



VOTER GUIDE
STATE SENATE - DISTRICT 8
FALL, 2018



MARK PHARISS

DEMOCRAT

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Residence: Plano, Texas

Current Job/Profession: Attorney

Education: B.A., Magna cum laude - Westminster College, Missouri; J.D. – Vanderbilt Law School

Highlight of Current Civic Involvement/Accomplishments:

I serve on the Board of Directors of two non-profit organizations: TeamSA Endowment, a fund that supports the programs of San Antonio Sports (formerly the San Antonio Sports Foundation), and Equality Texas, an organization that pursues full equality for all Texans. For the past three years, from January 2014 to December 2017, I served on the Board of Directors of The Family Place, a Dallas-based organization that provides safe housing, counseling services, and skills training to the victims of domestic violence.

One of my greatest civic accomplishments was helping obtain marriage equality for all Texans. In October 2013, my now husband, Major Vic Holmes, USAF, Ret., and I (along with our Austin co-plaintiffs, Cleopatra DeLeon and Nicole Dimetman) successfully sued the State of Texas for the civil right for same-sex couples to marry the person they love in the state they love. More importantly, we were able to talk to our fellow Texans about why same-sex couples are just like every other Texas couple and should be treated the same. This experience demonstrates my willingness and ability to fight for equality of all Texans, while being respectful of those with differing opinions.

In 1985, I moved to San Antonio as a new lawyer without knowing anyone other than a couple relatives. In order to meet people, I volunteered with a variety of organizations and committees, including the Sports Committee of the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce. The Sports Committee was tasked with bringing amateur sporting events to San Antonio both to encourage tourism and to promote healthy habits among San Antonio's youth. Eventually, the Sports Committee determined that a separate non-profit was needed to accomplish these goals, so I helped incorporate San Antonio Sports (then called the San Antonio Sports Foundation) in 1986.

I served as the pro bono (for free) outside General Counsel for San Antonio Sports from its beginning until I moved to Dallas in 2002 and served on its Board during the entire time. As a result, I worked on numerous events for San Antonio Sports, including the 1989 AAU Junior Olympics, the 1993 Olympic Festival, the 1998 NCAA Final Four, and the bid for the 2007 Pan Am Games. In total, San Antonio Sports has helped generate more than \$446 million for San Antonio's community, and more importantly has helped encourage San Antonio's youth to lead healthier lives.

As part of San Antonio's efforts to obtain the 2007 Pan Am Games, I helped draft (along with the late Ray Hutchinson) SB 456, legislation that enabled San Antonio to bid on the 2007 Pan Am Games and the cities of Dallas and Houston to bid on the 2012 Olympics. The legislation was sponsored by the late State Sen. Frank Madla and signed on June 19, 1999, by then Gov. George W. Bush. That legislation has since helped provide funding for a variety of local events, not just in San Antonio but also across the entire state.

My involvement in helping found San Antonio Sports and in helping pass SB 456 are two of my proudest achievements. As a result of my efforts, in December 2017 I was awarded a Lifetime Membership with San Antonio Sports, an incredible and humbling honor.



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Why are you running for office?

I am running for the Texas Senate because, as a proud Texan for 33 years, I care deeply about my state and want to help make Texas better for all Texans.

Giving back to my community was an obligation instilled in me from a very early age. My deeply religious mother taught me to assist “the least of these.” (Matthew 25:40.) During the holiday season, she would take my siblings and me to visit shut-ins and those in nursing homes, where we sang Christmas carols and distributed cookies, candies, and fudge my mother helped us make. My years as a Boy Scout—and as a God & Country Awardee, Eagle Scout, and Order of the Arrow member—also taught me to “do a good turn daily.” Serving as a State Senator is just one way I can give back.

The Texas legislature has underinvested in public education since 2008—reducing its share of public education funding from 50% to 38% today—a decrease which has caused local communities to increase local property taxes to make up the difference. This has hurt many homeowners in my district, and it’s one of the reasons I am running.

I also intend to fight the idea that the “solution” to our already underfunded public schools—Texas is ranked 43rd in the nation in per pupil spending—is to take more money from them and give it to for-profit, private schools that are not accountable to the community, a “solution” my opponent supports that would do great harm to students in SD8’s public schools—none of which are failing.

Finally, I am running to help the Texas legislature focus on issues that really matter—like public education, lower property taxes, good paying jobs, improved transportation and healthcare—instead of silly social issues like bathroom bills.

As a State Senator, I will be a State Senator for all, not just those who voted for me. And I intend to listen to all our citizens, locally elected officials, schools, religious institutions, and chambers of commerce, because that’s the only way to make Texas better for all.

The 2017 legislative session was dominated by the “bathroom bill” debate. Do you believe the state should require people to use the bathroom designated for the biological sex listed on their birth certificate?

I strongly oppose the re-introduction of a bathroom bill, which my opponent supports.

As noted earlier, the mere prospect of passing a bathroom bill this past legislative session generated over \$200 million in negative publicity for the State of Texas and cost the state \$66 million in tourism business. As the Texas Association of Business has made clear, if the Texas legislature had passed the unnecessary bathroom bill, Texas would have lost approximately \$8.5 billion in business annually and up to 185,000 jobs. The Perryman Group, a well-respected, Texas-based economic analysis firm, concluded a bathroom bill would cost Senate District 8 and its citizens 2,134 jobs, \$84 million in retail sales, and \$117 million in personal income.

The principal reason for these losses is because Texas’ tourism and convention business, which accounts for approximately 13% of Texas’ GDP, would have taken a significant hit. Also, businesses considering relocation to Texas would have reconsidered, ultimately making it more difficult for Texans to find a good job with good pay.

But the bathroom bills are also mean-spirited, targeting a minority for political gain and proposing a “solution” where no problem exists. The Texans I know have compassionate hearts as big as Texas, and Texas’ leadership is out of step with the people they purport to represent. I will never support a bathroom bill because, as Speaker Joe Straus is reported to have told Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, “I’m not gonna have the suicide of a single Texan on my conscience.”



GALA CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

During the last legislative session, Texas passed the Freedom to Serve Children Act which allows foster homes and adoption agencies, including those that receive public funds, to choose to only place children in homes with a mother and father. This coming session we anticipate once again seeing “Religious Liberty” bills which offer protection to businesses that deny services such as counseling, wedding planning, etc. to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Texans when based on “sincerely held religious beliefs.” Would you support such legislation? If so, please explain your justification of the expenditure of state funds defending such a law, as several similar laws are already actively involved in court cases and have been found to be discriminatory and unconstitutional? If you do not support such a proposal, please explain how you would justify your decision to a business that doesn’t wish to provide a specific service, such as baking a wedding cake, to an LGBT individual.

I would not support such legislation. I would justify my opposition to such legislation by noting what the Supreme Court said this year in the Masterpiece Cake case: “. . .while. . . religious and philosophical objections are protected, it is a general rule that such objections do not allow business owners and other actors in the economy and in society to deny protected persons equal access to goods and services under a neutral and generally applicable public accommodations law.”

A recent study by the National Center of Transgender Equality found that 82% of transgender youth feel unsafe at school and 44% report having been physically abused. This coming legislative session, we anticipate that we will once again see the introduction of a “Bathroom Bill” which requires transgender students use the bathroom that matches their sex assigned at birth. Would you support such legislation? If you support such legislation, what steps would you include to ensure that transgender children are not bullied or physically attacked when they enter a bathroom? If you oppose such legislation, how would you explain your stance to a constituent concerned about their child’s right to privacy in the school bathroom?

I do not support such legislation. I would explain that (i) there is already legislation prohibiting sexual assaults, so no additional legislation is needed, and (ii) such legislation will hurt Texas' economy. Finally, I would quote Speaker Joe Straus who said he didn't want to be responsible for another suicide.

During the last legislative session, the State Legislature attempted to pass a record number of bills considered anti-LGBT. Several states that have passed similar anti-LGBT laws have faced business boycotts. Conversely, cities/municipalities wanting to be more attractive to business relocations, have passed Equal Rights Ordinances (EROs). These ordinances typically prohibit discrimination in city employment and city services, city contracts, public accommodations, private employment, and housing based on an individual’s sex, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, familial status, marital status, military status, religion, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity/expression or pregnancy. Do you support the right of local governments to pass EROs? Please explain your position.

I support local governments to pass EROs and I have lobbied for them in San Antonio and Plano. GALA offers candidates the unique opportunity to address thousands of members of the North Texas LGBT community.

What would you like LGBT constituents and our families and friends to know about you as a candidate? Why should this large voting community support your candidacy?

My husband and I sued the state of Texas for the right to marry. When we spoke about the issue, we were always respectful of those who disagreed with us. I will take that same willingness to Austin to fight for public education, lower property taxes, healthcare, and transportation, but will be equally respectful of those who disagree.



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ANGELA PAXTON

REPUBLICAN

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Residence: McKinney, Texas

Current Job/Profession: Educator

Education: BA - Mathematical Science – Baylor University; MS – Education - University of Houston

Highlight of Current Civic Involvement/Accomplishments:

Golden Corridor Republican Women - Member (home club), former board member
Lifesavers Foundation Board of Reference - Ministry that supports The Doctor Spot, a mobile health clinic for children in need of healthcare, and Upscale Resale, a resale store that benefits the Prestonwood Pregnancy Center and its clients.
Prestonwood Baptist Church - Member
Mensa - member
Texas State Rifle Association - member
National Rifle Association - member
Baylor University Women's Council of Dallas - member
Collin County Aggies Moms Club - member
Greater North Texas Republican Women - Associate Member
Collin County Republican Men's Club - Associate Member
Collin County Conservative Republicans - Member
STAR Republican Women - Associate Member
Plano Republican Women - Associate Member
Stonebriar Community Church - founding family, worship ministry, women's ministry
Redeemer Presbyterian Church - founding family
Dallas Pregnancy Resource Center - Former Board Member

Why are you running for office?

To protect what is clearly working well in Texas and find ways to improve our communities even more. Senate District 8 is in the "sweet spot" of jobs, growth, and opportunity. People are moving here, not just from other parts of Texas but from around the nation. We must continue to prepare for this with a pro-growth, pro-family, pro-taxpayer vision that allows our area to grow and prosper. The Texas governing model has worked well for Texas, Collin County, and SD 8. It's the result of strong Republican leadership that promotes and protects the principles of limited government, low taxes, and limited and predictable regulation. These principles have created an environment that attracts companies, entrepreneurs, and families from all over the world and boasts one of the most educated workforces in the state. I will work to put our community first and continue the successful policies that have catapulted this part of Texas to its tremendous economic success.



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The 2017 legislative session was dominated by the “bathroom bill” debate. Do you believe the state should require people to use the bathroom designated for the biological sex listed on their birth certificate?

As a parent and an educator, I support legislation that protects children from having to change clothes, use restrooms, shower, and/or room with members of the opposite sex in school facilities or on school trips.

GALA CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate did not respond.