



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

Senate Resolution - 21.04

(Stating the sentiments of the Student Senate regarding establishing Voting Day on federal election days as a university holiday)

WHEREAS, the MIT Election Data and Science Labs reported only 36 and 59% of eligible voters voted in the 2014 and 2016 election respectively, and only 44% of 18-30-year-olds exercised their voting rights¹, and

WHEREAS, a recent poll done by FiveThirtyEight showed that 44% of the survey population only sometimes vote, and 25% almost never vote. Approximately 10% of the population that only sometimes votes and approximately 12% of the population that never votes cite the inability to get off work as a barrier to voting², and

WHEREAS, a recent study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* found that voter participation among physicians was 14 percent lower than that of the general population between 2006 and 2018. Only 37% of eligible physicians voted in elections during this period. Encouraging voter participation to health care students early in their careers could lead to increased voter turnout among physicians and other healthcare workers, and

WHEREAS, Texas Election Code Section 276.004 states that employees are entitled to take paid time off for voting on election days unless they have at least two consecutive hours to vote outside of the voter's working hours⁴. While this code only applies to employees, extending the opportunity to vote through a university holiday to all members of the university, including students, faculty, and staff, would decrease barriers to voting and allow Texas Tech University Health Science Center to be at the forefront of voting participation, and

WHEREAS, participating in election day allows students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to engage in issues affecting all communities within the Texas Tech University Health Science Center sphere at a federal, state, and local level. With campuses in Abilene, Amarillo, Dallas, Lubbock, and Permian Basin, we have a unique opportunity to serve the public good all across Texas, and

WHEREAS, we are currently in a time of social unrest, a global health crisis, and heightened community political awareness across the nation; ensuring that our students, faculty, and staff can participate in the election process can be a way for the university to demonstrate its commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and civic engagement, and

WHEREAS, other major universities across the United States are taking steps towards making Voting Day a holiday, and TTUHSC has the opportunity to be a national leader in this movement^{5,6}, and

WHEREAS, creating a university holiday on federal election days would align with our values-based system: Based on One Team, a university voting holiday would allow us to unite, offering a unique perspective while empowering each other to create positive growth and hold each other accountable in exercising our civic duty. Based on Integrity, a voting holiday would allow students, faculty, and staff to honor their civic duty commitment. Based on Visionary, creating a voting holiday promotes a pioneering spirit for other universities to follow by ensuring that all academic students' and employees' voices are heard on election day. Finally, based on Beyond Service, creating a voting holiday would allow students and employees to anticipate our community's needs and deliver excellence in all that we do, whether that be volunteering on election day or casting a vote, and

WHEREAS, this legislation has received support from the TTUHSC Student Ambassadors for Diversity and Inclusion (letter attached), and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Student Senate of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center supports Voting Day's establishment on federal election days as a university holiday,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be spread upon the Journal and that copies be sent to **Lori Rice-Spearman Ph.D.**, President of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center; the TTUHSC Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee; **Erin Justyna Ph.D.**, Assistant Provost for Student Affairs; **Chase Seabolt**, Editor of The Daily Toreador; and to the students of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center.

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CC: Journal

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TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES
CENTER
Passed the Senate, 06 April 2021



Marcus Gonzalez
President, Student Senate



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER.

Office of the Provost
Student Diversity & Inclusion

January 19, 2021

Re: TTUHSC Student Government Association – Senate Resolution 21.04

To Whom It May Concern,

As the Student Ambassadors for Diversity and Inclusion, we would like to express our support for The Student Government Association's resolution to formally establish a Voting Day on federal election days as a university holiday. Ensuring the ability for our entire diverse student body to be included in the election process is in line with our ideals and mission to foster an environment of respect and inclusion. Furthermore, both youth and minority voters often encounter barriers to casting a ballot¹. Therefore, it's no surprise that at many schools, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion takes on the responsibility of registering students and educating them on where and how to vote.

Creating a formal protocol that is recognized by the institution takes the onus off of students needing to request time off and receive possible penalization for missing class and coursework. Even with supportive faculty, it can be difficult to directly advocate for ourselves due to the intrinsic imbalance of power between student and teacher. Being proactive about creating an inclusive environment is a worthy goal, and as a group we support the resolution advanced by SGA.

Sincerely,

The TTUHSC Student Ambassadors for Diversity and Inclusion

1. Weeks, D. (2014, January 10). Why Are the Poor and Minorities Less Likely to Vote? *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/01/why-are-the-poor-and-minorities-less-likely-to-vote/282896/>

References

1. "Voter Turnout." *Voter Turnout* | MIT Election Lab, electionlab.mit.edu/research/voter-turnout.
2. Ameliatd. "Why Millions Of Americans Don't Vote." *FiveThirtyEight*, 26 Oct. 2020, projects.fivethirtyeight.com/non-voters-poll-2020-election/.
3. Carbajal, Erica. "Physicians Less Likely to Vote than General Public, Study Finds: Voter Participation among Physicians Was 14 Percentage Points Lower than That of the General Population between 2006 and 2018, According to a Study Published in JAMA Internal Medicine." *Becker's Hospital Review*, www.beckershospitalreview.com/hospital-physician-relationships/physicians-less-likely-to-vote-than-general-public-study-finds.html.
4. *Voting - Time Off*, www.twc.texas.gov/news/efte/voting_time_off.html.
5. *Free the students: why there's a push to make election day a campus holiday*, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/may/07/universities-election-day-students-shut-down>
6. *SGA supports making Election Day a University holiday*, <https://www.jhunewsletter.com/article/2020/11/sga-supports-making-election-day-a-university-holiday>