

Understand the issues, know the candidates and vote

The Rev. Ed Roden-Lucero

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The commemoration of Abraham Lincoln's birth has just passed. As election time approaches in Texas, his words, which follow, summon us to participate in the democratic process: "This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it."

Locally, much has been said about El Paso's historically low voter turnout. Lincoln's words are a reminder of democracy's gift: Voters own the process and the result. Elected officials are not their own boss. Those who are elected to public office are governed by those who vote. The greater the number of people that vote, the greater is the level of accountability required of those who are elected.

The El Paso Inter-religious Sponsoring Organization (EPISO) and Border Interfaith (BI) are local community organizing affiliates of the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (Texas IAF). EPISO/BI and the whole Texas IAF firmly believe that all registered voters should participate in the democratic process.

EPISO/BI and the IAF network are strictly nonpartisan. We never endorse a candidate or political party. Our organizations represent Catholic, Protestant and Jewish communities of faith that bring to the table of the 'boardroom of democracy' our social justice traditions rooted in the scriptures.

Every election addresses the common good in some way. That is why EPISO and Border Interfaith encourage all registered voters in the city and county of El Paso to understand the issues, know the candidates and vote.

We contribute to the process by offering a nonpartisan public forum in which the candidates are invited to understand the issues and get to know our families that struggle with significant issues in their daily lives. On Sunday, EPISO/BI will host an accountability session for the candidates of El Paso county judge, county commissioner Districts 2 and 4, and state representatives Districts 75 and 78. The session will take place at 2 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church.

Resulting from hundreds of house meetings in our faith communities throughout the city and county, families will present stories of great challenge related to education, employment, living wages, immigration, health care, colonia policies and restorative justice to the candidates. The stories will be followed by specific policy proposals that the candidates are asked to support.

The primary election in the state of Texas will take place on March 6; early voting runs from Feb. 20 to March 2. The ballot also will include other federal, state and county races not included in Sunday's accountability session.

The Rev. Ed Roden-Lucero is pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church and Co-Chair, EPISO.