

Ogden comments on Nov. 6 state election

Brazos County voter turnout usually low, Ogden says he expects it to be high

Texans are being called to the polls on Nov. 6 to decide whether the Texas Constitution will add 19 new amendments to its current 390.

The amendments proposed by the Texas Legislature vary: proposed amendment No. 13 concerns donating old school equipment and property for preservation purposes, and proposed amendment No. 12 would allow the legislature to make amendments to the constitution without holding a state-wide election.

Karen McQueen, the Brazos County Clerk, is the public official in charge of organizing the elections for Brazos County. McQueen said voter turnout is usually very low for an election such as this, which will not include the election of any persons to public office.

"In an off year when it's usually low, we probably get less than 10 percent of the registered voters to cast their ballots," McQueen said.

At 10 a.m. Tuesday morning, the clerk's office reported about 200 voters. This number is quite low when one considers that the Brazos County voter registration office currently reports 87,394 voters registered in the county.

Sen. Steve Ogden is the Texas Senate representative for the fifth district, which includes Brazos County and 18 other counties. According to the 1990 census, Ogden's total district population is 551,652, with 372,073 total registered voters. During the 1998 general election in which Ogden was re-elected, 143,275 registered voters cast their ballot, just one-fifth of the total voting population for the district.

Ogden said he suspects that the low voter turnout at elections is because people are busy and some of the items on the ballot seem so minuscule and unimportant that registered voters do not have time to learn the issues.

Nevertheless, Ogden said that he expects voter turnout to be higher during this election due to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11.

"By going to the voting booths, it would signify that we are not taking this great country, and privileges it gives its citizens for granted," Ogden said.

Ogden said that voting, even in a small election such as this, is a good exercise in democracy. "Particularly after the Sept. 11 attacks, it is important for us to remember what we're fighting for," he said.

Ogden said it is very important for the students of Texas A&M to participate in this election as well.

"[The students of A&M] are

of the voting age in Texas, and these amendments affect all Texans," Ogden said.

The senator said that by allowing the election to slip by without casting one's ballot, the citizens of Texas are agreeing to a general obligation debt on behalf of the state of Texas that is somewhere in the range of 3.5 billion dollars.

1990s, when the student body was a decisive voting force in Brazos County.

"When student turnout was high — when student political interests were high — the students of Texas A&M usually determined the outcome of the vote in Brazos County," Ogden said.

During the 1998 general

A&M-College Station.

An amendment of particular interest to the administration, faculty, students and staff of A&M is proposed amendment No. 5, which authorizes municipalities to donate outdated or surplus firefighting equipment or supplies to underdeveloped countries. Ogden said he does not support this amendment.

"This amendment is not a good idea because the equipment and supplies should be donated to the Texas Forest Service, an agency of Texas A&M, because they fix the items and give it to volunteer fire department across the state," Ogden said.

He said this program is much better than simply donating the goods to countries such as Mexico, which the amendment would allow.

Ogden said he does, however, support proposed amendments 12 and nine. Proposed amendment No. 12 eliminates obsolete, archaic, redundant and unnecessary provisions and to clarify, update and harmonize certain provisions of the Texas constitution. Ultimately, this amendment may limit the number of times voters will head to the ballot box by allowing legislation to ratify constitutional changes.

Ogden said the amendment is so narrowly defined, however, that an infringement on voter's rights is not expected. He said that this amendment

will only allow the removal of such provisions currently in the constitution that was originally adopted in 1876.

"Some of the types of restrictions that were put in the constitution in 1876 no longer make sense or apply," Ogden said.

Regardless, the amendment will reduce the number of times that Texans can vote on amendment issues, limiting Texan voter rights and responsibilities.

Another amendment on the ballot of particular concern to Texas voters is No. 9. This amendment would allow the authorization to fill a vacancy in the legislature without an election if a candidate is running unopposed in an election to fill the vacancy.

Once again, this amendment would limit the voting rights of Texans by preventing write-in votes.

Ogden said he also supports this amendment and that there is no real possibility that the candidate will not be elected if he or she is unopposed.

He said, "I've never seen a write-in win before. Not that it couldn't happen, but if they [the candidate] is not organized enough to file to run, then they don't need to be elected," Ogden said.

Positive and negative arguments can be drawn for all 19 amendments that will be placed on the Nov. 6 ballot. Voter's guides have been sent to every

See ELECTIONS on page 4A.

COLLEGE STATION VOTING LOCATIONS

NOVEMBER 6, 2001 ELECTIONS

EARLY VOTING: Thursday and Friday, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
REGULAR VOTING: November 6 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

South Knoll School
College Station Conference Center
C.S. Municipal Court Bldg
Memorial Student Center
A&M United Methodist Church
College Hills Elementary School
Bright Light Baptist Church
Brushy Community Center
A&M Church of Christ
C.S. Public Library
Lincoln Center
C.S. City Hall Training Room
C.S. ISD Admin. Bldg.
College Heights Assembly of God
Aldersgate Methodist Church
Holy Cross Lutheran Church

1220 Boswell, College Station
1300 George Bush Dr.
2611 -B Texas Ave.
Texas A&M
417 University Dr.
1101 Williams St.
11234 St Hwy 30
St Hwy 60 & Old James Rd.
1901 Harvey Mitchell Pkwy South
1818 Harvey Mitchell Pkwy South
1000 Eleanor
1101 Texas Ave.
1812 Welsh
4100 Old College Rd
2201 Earl Rudder Frwy S
1200 Foffire Dr.

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election, Prairie View A&M had more student votes than A&M.

This fact says a lot about voter turnout because A&M Prairie View has a much smaller student body. For Fall 2001, the registrar's office at Prairie View reports a tentative number of 6,754 students; approximately one-seventh of the number of students currently enrolled at

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ROOM 229 MSC

5:30 P.M.

Texas A&M University, Center for Academic Enhancement, Room 525 Blocker, 845-2724
<http://www.tamu.edu/aac/>