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Contact: Margaret Justus
281-250-8253



The 2019 Texas Lyceum Poll Shows Texans Overwhelmingly (82 percent) Grade Democracy as the *Best Form of Government*, yet believe our system needs work

- Texans are open to significant changes in the electoral system including making Election Day a national holiday, allowing people to register on Election Day and automatically registering citizens. And they also support voter identification requirements and automatically removing duplicate or inaccurate registrations from the voter list.
- Money in politics and the news media are seen as the greatest internal threats to democracy.
- Democrats overwhelmingly concerned about foreign meddling in upcoming presidential elections; Republicans, not so much.

(AUSTIN - TX) The 2019 Texas Lyceum Poll, conducted from August 16 – 25, found Texans overwhelmingly endorsing democracy as the best form of government (82 percent), but also supporting major reforms of the system (61 percent). These opinions flow from the perception that there are major gaps between democratic theory and its current practice in the U.S.

The older the Texan, the less critical of the system

The Lyceum poll revealed the older the Texan, the more positive they are toward democracy. Seventy-eight percent of Texans over 65 years of age *strongly agree* that democracy is the best form of government. Among those between 45 and 64, 61 percent *strongly agree*. Meanwhile, only 32 percent of Texas adults under 30 share that belief.

“Young Texans appear primed to listen to the discussion among many of the current Democratic Primary candidates about the structure of our government and its relationship to the citizen,” said Joshua Blank, PhD, Research Director for the Texas Lyceum Poll. “They’re a major constituency of the Democratic Party, and a growing share of the Texas population.

These poll results show that they're unlikely to shy away from potentially big, transformative ideas in 2020."

Open to Change in the System

When it comes to instituting reforms to our democratic system, a majority of Texans (61 percent) agreed that "*significant changes to the design and structure are needed to make it work for current times,*" compared to 38 percent who believe that the current system serves the country well.

In addition to variation by age, the calls for reform vary quite a bit by race and party. The Lyceum poll found African Americans the most supportive of changes to the system compared with Anglo and Hispanic respondents. Seventy-nine percent of African American Texans support major changes, compared with 60 percent of Hispanic, and 57 percent of Anglos.

When it comes to political party, support for election reforms follows somewhat predictable patterns, with 77 percent of Democrats, and 45 percent of Republicans, open to significant reform.

While there has been a lot of discussion of education's impact on political attitudes in the wake of the 2016 Election, Texans with less education are *more interested* in reforms than their more highly educated peers. Fifty-five percent of Texans with a college degree expressed support for change to the system compared with 65 percent of those with some college, and 66 percent of those with only a high school degree.

Texans favor paper ballot back-up, streamlined voter registration, voter ID, and allowing those convicted of felonies to vote after serving their time.

When asked about reforms to our electoral system, a significant majority (83 percent) of Texans would support requiring electronic voting machines to provide a paper ballot backup; automatically updating and/or removing duplicate voters from registration lists (80 percent each); and requiring voters to present a government issued ID when voting (81 percent)— which has been the law in Texas since 2013.

Another set of proposals with widespread support included allowing those convicted of felonies to vote after serving their sentences (67 percent); making Election Day a national holiday (63 percent); automatically registering eligible citizens to vote (62 percent); and allowing people to register on Election Day (61 percent).

"This was one of the more surprising results of the survey," said Blank. "We tend to think of election reform as a partisan exercise – often because it is, or at least has been in recent years. But in these results, we see a large majority of Texans embracing *both* measures to increase ballot security *and* measures to increase ballot access – which points to the possibility for large scale reforms."

Less popular reforms included automatically removing inactive voters from registration lists (47 percent); allowing people to vote online (43 percent); and conducting all elections by mail (26 percent).

Texans: Russian influence on U.S. elections is a 'major problem'. Money in politics and the news media = greatest internal threats to democracy.

While Texans view domestic forces (62 percent) as the greater threat to democracy compared with foreign countries (24 percent), a near-majority (49 percent) believe Russian or other foreign countries meddling in our U.S. presidential elections is a "major problem."

At the same time, only 16 percent of Texas are "very confident" that Texas elections are safe from hacking and other technological threats.

"Make no mistake: Texans are concerned about foreign actors spreading misinformation and possibly hacking into county or statewide election systems," says Daron Shaw, University of Texas professor. "But they see other threats as greater and more immediate."

When it comes to internal threats to democracy, Republicans point to the news media as the greatest internal threat, followed by money in politics and uninformed voters. Among Democrats, money in politics was seen as the greatest internal threat, selected by 36 percent of respondents, followed by poorly prepared candidates for office (18 percent) and uninformed voters (14 percent).

"For the first time in the history of our annual statewide poll, we chose to focus on Texans attitudes toward democracy and explored ideas on ways to improve it," said Texas Lyceum President Sanjay Ramabhadran. "We believe producing this independent, transparent poll serves as a great example of the essence of democracy and we hope to continue this program far into the future."

About the annual Texas Lyceum Poll

Daron Shaw, Ph.D., Professor at The University of Texas at Austin and Joshua Blank, Ph.D., Texas Lyceum Research Director, oversaw the poll, which was in the field from August 16 to 25. The poll surveyed 1,200 Texas adults and has an overall margin of error of +/- 2.83 percentage points. The poll enlists the latest in techniques, using live interviewers and contacting respondents both by landline (45%) and cell phones (60%) with the use of English and Spanish language instrumentation and interviewing (*telephone n=1000*), with an additional online supplement to augment the poll with respect to hard to reach populations (*online n=200*).

Please view the poll summary and additional information on our [website](#), where we have provided all results for the past 13 years.

About the Texas Lyceum

The Texas Lyceum, a non-profit, non-partisan group, is the premier statewide leadership organization focused on identifying the next generation of top Texas leaders. The Lyceum consists of 96 men and women from throughout the state who begin their six-year term while under the age of 46, and have demonstrated leadership in their community and profession, together with a deep commitment to Texas. For more information, please visit www.texaslyceum.org. Texas Lyceum is on Facebook at

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