

**RESOLUTION NO. 20210729-176**

**WHEREAS**, in the immortal words of the late Congressman John Lewis, there are times when we must get in good trouble, necessary trouble, and help redeem the soul of America; and

**WHEREAS**, we stand today on the shoulders of giants who have fought in hallowed halls of legislative chambers across our nation for free and fair access to the ballot box; for a voice in the electoral process we call our American democracy; and

**WHEREAS**, continuing the work of these civil rights heroes is not about left or right, but about what is right and wrong; and

**WHEREAS**, the foundational importance of the right to vote in free and fair elections justifies and requires vigilant protection and active encouragement at every level of government, necessitating the implementation of new action to eliminate barriers that intentionally abridge the franchise; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Austin has consistently provided such protection and encouragement through adoption of pro-voter policies found in Resolutions No. 20200917-017, 20201112-017, 20200409-078, 2019101-033, 20190307-027, 20181018-040, and No. 20130829-074; and

**WHEREAS**, these resolutions were passed in recognition of, and in response to, direct and indirect assaults on the right to vote; and

**WHEREAS**, Austin voters again find themselves on the brink of further disenfranchisement as House Bill 3 and Senate Bill 1 have been introduced during the first 2021 Special Legislative Session; and

**WHEREAS**, these bills would make it harder for Austin communities – and especially communities of color – to vote through:

- Banning 24-hour voting;
- Banning drive-through voting;
- Prohibiting state election officials from proactively disseminating absentee ballots;
- Adding new identification requirements for voting-by-mail;
- Limiting third-party ballot collection;
- Expanding the authority and autonomy of partisan poll watchers; and
- Requiring monthly reviews of the state’s voter rolls to identify noncitizens; and

**WHEREAS**, these provisions conflict with the City’s adopted legislative priorities for the 87th Texas Legislative Session (Resolution No. 20200917-017) which, in part, support: improving standards for polling places; repealing punitive and restrictive identification requirements to access the ballot; increasing outreach and distribution of elections and voter registration information to eligible Texans who are not currently registered to vote; and providing for no-excuse absentee voting that would allow voting-by-mail for all eligible voters, especially during a declared state of emergency; and

**WHEREAS**, if passed, House Bill 3 and Senate Bill 1 would exacerbate already low voter turnout rates in Texas which is ranked 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation by the Election Law Journal for ease of voting; and

**WHEREAS**, citizens of Austin support measures to address this undemocratic reality, as evidenced by approved revisions to the City Charter in 2012 to establish 10 single-member Council districts, and to hold municipal

elections in November rather than in May; in subsequent elections, voter turnout in Austin municipal elections increased by as much as 400 percent; and

**WHEREAS**, this resolution furthers the goals set out in the Strategic Direction 2023 as the percentage of eligible residents registered to vote and who participate in City elections is one of the metrics for the strategic outcome referred to as “Government That Works for All;” and

**WHEREAS**, the legislation currently being considered by the Texas legislature – introduced under the guise of election integrity – would be a solution in search of a problem, as evidenced by the Texas Secretary of State office’s assertion that the 2020 election was “smooth and secure,” and the consistent lack of widespread voter fraud throughout Texas; and

**WHEREAS**, conversely, House Bill 3 and Senate Bill 1 are responses to historic voter participation in Texas during the 2020 election resulting from jurisdictions increasing access to the ballot box through ensuring voters felt safe (i.e., creating mobile or temporary voting locations, expanding provisions that allow curbside voting, and extending early voting); and

**WHEREAS**, proponents of this legislation seek to build on recent Supreme Court precedent eviscerating voting protections once provided by the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and on anti-voter Texas laws which have been ruled unconstitutional by lower courts and placed within the context of the state’s long history of voter suppression that has disproportionately disenfranchised Texans of color; and

**WHEREAS**, on July 12, 2021, members of the Texas House of Representatives broke quorum for the second time in as many months, preventing further consideration of House Bill 3 and adoption of Senate Bill 1; and



**WHEREAS**, through Resolution No. 20200917-017, the City of Austin committed to support state legislation that improves the quality of life for its residents, protect Austin's civil rights ordinances, and oppose that which tarnishes the City's status as an inclusive community for all; and

**WHEREAS**, House Bill 3 and Senate Bill 1 would silence many in our City, thus disallowing community input needed to equitably address today's challenges; and

**WHEREAS**, these anti-democratic bills are antithetical to the values that define the City of Austin; and

**WHEREAS**, Congressman Lewis once proclaimed, "When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something;"

**NOW, THEREFORE,**

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

The City of Austin recognizes that our communities thrive when all voices are heard in our democratic processes and reaffirms support for state and federal legislation that promotes and protects voting rights and access to voting, as well as greater inclusion and civic empowerment.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

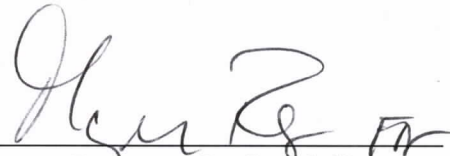
City Council urges members of the Texas Legislature to withdraw House Bill 3 and Senate Bill 1 and instead take proactive measures to protect voting rights and promote access to voting.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager is directed to send copies of this resolution to the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House, the Austin state and federal delegations, City Councils in Texas, and to the President of the United States.

**ADOPTED:** July 29, 2021

**ATTEST:**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jannette S. Goodall', is written over a horizontal line. To the right of the signature, there is a small, stylized mark that looks like 'FR'.

Jannette S. Goodall  
City Clerk