

How do local politics affect me personally?

Democrat Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill once said "All politics is local", and we believe it! From the speed you drive on the highway, to the warning labels on the products you buy, to the taxes on your grocery bill, to the regulated or unregulated college tuitions and telephone usage taxes, someone in government with an "R" or a "D" by their name on a ballot determined the rules you have to live with.

At the State and Federal levels, we hear reports about millions, billions, and trillions of dollars. Those numbers are so ridiculous that it's almost like Monopoly money to you and me, but don't be fooled! Government does not *earn* money: it *takes* money from average citizens like you and me in increments anywhere from a fraction of a penny, to hundreds of dollars at a time, and those people with an "R" or a "D" by their name on a ballot determine how the money they took from you is spent.

Have you ever heard the term "Tax Freedom Day"? It's the first day of the year where the nation as a whole has theoretically earned enough income to fund its annual tax burden. In 2010, Tax Freedom Day was April 9th. So, in theory, 26.90% of your work this year went to pay for government services. Do you *feel like* you've received a fourth of your income back in government services? If not, then you are feeling the pinch of how politics affects you personally.

What about local politics at the County level? Your County Judge and four County Commissioners make up your County Court. They are the fiscal conservators who set and pass the budget for county government. They are responsible for county roads and bridges, and for your safety in times of disaster. Do you know how your property taxes are determined? Your tax appraisal multiplied by your tax rate equals your tax bill. The County Commissioners set the tax rate for county taxes, and have representation on the Appraisal Review Board. Your tax bill might be escrowed into your mortgage, so you don't really think about it much, but you'll certainly sit up and take notice when you get one of those friendly letters from your mortgage company that your monthly payments are going up due to increased estimated tax payments! Oh – you rent, so you're not affected? Think again! If your landlord gets one of those friendly letters about increased monthly payments, do you seriously believe he will absorb the extra expense, or pass it along to you by increasing your monthly rent when your contract renews? So, who would you rather have in your county government: a tax-and-spend progressive, or a fiscal conservative? Republicans believe that government spending is out of control and needs to be reduced responsibly. We support fundamental, immediate tax reform that is simple, fair, and fully disclosed.

Your Justice of the Peace considers many kinds of cases each month, ranging from truancy to small claims, evictions, peace bonds, bad checks, Class C misdemeanors and such. This is the judicial level where you or your family members are most likely to interact with the court system. 80% of the cases in Texas are filed in the Justice of the Peace courts. Would you rather have an ethical Justice of the Peace with high moral standards and conservative principles, or a more liberal judge who believes in going easy on first-time offenders and giving everyone a "get out of jail free" card? Republicans believe you have the right to be safe in your home, on your street, and in your communities. We support enforcement of the laws through the Courts imposing swift and sure justice with stiff penalties, truth in sentencing, and respecting the rights of law-abiding citizens, while we oppose judicial activism.

So, you see, those people with an "R" or a "D" by their name on a ballot really do determine the rules you must live with on a day-to-day basis. The Republican Party believes you should be served and protected by, not encumbered by, government; constantly nourished by faith and family, thriving in a free market, and helping others through charity of giving and serving. Good government is based on the individual, and each person's ability, dignity, freedom, and responsibility must be honored and recognized. We believe equal opportunity is a right and a privilege but equal outcome is not. We believe self-government, based on personal integrity of a proper moral foundation, is the best government. This is best balanced with limited civil government, coupled with public trust, to provide collectively for the people those services not efficiently achieved individually. If you share these same values, we invite you to support our Republican candidates in the next election.

Written by Kathy Haigler – Caldwell County, TX activist