



REPUBLICAN PARTY OF TEXAS

GRASSROOTS GUIDE: Saying NO to Debt from Bonds

In almost every election, voters are asked by their local taxing entities to approve a bond package. Bonds are debt in which local governments borrow money to pay for things like schools, roads, or infrastructure. When voters approve the bonds, they are promising to pay back the loan with interest. Unfortunately, bonds by definition increase the debt and the overall tax burden of the taxpayers.

If your ballot includes a bond package that you believe would be bad debt, you can save yourself and your fellow taxpayers by **helping voters say NO to bonds at the ballot box.**

Find Information

Find out more details about the specific bond on YOUR local ballot by locating the following items.

- ❑ Sample Ballot -- search “_____ County Elections Sample Ballot” (for your county) to find the ballot wording for the bond package
- ❑ Bond Order -- look on the entity’s website or submit a [public information request](#) to find the full bond agreement [*this will tell you exactly what you are voting on; the details of the bond are NOT all included in the ballot language*]
- ❑ Video and/or Audio of Bond Committee Meetings -- this may be available on the internet or on social media [*find out all you can about how your taxing entity went about preparing and structuring this bond package before bringing it to a vote*]
- ❑ Online Check Registers -- examine the entity’s spending habits [*if you find examples of wasteful spending (ex. expensive meals or trips), you will want to let people know that perhaps with a simple change in money management, your community might not have to go into debt to fund the projects*]
- ❑ Superintendent Contract / Staff Salaries / Elected Official Salaries / Budgets -- examine the entity’s budget and how they allocate all their funds [*How do administrators’ salaries compare with other positions? Are funds being spent on superfluous activities instead of necessary major building maintenance? Are you paying for a house/car/phone allowance for a Superintendent while the roof is leaking? Are there mandatory raises?]*]

The Public Information Act says that government entities must give copies of certain documents to people who request them within 10 business days. To make your request, just send a request in writing to that agency. See more information at <https://www.nfoic.org/texas-sample-foia-request>



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Talk to Your Community

Most Republican-leaning voters don't want to be saddled with even more debt, but bonds can be difficult to understand. Many may not know the consequences of their votes. Help them out by sharing the information you have gathered. Here are some ways to get your message through.

Basic talking points

- Bonds are debt, and debt increases our overall tax burden. Taxes are already too high -- residents need tax relief, not increases.
- Whatever debt is incurred today will have to be paid off by our children and grandchildren tomorrow. Our debt puts them in bondage.
- Bonds are a tax hike.
- Debt in this area is already [_____]. This bond will [*double /triple*] the amount of debt, just in principal alone [*add a conservative estimate for interest to reflect the increase to the debt beyond the principal amount of the bond*]
- Wasteful spending is rampant [*verify this in your districts; give examples of what you found in the documents in Step 1*].
- Every vote matters. Some bond elections are decided by a couple dozen votes or less.

Each person with whom you speak may have a different -- and legitimate -- compelling reason to oppose the bond. Help them understand how bad debt hurts them personally.

Sample Editorial

Send a note to the editor of your local newspaper. Many media outlets have online submission forms. Here's an example -- be sure to add in the correct details.

"[*City name*] is a great city full of great people, but this new \$_____ school bond proposal does more harm to the community than it does in meeting the needs of the school system. While we want the best education for our students, the improvements to the schools will **not** necessarily make their way into the classrooms, will **not** increase teacher pay, and **will increase** our maintenance and operations budget drastically -- likely hurting our teacher salary budget. This bond will also increase our debt and our overall tax burden at a time when people all over the state are suffering from higher taxes. I'll be voting NO to bad debt, and I hope you'll join me!"



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Sample Block-walking/Phone-banking Script

Being a social media warrior is great, but there's nothing like actually getting out and hitting the road to talk to your neighbors. Many times all they need is a neighbor at their door offering good information in order to vote NO to bad debt. Ask your local county chair or precinct chair for help in finding walk lists or call lists through data available to them through the RPT.

Here's a sample of what you can say when you're block walking or making phone calls.

“Hello! My name is _____ with the **Say No To Bad Debt** campaign. Have you heard about this \$_____ bond that will increase our tax burden?”

Tell them why you're voting no. Let them know it will be on the ballot and when to vote.

Texas Laws

It is important to stay within the law when you begin to run a campaign and start handling money. Here are a few tips:

- If you plan to spend more than \$500 on materials, you'll need to either start your own Specific Purpose PAC (Political Action Committee) or collaborate with a General Purpose PAC already in existence that wants to fight bonds. Please consult legal counsel as necessary.
- Familiarize yourself with electioneering laws. See [Grassroots Guide: Texas Laws on Election Activism](#).

RPT Platform

For the Republican Party of Texas position on debt, see our Party Platform at <https://www.texasgop.org/republican-party-texas-platform-2016/> (specifically Planks 175, 178, and 179)

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