seal carrier envelope and sign where indicated exactly as you signed the ballot by mail request;
6. Place appropriate postage and return it.

## November 8 General Election Ballot to be shorter than 2014

There's no race for the U.S Senate since "neither John Cornyn nor Ted Cruz is at the end of a term" and we have to wait for 2018 to deal with the usual statewide offices (governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, comptroller & land office). However, there is an open seat on the Texas Railroad Commission and three seats each on the Texas Supreme Court and the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. In each of these races there will be a Democratic contestant. On September 7 *the Houston Chronicle* endorsed Libertarian **Mark Miller** as "clearly the most qualified to serve on the Railroad Commission" calling him a "plainspoken petrochemical engineer who ... clearly understands everything we need in a railroad commissioner." For these executive and judicial races watch for major newspaper endorsements. The Chronicle does a good job of research before making any endorsement. Of course, every member of the U.S. House is up for election including Republican Pete Olsen (vs. Democrat Mark Gibson), Republican Randy Weber (vs. Democrat Michael Cole) and Republican Brian Babin (with no Democratic opponent.) Of our 36 Congressional contests only one is likely to be close: Dist. 23 "where incumbent Republican Will Hurd of San Antonio has a rematch with Pete Gallego, the Alpine Democrat he defeated two years ago."

Sen. Larry Taylor has no Democratic opponent so he will remain as our Senator. Half of our 31 state Senators are up for election this year. However, Texas takes gerrymandering very seriously so don't expect upsets in the Senate. The same story applies to the House where incumbents will likely win with only about a third of the races in any contest. All members of the Texas House of Representatives will be on the ballot including Rep. Dennis Paul and Rep. Greg Bonnen who have no Democratic opponents. Republican Ed Thompson (vs. Democrat John T. Floyd) and R-Wayne Faircloth (vs. D-Lloyd Criss) face a remaining November contest. In the Texas House of Representatives there are only nine incumbent Republicans running in districts where Democrats have a real chance. Two of those are nearby: Wayne Faircloth of Texas City challenged by Lloyd Criss and Gilbert Peña of Pasadena challenged by Mary Ann Perez. In both races former Democratic representatives are trying to re-take their old seats.

[information mostly from Ross Ramsey, *Texas Tribune*, 9-6-16]

## WEP elimination bill Delayed

Tim Lee, *Inside Line*, 9-2-16

Members of the Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA) have been working hard all summer to achieve results on the unfair Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). Many have contacted their congressmen and friends in other states impacted by the WEP, encouraging them to do the same.

In July, the Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act (**HR 711**) was scheduled for a hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee, but received a disappointing setback when groups working on the bill couldn't come to an agreement on the bill's provisions.

Representative Kevin Brady (R – The Woodlands), the author of the bill and head of Ways and Means, postponed the bill until agreement could be found. Since that time, Brady has been working diligently to enhance and promote HR 711.

On Sept 1, Congressman Brady released a new blog entry online explaining why the WEP is so unfair. (full blogpost on p.3) Among Brady's reasons for calling the WEP unfair, he says "the benefits for workers who choose to serve their communities are calculated differently than other workers." He also goes into great

detail about how Social Security benefits are calculated for standard workers and how that differs from the way public servants are treated. This blog post serves as a great resource for explaining this unfair law to family, friends and colleagues who want to learn more.

**Members, Chairman Brady wants to hear how the WEP has impacted you as the Ways and Means Committee works on a solution to treat all workers fairly. Please share your story about how the WEP has impacted you by sending an email to [WEP.feedback@mail.house.gov](mailto:WEP.feedback@mail.house.gov).**

**Progress on the WEP is not lost; in fact, the CLOCK IS TICKING. Congress reconvenes this month and we have no time to waste to get H.R. 711 back on track for a committee vote! Sharing your story will go a long way towards helping HR 711 succeed!**

TRTA is ready to get to work on finding agreement with advocacy groups across the country, and will do so tirelessly until our members and public service retirees across the nation receive some financial relief!

## The Blog: Chairman Kevin Brady The WEP is Unfair – and Here’s Why

<http://waysandmeans.house.gov/wep-unfair> 9-1-16

Americans across the country pay into Social Security and expect to receive the benefits they have earned when they retire. Unfortunately, because of a well-intended but flawed policy known as the Windfall Elimination Provision, or the WEP, some workers — specifically teachers, firefighters, police officers and others who have paid into Social Security for part of their careers but not all of it — are not treated fairly.

As the Bipartisan Policy Center explained: “Many state and local government workers are not covered by Social Security, meaning that employees and their employers do not contribute payroll taxes on their earnings from those positions. Yet many of these workers also work part of their careers (or work part-time) in covered employment and will still be eligible for Social Security benefits. The WEP was originally designed to prevent these individuals from receiving unintentionally large Social Security benefits, but its methodology is overly complex and does not allocate benefits equitably.”

That’s not fair. Here’s why:

1. The benefits for workers who choose to serve their communities are calculated differently than other workers. The WEP only applies to certain workers who didn’t pay into Social Security for part of their careers. That means many teachers, fire fighters, and police officers could have their benefits reduced by up to 56 percent just for choosing to serve their communities. Here’s an example: A kindergarten teacher who works at a local supply store during the summer will have his Social Security benefits calculated using a different formula than his neighbor who has worked only at the supply store.
2. For some, the WEP is not based on their entire earnings history. The benefits some workers receive upon retirement do not reflect the actual earnings over the course of their career. The WEP tries to fix this but uses an arbitrary formula that is based on a Washington compromise. This arbitrary formula would affect someone who served as a police officer before becoming a private security guard. On the other hand, if he had spent his full career as a private security guard, his benefits would reflect his earnings history.
3. For those who choose to serve their communities, the WEP makes it harder to plan for retirement. The WEP does not show up on a worker’s Social Security statement. Here’s an example: A worker could think she is getting \$1,227 a month when she retires, only to find out years later that she will receive nearly \$800. For those who planned their retirement based on their Social Security statements, that unexpected reduction could have serious consequences. The whole point of Social Security statements is for workers to be able to plan, but for those subject to the WEP, these statements give wrong information.

Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady (R-TX) and Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA) want to hear how the WEP has impacted you as they work on a solution to treat all workers fairly. Share your story with us at [WEP.feedback@mail.house.gov](mailto:WEP.feedback@mail.house.gov).

## 23 Votes separate Smith and Cain in Rep Run-off for Deer Park/LaPorte

Deer Park attorney Briscoe Cain beat Rep. Wayne Smith, a longtime incumbent from Baytown, by 23 votes in the May runoff. If only two dozen voters in our adjacent district 128 had voted differently Rep. Smith would still be in the Texas House next January. In the last general election voter turnout was 32% but for the May primary runoff it dropped to 6% with only 6067 choosing to cast a ballot in Dist. 128. Rep. Smith was not alone in seeing a squeaker election. In the Killeen area optometrist Austin Ruiz lost to Killeen Mayor Scott Cosper by just 43 votes in House District 54.

### Who is Rep. Briscoe Cain?

According to right-wing blog *Big Jolly Politics* Cain is a strong social conservative with endorsements from numerous pro-home-school, pro-life, pro-open-carry and anti-gay marriage organizations. His campaign literature certainly was designed to appeal the such groups. For example, on Education he states, "I support greater school choice and believe that the State Board of Education should have the authority to appoint the Commissioner of Education and textbook review committees."

Cain is a 2012 graduate of South Texas College of Law (2012). As a student he founded a pro-life student group and served as the President of the very conservative Federalist Society. In 2013, Cain started his own law firm. He also serves as legal counsel for an anti-abortion activist group, and as a board member for Right to Life Advocates, Inc. *Ballotpedia.org* confirms all of this information.

Briscoe is 31 years old and a father of 3.

Cain will face Libertarian Ken Lowder in November. No Democratic candidates filed in the election.

## TRS-Care Costs slated to increase

Tim Lee, *Inside Line*, 8-19-16

Starting Sept. 1, TRS-Care participants will begin paying increased deductibles and out-of-pocket limits. These changes were approved by the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) to the health care program in a June 16 Board meeting.

TRS-Care serves more than 250,000 retired educators, but its funding has been at a critically low

level. Without the assurance that the health care plan would remain solvent through Aug. 2017, the TRS Board of Trustees made changes to save TRS-Care money.

TRS began detailing these changes to members in its recently released August newsletter. The changes to deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums are the first of several changes, which are projected to save the program close to \$40 million.

Starting Jan. 1, 2017, the prescription drug plan for Medicare eligible participants will be the Express Scripts Medicare Part D plan. Additionally, a \$10 convenience fee will be charged to members after the first fill for maintenance drugs dispensed at retail pharmacies.

Another significant change occurring in January will be a switch to Humana for all Medicare Advantage plans through TRS-Care. To find out if your provider accepts to Humana, please call 1-800-320-9566. The 2017 benefits and premiums for Medicare Advantage plans will stay the same as they were in 2016.

## Stay in Contact with Your State Legislators

**Sen. Larry Taylor** - 512-463-0111  
League City - 281-332-0003  
[larry.taylor@senate.state.tx.us](mailto:larry.taylor@senate.state.tx.us)

**Rep. Dennis Paul** - 512-463-0734  
NASA area 281-488-8900  
Dist. 129 area north of Clear Creek  
[dennis.paul@house.state.tx.us](mailto:dennis.paul@house.state.tx.us)

**Rep. Greg Bonnen** - 512-463-0729  
League City - 281-338-0924  
Dist. 24 - area south of Clear Creek  
[greg.bonnen@house.state.tx.us](mailto:greg.bonnen@house.state.tx.us)

**Rep. Ed Thompson** - 512-463-0707  
Pearland - 281-485-6565  
Dist. 29 - area of Pearland/Alvin  
[ed.thompson@house.state.tx.us](mailto:ed.thompson@house.state.tx.us)

**Rep. Wayne Faircloth** - 512-463-0502  
Dist. 23 - Bacliff/Texas City  
2121 Market Street, Suite 205  
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(409)762-0304  
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