

2022 Suggested Best Practices for County Election Websites

Texas Secretary of State [Internet Posting Requirements for Political Subdivisions](#) (2019) [Advisory](#) (5/2021)

1. Website security!

- Required annual [county cybersecurity training](#)
 - The [Texas Department of Information Resources \(DIR\)](#) has published a list of cybersecurity training programs for use by state and local government employees.
- Take action to get an encrypted county website (HTTPS). <https://letsencrypt.org/>
 - Apply for “https://” and a “lock” will appear on your URL.
- Follow [domain security best practices](#) of the U.S. General Services Administration ie.
 - LWVTX and the TX SOS goal is to get 100% of counties to sign up for the [EI-ISAC](#)
 - Apply for the free [DEMARC](#) domain-based message authentication, reporting
 - Use the [DMARC and email authentication](#) best practices from the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS).
 - Sign up for a network and vulnerability scanning service for government organizations called “[Cyber Hygiene](#)” operated by the DHS.
 - Join MS-ISAC the [Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center](#). MS-ISAC has been [designated by DHS](#) as the cybersecurity information sharing center for state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and works to help ensure the resiliency of government systems.
- Have official county websites that are easily identified!
 - Use a government-verified [DotGov](#) domain so voters will feel confident they are at the right website.

2. Mobile friendly!

- Select a website design that works for all devices.
- Put the most important information at the top of the page
- Use a phone to regularly test the election web page.
- Avoid using PDFs, which are hard to view on a phone, instead place the information directly on the web page or use a Word or Google document.
- Ensure voters can complete common tasks, such as:
 - Finding important election dates
 - Registering to vote & Updating voter registration
 - Applying to vote by mail & Tracking vote by mail
 - Finding polling locations and times

3. Easy for voters to find election and voting information!

- Make “Elections” or “Voting” a link on your homepage
- Follow the [Center for Civics Design Field Guide for Designing Election Department Websites](#).
 - Help voters find your website.
 - Connect your website to other government sites (ie the Texas Secretary of State and www.votetexas.org)
 - Answer questions, such as ‘What’s on the ballot?’ Show an example.
 - Group navigation to answer voters’ questions.
 - Help visitors know what site they are on and what will be covered there
 - Write links that use words voters use and that helps voters know where they will end up.
 - Put the most important information in the main menu or the center section of the page.
 - Help voters find ballot information, especially if sample ballots are within a widget.
 - Use words that voters use in links, headings, and graphics.
 - Help voters see at a glance what each chunk of information is about.
- Use words or icons voters commonly use! Review and use the Center for Civics design Field Guide

- for [Writing instructions voters understand](#) and [Creating accessible online information](#).
- The [Center for Civics Design](#) suggests election officials use words that voters commonly use in links, headings, and graphics.
 - If your county needs a website or a new election website. Consider a free [Election Website template](#) provided by [electiontools.org](#)

4. Voting and election information are up to date and accurate!

- Avoid election jargon, use plain words voters understand.
- At the top of the page, provide contact information for election officials: name, address, phone, and email.
- PDFs are not recommended by the ADA. Move voter information directly onto the webpage.
- Use links from the Secretary of State's website to provide specific resources for voters:
 - [Am I Registered to Vote?](#)
 - [Update Your Voter Registration](#)
 - [Vote by Mail](#)
 - [Track My Ballot](#)
 - [Voter ID Requirements](#)
 - [Military/Overseas Voters](#)
 - [Student Voters](#)
 - [Voters With Special Needs](#)
 - [Election day results](#)
 - [Find My Polling Place](#)
- Counties are responsible for certifying VDRs and should provide information about how to become a certified voter deputy registrar, along with other available training.
- Similarly, counties should provide clear information on recruiting and training election workers.
- Take advantage of training, offered by the Texas Secretary of State and Texas Association of Counties, regarding new election laws and how to comply.

5. Help for special categories of voters!

- **Voters with disabilities**
 - Provide website accessibility
 - U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division *Disability Rights Section* [Accessibility of State and Local Government Websites to People with Disabilities](#)
 - Review [Chapter 5, Website Accessibility Under Title II of the ADA \(HTML\) | \(PDF\)](#)
 - Use HTML format on an accessible website to ensure that the website is accessible for voters with disabilities.
 - Do not use PDFs to provide information to voters! PDFs are not accessible by voters with low vision and are not the best practice for mobile phones.
 - Use words voters commonly use!
 - Use words such as "Voters with disabilities" or Voters with Special Needs."
 - Replace the title "Notice of Voting Order" with "Information for Voters with Disabilities" and an explanation of their rights.
- **Military and overseas voters**
 - Provide a link to [Federal Voting Assistance Program](#) Voting assistance for Service members, their families, and overseas citizens.
- **Student voters**
 - [Campus Vote Project](#) provides an excellent [student voting guide for Texas](#).
 - Add information for high school voters who may be voting for the first time.

6. Voter ID!

- List the voter ID information directly on the website and provide links for more details.
- Provide a link to the Secretary of State's page for [Voter ID Requirements](#)
- If using a pdf or image, let voters know what they will see when they click on the link.

7. Texas Secretary of State!

- Use a link or an embeddable code promoting www.votetexas.gov
<https://www.votetexas.gov/resources/promoting-votetexas-gov.html>
- Let voters know what they will find if they go to www.votetexas.gov or <https://www.sos.state.tx.us/>

8. Languages voters use!

- Provide a link to the Texas Secretary of State Spanish language website www.votetexas.gov/es/
- Review and use the Center for Civic Design Field Guide [Planning language access](#)

9. Nonpartisan Voters Guide!

- "The League of Women Voters of Texas nonpartisan Voters Guide is available before early voting for statewide elections". Link to VOTE411.org

10. Share Verified Websites and Social Media Accounts

- List county official websites and verified social media accounts
- Secretary of State's Toll-free number: 800.252.VOTE(8683) email:elections@sos.texas.gov
- The Election Protection number at 866-687-8683 <https://866ourvote.org/>