

All Together Now

Support for legislative transparency grows

A North Texas good-government corps is mustering for an advance on Austin next year.

The troops consist of the region's legislative delegation. The theater will be the Capitol. The cause is the open-government issue of mandatory record votes for all substantive measures approved by state lawmakers.

In interviews with the editorial board of *The Dallas Morning News* this campaign season, the vast majority of candidates for the Legislature — almost to a man — pledged support for the issue in the 2007 session.



RECORD VOTES

Some of them, if re-elected, we'd expect to carry or put their names on record-vote measures again next year. That goes for **Reps. Dan Branch**, Tony Goolsby, Linda Harper-Brown and Jodie Laubenber.

It's been typical this year to hear all candidates in a race support the goal of mandatory record votes (as opposed to the more common practice of voice votes).

Example: House District 106 (Grand Prairie-Irving), consisting of incumbent Republican Kirk England and challengers Katy Hubener, a Democrat, and Libertarian Gene Freeman. Another: House District 113 (Dallas'

eastern suburbs), where incumbent Republican Joe Driver cited a "need for transparency" in lawmakers' votes. Democratic challenger Eric Brandler said it's a "no-brainer."

There are some outliers on the issue among House incumbents. One is Myra Crownover in Denton. Another is Richardson's Fred Hill, whose reluctance centers on the time consumed by more on-the-record votes, a concern that can be addressed by looking at how other states handle this practice and by lawmakers focusing on properly defining what sorts of ceremonial measures should be exempt.

Solid support prevails on the Senate side, meanwhile. Last year, members unanimously approved a bill by Dallas Sen. John Carona requiring record votes; it died in the House.

Next year, the prospects appear improved, for two reasons: First is a pledge from Mr. Goolsby, Mr. Branch and others to get the issue to the House floor. The second is a pledge by Speaker Tom Craddick not to block a floor vote.

Message to the Senate: Please stand firm. Message to the House: Please join in.

Digital**EXTRA**

🔗 **Link:** Read a primer on the record-vote issue and find out how to contact your legislator. DallasNews.com/Extra