



Honorable Diane Trautman  
Harris County Clerk  
Houston, TX 77002

Via email: [DTrautman@cco.hctx.net](mailto:DTrautman@cco.hctx.net)

Dear Ms. Trautman:

This is in response to your proposal to conduct the 2020 Harris County primary as a “joint” Republican and Democrat primary. We respectfully decline your proposal.

The law requires political parties to run their primaries. A joint primary would require: voters designating a party when signing in; staffing polls with either or (if available) both Republican and Democrat election judges and workers; and Republican and Democrat election workers checking in voters and managing election equipment for both primaries.

After consulting with Harris County GOP leadership, and with concern for voters and election workers, I decline your offer to merge the two parties’ 2020 primaries, for the following reasons:

- Delay: We remember 2008. Over 410,000 people voted in that Harris County Democrat presidential primary. You can expect at least as many voters and even longer lines in the 2020 Democrat primary. By contrast, with a unified Republican party, we expect the GOP primary turnout to be much smaller. Making Republican voters wait in Democrat lines would discourage voting—which is the opposite of your stated goals.
- Confusion: We have had reports of Democrat election workers coercing Republican voters. The Democrat Party habitually accuses Republicans of intimidation. With the inevitable imbalance of personnel, one party’s workers at a poll would wholly or partly manage the other party’s primary at many locations. That would give rise to disputes and questioned election results. To minimize confusion, neither party should run the other party’s primary.
- Conflict: A Republican election judge and a Democrat election judge at the same poll would have equal authority. In an ideal world, they would always agree. But if not, needless conflict could arise that others, including your office, have no authority to resolve.
- Cost: Your office suggested joint primaries would save costs. Although the State of Texas—**not** your office—picks up the tab for primaries, this is not accurate. As your demonstration showed, each check-in location would have workers from each Party. Unless you forced one party to have fewer election workers, a joint primary would not save the State money.

We appreciate your stated goal of efficient and well-run primary elections. While we decline your proposal, we look forward to working with you on the 2020 Harris County Republican Primary.

Paul F. Simpson  
Republican County Chair