

Rep. Ed Thompson to speak at October CCART Meeting

Sharing the podium with our two candidates for State Representative District 129, **Dennis Paul** and **John Gay**, will be the current representative for the northern half of Brazoria County, **Ed Thompson**. District 29th Representative Ed Thompson, a 30 year resident of Pearland and local insurance agent, represents not only Pearland but Alvin, Liverpool and Manvel. He serves on the House Committee on Environmental Regulation and the House Committee on Special Purpose Districts. He has served on the Pearland ISD Board, as Pearland Mayor Pro-Tem and as Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and President of the Economic Development Corporation. He recently retired after 40 years as a high school football referee. A graduate of the University of Houston with a BBA in Finance, Ed has two children and four grandchildren.

Rep. Thompson emailed the following Op-Ed:

The phrases “retirement funding” and “healthcare coverage” are likely to strike a nerve among many Americans today, and teachers are no exception. The Teacher Retirement System of Texas and its healthcare component, TRS-Care, are currently facing financial challenges that prove worrisome to teachers vested in the system. My wife taught in Alvin ISD and was a school administrator, and I served on the Pearland ISD Board of Trustees for three years - I know that teachers have one of the hardest and most important jobs, period. However, sometimes it seems they are not compensated as such.

During the 83rd Legislature, SB 1458 was passed to guide TRS to be actuarially sound and ensure that teachers are compensated for their retirement. Part of SB 1458 authorized for phased increases in contribution rates over the next four years. In the upcoming 84th Legislature, lawmakers will need to address maintaining the proposed 6.8% annual contribution rate after the year 2015.

Another concern is with the funding of healthcare; TRS-Care will face a funding shortage of about \$1 billion at the end of 2015. With healthcare costs rising, and flaws found in the Affordable Care Act,

Texas teachers deserve to feel confident in and protected by their healthcare plans. Our schools’ teachers are selfless in their pursuit to educate, mentor, and inspire young minds, and the least we can do is provide continuing reparation for their service. We in the Legislature will continue to work to ensure that Texas teachers - current and retired - are fairly compensated in their retirement.

The Era of Straight-ticket Voting is Over

In the 2012 General Election, according to Ross Ramsey at the *Texas Tribune*, 61.4% of Texas voters voted straight-ticket with 60% cast for a slate of Republican candidates and rest for Democrats. What a shame! Some of the best candidates were on the opposite ticket. **For lack of time and energy those 64.4% of voters assumed that only their party primary could produce the best candidates for November. But this belief is a phantom.**

In the Presidential election year of 2012, for the final Texas primary, only 10% of registered voters bothered to vote. Non-presidential years are notorious for lack of voter-turnout. **Last May, Sen. Dan Patrick won the Republican nomination for Lt. Governor with only 3.5% of registered Texas voters.** This level of citizen apathy is not likely to produce the “best” nominees. **The “best” is no longer all Republican or all Democratic.** The election this November 4th presents a profound dilemma in choosing the best candidate. **The “straight ticket” no longer works.**

Of course, the real problem is our “**long ballot**” with dozens of legislative, executive and judicial offices that must be studied and a choice made. Few of us have hours or skills to research for such a task. So, we turn to newspapers such as the *Houston Chronicle*, *Dallas Morning News* and the *San Antonio Express-News* who make endorsements or recommendations. Sometime in the next two weeks google the name of your favorite major paper and add “political recommendations” and chances are you will be able to find a list of recommended candidates. Since the Democrats don’t contest in every race the list will be more Republican than Democratic. As of October 12th both the *Chronicle* and the *Dallas News* have recommended **Mike Collier** (D) for Comptroller and both the *San Antonio* and *Dallas* papers have endorsed **George P. Bush** (R) for Land Commissioner. The *Dallas* and *San Antonio* papers

tepidly endorsed Republican **Sid Miller** for Agriculture with the Dallas News saying that despite Miller's "sandpaper personality" and "troubling missteps" he was better than the "no show" Democrat Jim Hogan. The San Antonio paper recommended the three Republicans running for the Court of Criminal Appeals. I expect both Houston and Dallas will follow soon with those same recommendations. Over the next two weeks each paper will make numerous recommendations. For Attorney General the *Chronicle* enthusiastically endorsed Democrat **Sam Houston** noting his legal and executive experience and labeling opponent Ken Paxton-R "troubling... [with] the persona of a Sunday school teacher but has a history of law-breaking and questionable business practices..." [10-11-14] Recommendation for governor and lieutenant governor can be a minefield of ideological conflict yet the *Chronicle* last week plunged in with an vigorous endorsement for **Senator Leticia Van de Putte**. The *Chronicle* called the contrast with Dan Patrick "stark." Van de Putte was described as "knowledgeable and experienced... congenial and easy to work with." But Dan Patrick was described as a "potential demagogue... divisive, disruptive and self-aggrandizing." To emphasize the point the *Chronicle* quoted primary opponent Jerry Patterson's remark that Patrick was "**an unsavory combination of Huey Long, Elmer Gantry and W. Lee 'Pass the Biscuits Pappy' O'Daniel.**"

As for the Governor's race no paper has endorsed as of October 12th. Sen. **Wendy Davis-D** and Attorney General **Greg Abbott-R** have dramatic policy differences and political styles. Both have authentic bona fides so I expect the paper's ideological bent will flavor the choice.

For those measuring the value of candidates by their advertising remember your civics lessons on detecting "**propaganda.**" Tricks, half-truths and total lies will be used. Google the Austin *American Statesman's* politifact at politifact.com/texas/ and you can find their research team has evaluated the truthfulness of many of the statements and accusations of Texas candidates. Most statements are half-truths and some even reach the "pants-on-fire" rating of total fabrication.

Chronicle Endorses Paul & Criss

Houston Chronicle, 10-9-14

"Thanks to heavy-handed gerrymandering, there are only a few contested races for Texas House seats. Apart from the polarization this breeds, it makes it

difficult to find the kind of candidates we prefer — pragmatists who can work with everyone to get things done." shouted the *Chronicle* last week in their endorsement of several area state legislative candidates. Two of those candidates are in our area and the *Chronicle* assessed each as follows:

District 129: Dennis Paul

It sounds strange coming from a Republican, but Dennis Paul, 53, very correctly says Texas must spend "a lot more money" on higher education and on vocational education to supply skilled workers to Gulf Coast industries. As a professional engineer, he might be helpful in making the case for the proposed "Ike Dike" to prevent destructive storm surges in Galveston Bay, the eastern edge of the district that includes Johnson Space Center. Paul wants to find ways to help JSC thrive, but views NASA as under attack from the Obama administration. Paul knows the issues better than well-intended Democrat John Gay, 78. Voters should send Paul to Austin.

District 23: Susan Criss (Craig Eiland's district) Criss, a former judge and prosecutor, is supported by trial lawyers, while Faircloth, an insurance agent, is backed by insurance companies, who are not much loved in a region that had problems with them following Hurricane Ike in 2008. Faircloth's campaign comes right out of the Republican textbook — less regulation and secure the border. Criss, 53, wants to restore all education funding cut in 2011's budget crunch so that public school students are not short-changed. She says big corporations must pay their fair share of taxes so average people don't have to pay more. She wants the proposed "Ike Dike" to protect against future storms so people won't lose their homes again. And she wants insurance companies to treat people fairly. We agree, so we endorse Susan Criss for District 23.

Dennis Paul Bio from his website:

- a 26 year resident of District and has owned a small business in District 129 for 12 years,
- married to wife Eliza for 26 years have an 18 year old daughter who just graduated from St. Agnes Academy in Houston,
- a graduate of the University of Houston and has been an Engineer for 27 years,
- family attends St. Bernadette Catholic Church.

His stated Positions and Attributes:

- a conservative (less government/more freedom)

- a member of the State Republican Executive Committee for 7 years,
- served as a delegate to Republican State and National conventions,
- an active member of : Knights of Columbus, Space Center Rotary Club, Downtown Pachyderm Club and multiple professional engineering organizations,
- will fight to stem the tide of illegal immigration, reduce our property tax burden, support education and for less government regulation,
- volunteers in disaster areas to insure stable structures. worked to pass a Good Samaritan law in the Texas Legislature to protect volunteers from frivolous lawsuits,
- worked on was developing a plan to clean up Armond Bayou before the EPA forced a Washington solution on a local problem.

John Gay bio from his Website:

- practices law with his wife Becky,
- a certified mediator and has been an attorney in District 129 for over forty years, specializing in family law
- graduated LLB College of Law, DePaul University

His stated Positions and Attributes:

- strong fiscal conservative,
- dedicated to strengthening our public and higher educational systems,
- supports expanding our regional industries, especially healthcare, aerospace and specialty chemicals.
- will work to restrain government spending,
- secure the border,
- will promote positive solutions to problems, keep taxes low, and control regulatory growth,
- will work to restore school funding, create a fair accountability system, cut wasteful or duplicate services, fund downward expansion of UHCL,
- continue dual-credit and workforce training and certification programs,
- The key challenge in the 84th Legislative session will be "Governing Smart". Texas' prosperity has led to dramatic growth both in population and in demands on the 'State's resources.

Austin Hearing Reviews the Looming TRS-Care Shortfall

Tim Lee, *Inside Line*, 9-25-14

At the end of September the Senate Finance Committee considered the funding needs of several

state agencies including the TRS and TRS-Care. When the LBB informed the Senate Finance Committee of the impending \$1 billion TRS-Care budget shortfall, an audible gasp was heard from among the committee members.

The not-so-secret funding crisis has been looming for years and can no longer be avoided. If nothing is done during the coming legislative session to resolve this funding issue, TRS-Care participants could see astronomical premium increases as high as 130%. TRS retirees live on stagnant incomes, with only one permanent increase in their pensions since 2001. One Senator commented that most school districts don't pay into Social Security, leaving many retirees who live on their TRS annuity alone in a "pretty tough" position.

In their appropriations request made earlier this year to the LBB, TRS asked for a supplemental appropriation of nearly \$900,000,000. This is in addition to the 1% of active teacher payroll that is commonly provided to TRS-Care during each fiscal year, which was also requested. In testimony the Committee heard that the pension fund is "healthy" and "actuarially sound." TRS has 1.4 million members, which includes active and retired educators. In 2013, they paid out \$8.1 billion in annuity payments to retirees.

The LBB and TRS are reviewing several potential options. Indeed, the TRS will release a sustainability study later this month. TRTA reviewed several of the options last Summer which can be viewed by going to trta.org, clicking on "Legislative Updates" and scroll down till you find the Summer segment labeled "day 1" through day 6.

While no decisions were made in the meeting, it served as one of the first steps legislators are taking in determining how to handle the TRS-Care crisis.

Chronicle Supports Proposition One

Houston Chronicle, 9-26-14

The constitutional amendment providing for the use and dedication of certain money transferred to the state highway fund to assist in the completion of transportation construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation projects, not to include toll roads.

This amendment would authorize some of the Rainy Day Fund to be spent on highway building, maintenance and policing. But as the Chronicle endorsement editorial put it, "Proposition 1 is inadequate, as even its supporters concede, and yet the consequences of not passing it likely would be dire.... We haven't raised the gas tax since ...1991.

Not only has inflation eaten away at the tax's purchasing power, but today's more fuel-efficient cars and trucks now consume less fuel to pay for the roads they use." The Chronicle added some political reasoning, "We haven't raised the gas tax or transportation-related fees because the state has been in thrall the past couple of decades to a gang of anti-government, anti-tax ideologues who don't believe in paying for the people's needs. Any GOP lawmaker who dares suggest such a common-sense solution knows that he or she would be "primaried." And Democrats don't have the votes to do what's right.... Lawmakers in the Republican-ruled legislature have resorted to a series of multibillion-dollar borrowing schemes to pay for road and bridge projects. Texas now owes \$23 billion in road debt and will spend an estimated \$31 billion retiring it in the coming years. Our highway debt burden is the highest in the country.... Proposition 1 would make some \$1.7 billion available in the first year. After that, the amount will vary, depending on oil and gas production.... That amount is a pittance in contrast to what we need merely to keep us at the current congestion level. Texas needs \$4 billion every year just for minimal maintenance, plus another \$1 billion for a few new roads. Proposition 1 is apparently the best this wealthy state can do."

Early Voting Begins October 20

Early Voting Hours of Operation

October 20 - October 24:

8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

October 25:

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

October 26:

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

October 27 - **October 31:**

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



The Clear Creek area early voting location remains at the Freeman Branch Library, 16616 Diana Lane. Galveston Co. early voting will be at North County Annex, on Calder Road, Bacliff Community Center and Dickinson Community Center, 2714 Highway 3. Remember: As of October 12 no government ID is required to vote. The Supreme Court ruled last week to declare Texas-style picture IDs unconstitutional.

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. Both Harris and Galveston Counties are ready to get your application. Go to voteharris.org; click on "voting by mail" or, if you live

in Galveston County, google "**Galveston County Clerk's Office**;" 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 24** and your completed ballot must be in the Clerk's office by election day. Here are the respective addresses:

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 voteharris.org or at "Galveston County Clerks's Office" as well.

Candidate Lineup for November 4

State Representative District 129

Republican **Dennis Paul** [dennispaul.com]

Paul has visited at CCART meetings several times.

Democrat **John Gay** (johngayfortexas.com)

Gay is a 40-year Webster Attorney.

State Representative District 23

Republican **Wayne Faircloth** (votefaircloth.com)

Faircloth is a State Farm Agent in Dickinson.

Democrat **Susan Criss D** (votesusancriss.com)

Criss was a district judge in Galveston for 15 years.

Congressional District 14

Republican **Randy Weber**, (randyweber.org)

Weber is a former state legislator supported by conservatives.

Democrat **Donald Brown** (donbrown4tx14.org)

Brown is a Vidor mortgage broker.

Congressional District 22

Republican **Pete Olson** (olsonforcongress.com)

Olsen is a graduate of Clear Lake High School.

Democrat **Frank Briscoe** (briscoeforcongress.com)

Briscoe is an architectural conservator 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 District 36.

Republican **Brian Babin** (babinforcongress.com)

Babin is a dentist and Woodville mayor.

Democrat **Michael Cole** (michaelcole.us)

Cole is a teacher in Orange with hopes for a history phd.

Lieutenant Governor (2 State Senators)

Republican **Dan Patrick** (danpatrick.org)

Democrat **Leticia VanDeputte** (leticiavandeputte.com)

Governor

Republican **Greg Abbott** (gregabbott.com)

Democrat **Wendy Davis** (wendydavistexas.com)

Reps. Greg Bonnen and Ed Thompson are unopposed.