

THE TORCH

TEXAS EAGLE FORUM

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Keep Marijuana Illegal in Texas

By **Luke Niforatos**, Executive Vice-President of Smart Approaches to Marijuana, 5/20/22

Residents of the Lone Star State should be skeptical of the grandiose promises of an addiction-for-profit industry that has yet to improve the life and well-being of citizens in any other state. Because the calls for the legalization of marijuana are becoming louder, the latest research on varying aspects of the legalization debate will easily counter the favorite talking points of agenda-driven activists.

Supporters often argue that marijuana is harmless; however, research says otherwise. A 2017 report by the National Academy of Sciences reviewed more than 10,000 peer-reviewed academic articles and concluded that marijuana use is connected to a number of problems, including: respiratory problems, mental health issues, like psychosis, social anxiety, and thoughts of suicide, increased risk of car accidents,

Continued on **Page 2** >

IN THIS ISSUE

Keep Marijuana Illegal in Texas	1
<i>Grid Down, Power Up</i> Capitol Event	3
Cliff Notes	4

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progression to and dependence on tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, learning, memory, and attention loss—possibly permanent in some cases, and, when consumed by pregnant women, low birth weight.

Additionally, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that “Approximately one in 10 people who use marijuana will become addicted. When they start before age 18, the rate of addiction rises to one in six.”

Many of these harms are accelerated by the increasing prevalence of high-potency marijuana, which is being engineered to contain up to 99 percent THC, the high-inducing component in marijuana. By comparison, in 1995, only 1.1 percent of tested samples had a THC concentration of 12 percent or more—a majority were within the 3–7 percent range. But in 2018, 70.3 percent of tested samples were 12 percent or greater, with an average of 15.8 percent. Alarming, the use of marijuana with a THC potency of 15 percent or more results in a three-times greater risk of psychosis—daily users face a five-times greater risk.

An oft-cited reason for supporting legalization is the perceived medical benefit of marijuana. However, fewer than 5 percent of medical marijuana card holders have cancer, HIV/AIDS, or glaucoma, suggesting many users only claim to have an illness so that they can obtain marijuana. Given that the Food and Drug Administration has not approved marijuana as a medication, there is insufficient evidence to claim that it has medicinal value. No approved drug is administered via smoking. With the motives of most medical marijuana card holders in mind, legalizing medical marijuana would increase the usage of marijuana and open the door to the full legalization of recreational marijuana.

Supporters might argue that the risk of impaired driving is overblown. However, marijuana-related traffic deaths in Colorado increased by 138 percent following legalization. A national study of high school students found that “Nearly half of all marijuana users reported driving after use during the past 30 days.” After analyzing the increases in fatalities in “legal” states, it was estimated that “nationwide legalization would be associated with about 7,000 excess traffic fatalities each year.”

Supporters of legalization might say that youth use rates will not increase following legalization. However, states that legalize marijuana often see increases in youth use rates. A 2021 study found legalization in California was associated with more youth use; researchers noted that “increases observed in California may portend continued increases in adolescent marijuana use in future years.” A study in Seattle found that “marijuana legalization predicted a higher likelihood of self-reported past-year marijuana and alcohol use among youth.” A 2020 study found that recreational marijuana legalization was followed by a 25 percent increase in adolescent marijuana use disorder, which is addiction to marijuana. Rates of use are increasing among youth, and the high-potency marijuana they are using is ever more harmful.

Supporters might point to a poll that suggests that Texans support legalization. However, the basis of this poll was misleading, given that it failed to ask voters about real-world policy alternatives, including decriminalization, the policy recently passed in Austin. By only asking voters about the two

extremes—prohibition and full legalization—more moderate positions were omitted, concealing the public’s actual views. For instance, a binary poll by Gallup suggested that 68 percent of Americans support legalization; however, Emerson College conducted a poll with four real-world policy options, including decriminalization and legalizing medical marijuana only, which found that only 38 percent favored the full legalization of marijuana. **As the level of support in Texas is lower than the national average, Texans can confidently conclude that a majority of residents do not, in fact, favor legalization.**

Given that marijuana has failed to deliver as promised in all states that have legalized it, Texans should reject the prevailing arguments in support of it.

Supporters might say that the tax revenue from the “legal” sale of marijuana will be a boon for Texas. However, this assumption is flawed for two primary reasons. First, researchers at Rand found that “the actual revenues tend to be less than what is anticipated.” Second, even with this tax revenue, the societal costs of legalization vastly outweigh potential revenue. One study examined the economic and social costs of legalization in Colorado, estimating that for every \$1 it receives in marijuana tax revenue, the state spends \$4.50 to mitigate the consequences of legalization.

Supporters might say that legalization will uplift the communities most affected by the criminalization of marijuana. These same individuals often argue that entrepreneurs of color should be prioritized when marijuana licenses are approved. However, even when states prioritize applicants from marginalized communities, their attempts often fail, such as in Illinois, where “not one social equity license has been issued and there’s still not one licensed cannabis business in the state with a majority owner who is a person of color.” Additionally, the same poll from Emerson College found that only 31 percent of African Americans favor the full legalization of marijuana—thus, more than three times as many oppose legalization.

Supporters might say that legalization will eradicate the black market. However, this has not happened in any of the “legal” states. For instance, roughly 90 percent of marijuana sales in Massachusetts were on the black market, while 78 percent of sales in California and more than half of all sales in Oregon and Washington were illicit. Moreover, the U.S. Department of State’s International Narcotics Control Strategy Report mentioned that “U.S. consumer demand for illicit marijuana has increased following marijuana regulation

in several U.S. states, due to higher costs for legal marijuana and reduced illicit domestic production.” Additionally, the DEA’s most recent National Drug Threat Assessment stated that “some marijuana produced by state-licensed growers is diverted and sold illicitly rather than through state-licensed retailers,” suggesting that legalization often fuels the black market rather than replaces it.

Supporters might also say that legalization is not associated with increased crime rates. However, a study by researchers at the University of Colorado Denver, found, “neighborhoods with one or more medical or recreational dispensary saw increased crime rates that were between 26 and 1,452 percent higher than

in neighborhoods without any commercial marijuana activity.” A study in Oregon “found that counties in [Oregon] have experienced increases in simple assault rates following legalization, relative to rates in the 19 non-legalized states.” Researchers also found that Denver neighborhoods adjacent to marijuana businesses saw 84.8 more property crimes each year than those without a marijuana shop nearby.

Given that marijuana has failed to deliver as promised in all states that have legalized it, Texans should reject the prevailing arguments in support of it.

For more information and researched documentation, go to learnaboutsam.org.



GRID DOWN, POWER UP CAPITOL EVENT

On May 18th, Texas Senator Bob Hall hosted a screening of the film, *Grid Down, Power Up*, followed by a panel discussion on where we are today on securing the electric grid. Here are the takeaways from that event:

- The U.S. government has been concerned about the cybersecurity of the critical electric infrastructure since at least 2003; the security of the electric grid from physical threats since at least 1982; geomagnetic disturbance (GMD) threats since at least 1990; and electromagnetic pulse (EMP) threats since at least 1972. In other words, we have been warned about the need to secure our critical electric infrastructure for over four decades from the very threats we still face today.
- Despite Executive Orders from both Democratic and Republican Presidents and numerous laws passed by Congress to mandate the protection of America’s critical national infrastructures, almost no progress has been made to actually harden the U.S electric grid against the most severe threats—solar weather and nuclear electromagnetic pulse (EMP).

- The state of Texas is unique in that it has its own electric grid and can protect itself against these hazards while the federal government languishes. There are many new and cost-effective technologies currently available to protect our grid.
- May 2022 marked 90 months since the Texas Legislature was first warned about the need to protect the Texas grid. Since that time, the Legislature has been afforded more than 50 hours of education and expert testimony, and Senator Bob Hall has authored legislation three sessions in a row that would have placed Texas in the lead in protecting the state’s electric grid. The Legislature decided not to pass this legislation every session.
- This documentary marks the beginning of a nationwide campaign to inspire Americans to get involved by holding their elected officials, at all levels of government, accountable. Texas can lead nation. It’s time for the Legislature to act!

NOTE: TEF has been on this issue since 2015 (see April 2015 Torch) and will continue to make it one of our legislative priorities in the 2023 Legislative Session. We appreciate Senator Hall’s persistent efforts to protect our grid.



Leaked Document Shattered Trust

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas recently compared the leak of a draft opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade* to infidelity and said it was “tremendously bad.” Justice Thomas, who is the most senior justice on the high court, also suggested that it’s possibly another one of the justices—if not a liberal law clerk—who leaked the opinion, an unprecedented move. “I wonder how long we’re going to have these institutions at the rate we’re undermining them, said Justice Thomas, “and then I wonder, when they’re gone or destabilized, what we will have as a country, and I don’t think the prospects are good if we continue to lose them. When you lose that trust, especially in the institution I’m in, it changes the institution fundamentally. You begin to look over your shoulder. It’s like a kind of infidelity—that you can explain it, but you can’t undo it.”

It is the first time a full draft opinion has been leaked in the Supreme Court’s 233-year history. In the draft opinion, Justice Samuel Alito said the abortion issue should return to state legislatures. “The Constitution makes no reference to abortion,” he wrote, “*Roe* was egregiously wrong from the start.”

SOURCE: *The Washington Times*, 5/16/22

Taxpayer-Funded Smut?

While parents across Texas fight to remove explicit materials from their children’s classrooms, the Dallas and Austin school districts continue providing such books to students—and paying for them with taxpayer dollars. For example, schools across both districts have purchased multiple copies of “*Gender Queer*” and “*All Boys Aren’t Blue*,” which feature scenes of sexually explicit content. Whatever else the purchases are doing, they aren’t improving reading achievement. According to the state’s official school ratings, only 37 percent of students attending Dallas ISD read at grade level, while 47 percent of students at Austin ISD meet their grade level in reading. Students’ math skills are similarly low. Public schools are producing a highly woke—and highly illiterate—generation of Texans. That won’t go well for any of us.

SOURCE: *Texas Minute*, 5/17/22

How Many College Graduation Speakers Are Conservative?

Every year celebrities, politicians, and CEOs speak at college graduations. It shouldn’t be much of a surprise that left-leaning speakers are prominent at college commencement ceremonies, but what’s astonishing is that, in 2022, only three of the top colleges are featuring conservative speakers. Young America’s Foundation has kept tabs on the political leanings of commencement speakers for the past 30 years, and their findings have shown that “a disproportionate number of speakers at our nation’s top colleges and universities have been liberal ideologues, big donors to liberal causes, and members of the woke media.” The report states, “It’s truly sad that up until the very last day of school, students are being indoctrinated by speakers with a clear ideological agenda—people who have no intent on giving an actual inspiring, powerful sendoff to our future leaders.”

SOURCE: *PJ Media*, 5/16/22

Shocking Worldview of Evangelical Pastors

New analysis from Arizona Christian University’s Cultural Research Center reveals a “particularly shocking” absence of biblical worldview among pastors of evangelical churches, “because evangelical churches, by definition, believe that the Bible is God’s true and reliable words to humanity.” The latest release of the American Worldview Inventory, conducted in February and March of this year, revealed that 37 percent of Christian pastors held a biblical worldview, and the numbers are only slightly better among pastors of evangelical (51 percent) and independent or non-denominational (57 percent) churches. “With barely half of evangelical pastors possessing a biblical worldview—and that number continuing to decline—attending what may be considered an ‘evangelical’ church no longer ensures a pastoral staff that has a high view of the scriptures,” said George Barna, Senior Research Fellow with FRC’s Center for Biblical Worldview.

SOURCE: Family Research Council, *Washington Update*, 5/27/22

Quote of the Month

“A nation that punishes political opponents more harshly than its criminals cannot exist but by the silence of that nation’s citizens.”

~ Roger Helle, “When There Is No Justice,” *The Patriot Post*, 5/18/22

Great American Quote

“It is an object of vast magnitude that systems of education should be adopted and pursued which may not only diffuse a knowledge of the sciences but may implant in the minds of the American youth the principles of virtue and of liberty....”

~ Noah Webster, *On the Education of Youth in America*, 1832

Texas Eagle Forum

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Cindi Castilla

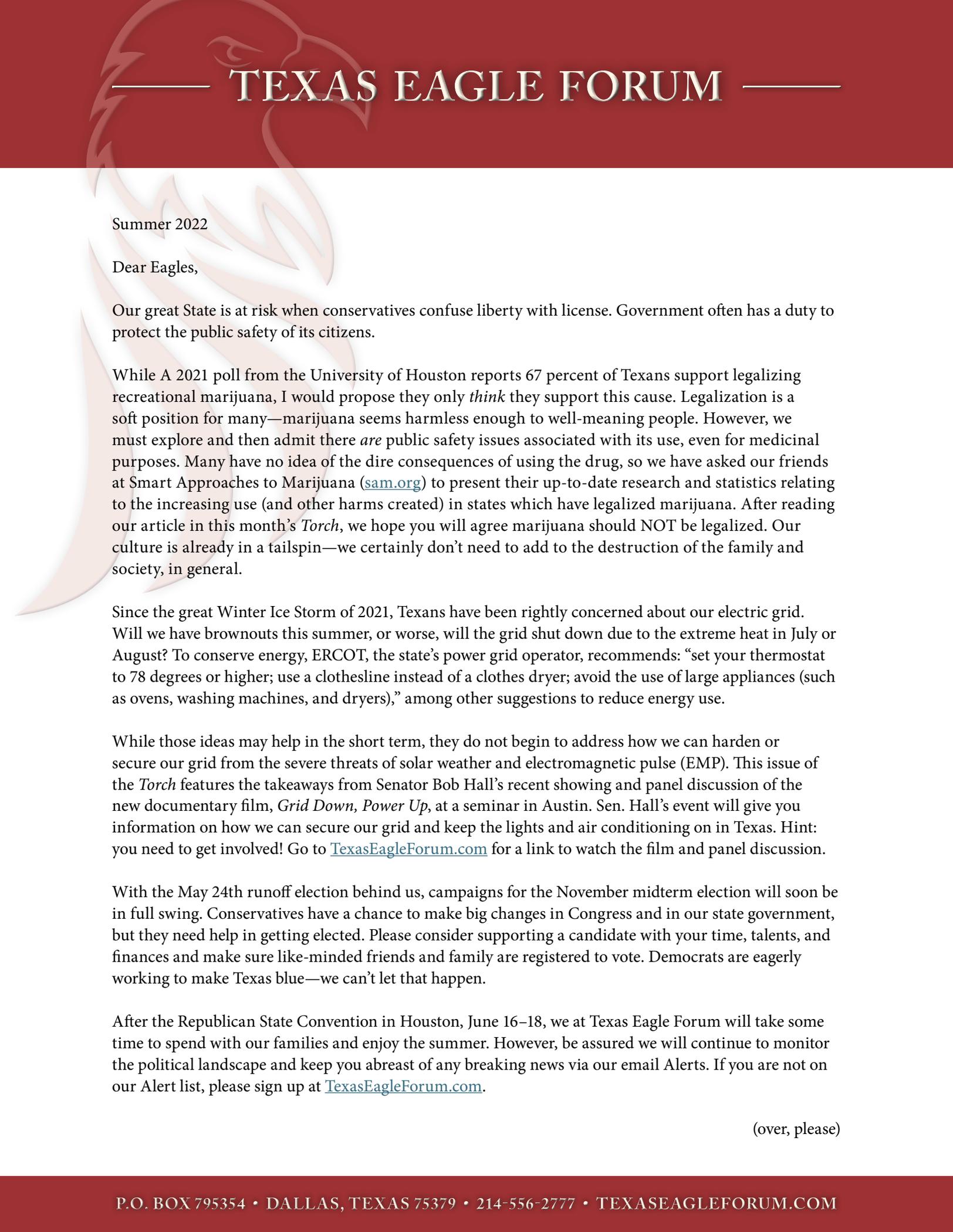
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TEXAS EAGLE FORUM

Summer 2022

Dear Eagles,

Our great State is at risk when conservatives confuse liberty with license. Government often has a duty to protect the public safety of its citizens.

While a 2021 poll from the University of Houston reports 67 percent of Texans support legalizing recreational marijuana, I would propose they only *think* they support this cause. Legalization is a soft position for many—marijuana seems harmless enough to well-meaning people. However, we must explore and then admit there *are* public safety issues associated with its use, even for medicinal purposes. Many have no idea of the dire consequences of using the drug, so we have asked our friends at Smart Approaches to Marijuana (sam.org) to present their up-to-date research and statistics relating to the increasing use (and other harms created) in states which have legalized marijuana. After reading our article in this month's *Torch*, we hope you will agree marijuana should NOT be legalized. Our culture is already in a tailspin—we certainly don't need to add to the destruction of the family and society, in general.

Since the great Winter Ice Storm of 2021, Texans have been rightly concerned about our electric grid. Will we have brownouts this summer, or worse, will the grid shut down due to the extreme heat in July or August? To conserve energy, ERCOT, the state's power grid operator, recommends: "set your thermostat to 78 degrees or higher; use a clothesline instead of a clothes dryer; avoid the use of large appliances (such as ovens, washing machines, and dryers)," among other suggestions to reduce energy use.

While those ideas may help in the short term, they do not begin to address how we can harden or secure our grid from the severe threats of solar weather and electromagnetic pulse (EMP). This issue of the *Torch* features the takeaways from Senator Bob Hall's recent showing and panel discussion of the new documentary film, *Grid Down, Power Up*, at a seminar in Austin. Sen. Hall's event will give you information on how we can secure our grid and keep the lights and air conditioning on in Texas. Hint: you need to get involved! Go to TexasEagleForum.com for a link to watch the film and panel discussion.

With the May 24th runoff election behind us, campaigns for the November midterm election will soon be in full swing. Conservatives have a chance to make big changes in Congress and in our state government, but they need help in getting elected. Please consider supporting a candidate with your time, talents, and finances and make sure like-minded friends and family are registered to vote. Democrats are eagerly working to make Texas blue—we can't let that happen.

After the Republican State Convention in Houston, June 16–18, we at Texas Eagle Forum will take some time to spend with our families and enjoy the summer. However, be assured we will continue to monitor the political landscape and keep you abreast of any breaking news via our email Alerts. If you are not on our Alert list, please sign up at TexasEagleForum.com.

(over, please)

So many of you have called or written kind words of encouragement—I can't tell you how much they bless me as I lead this wonderful organization of Christian activists. I am grateful, too, for your prayers and generous financial gifts, which enable TEF to make your voice heard in Austin. We especially appreciate the calls you make to your elected officials when needed.

May God bless you, and God bless Texas!

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cindi Castilla". The script is cursive and fluid.

Cindi Castilla
President of Texas Eagle Forum

P.S. As I am writing this letter, I am heartbroken at the news of another terrible tragedy involving the murder of innocent people. This time it is children and teachers. The Left immediately wants to make this about guns, others about mental health, but it is clear that the more government leans in to “fix” the problem, the greater the problem becomes. The truth is our Nation, public schools, and government continue to move away from God, so we shouldn't be shocked to see an uptick of pure evil. More God would equal less evil. I pray our nation will get on its knees and invite God back in our lives. Jesus is the only answer to overcoming evil.

“If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.” ~ 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJ)