



Bruce Elfant, Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector and Voter Registrar

News Release

Communications Division

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 3, 2020

New Austin street art encourages residents to register, vote

AUSTIN – In a city known for its amazing street art, there is a new mural in town ready for visitors to snap photos.

The register and vote mural, located on the Dobie Twenty21 building (formerly Dobie Mall) adjacent to the University of Texas campus, will, hopefully, become a social media star, helping to remind UT students and others about the importance of voting.

The mural design came from the 2019 high school mural contest sponsored by the Travis County Tax Office and Austin's League of Women Voters. The one painted on the Dobie Twenty21 wall was a design submitted by German exchange student Joel Klemm, who was attending Austin High School.

Learning how the United States registers voters was new to Klemm. Germany automatically registers voters when they reach voting age. The country is ranked 12th in voter turnout while the United States ranks 26th out of the world's 32 developed countries, according to a 2018 Pew research survey.

Travis County voter registration counts on its citizens to reach unregistered eligible voters.

"We hope Travis County residents will snap a picture in front of the mural and share it with their family and friends on social media," said Bruce Elfant, the county's voter registrar and tax assessor-collector. "The Nov. 3 election is an opportunity to make a difference in our country, state, county and city and we need everyone to register to vote before the state's registration cutoff on Oct. 5." Early voting begins Oct. 13.

Currently, Travis County's more than 4,000 volunteer deputy registrars helped to register over 95 percent of the county's eligible voters. The tax office's Voter Registration Division recently launched a voter registration tool, Text2Register, that can help the state's 254 counties register voters.

Text2Register allows any eligible Texas voter to text "register" to 48683 (I VOTE) to receive instructions on how to complete voter registration in their county.

Gretchen Nagy, the tax office's Voter Registration Division director, encourages those who come to see the mural to also share information on Text2Register.

"We are hoping our register and vote mural goes viral in Texas," Nagy said. "That can happen with the help of Travis County residents sharing photos of the mural and Text2Register information on their Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, Tik Tok and website accounts."

Nagy's division ran the mural contest in spring 2019. Originally, the mural was to appear on a wall in the Mueller Development in September 2019, but finding a mural painter proved challenging. Meanwhile, the wall where the mural was to appear became blocked by a growth spurt of nearby trees. Fortunately, Trinity Properties, the owners of Dobie Twenty21, jumped at the opportunity to host the mural.

"We really appreciate the Mueller Development for their partnership, which includes allowing us to have a voter registration booth at their Farmers Market every Sunday" Nagy said. "We also want to thank Trinity Properties for their dedication to voter registration and voting by giving us a home for our mural."

September 2020 is the perfect time to unveil the register and vote mural, Nagy said.

"We cannot imagine a better time to debut the mural as a way to encourage eligible voters to register and vote in the upcoming Presidential Election," she added.

The mural was painted by artist Lucas Aoki. A video of the mural coming to life is expected to be distributed later this month.

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RE: Photo of mural attached

The **Travis County Tax Office** annually collects more than \$4 billion in local property taxes for 132 local government entities and \$4 million in fines and fees for Justice of the Peace and County Courts at Law. The office registers and titles almost 1 million vehicles, registers over 800,000 voters, and supports elections for 201 local government entities. The Tax Office operates five locations in Travis County and many services are available online.