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FEATURED

Early primary voting down in Cooke County

IZZY AVEDESIAN Special to the Register

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Cooke County's early voting turnout is down from the 2020 presidential primary, despite a record-high number of registered voters and additional voting days this year.

The number of daily voters are about half of what they were during early voting of the 2020 primary, said Cooke County Clerk Pam Harrison.

Harrison said the turnout was lower than she expected, especially because this is the first year early voting includes weekends and longer poll hours during weekdays - 7 am to 7 pm.

This past weekend, 50 voters cast ballots on Saturday and 35 on Sunday.

At the end of the early voting in the 2020 primary, Cooke County voters cast 3,879 ballots. Harrison said she expects no more than 2,500 by the end of early voting on Friday.

Historically, Republican voters make up 80 percent of the county, and by last Tuesday, 108 votes had been cast in the Democratic primary and 1,406 in the Republican primary.

"I don't know that it's looking any different than usual," Republican County Chairman Chris McNamara said.

In addition to the presidential race, the U.S. Senate seat held by incumbent Ted Cruz and the U.S. House post held by Michael Burgess, who is not seeking re-election, are high on the ballot. The Republican primary also has two contested county commissioner races. The Democrats did not field candidates in those races.

"All the big hitters are on there, so there's a lot of reason to go vote," McNamara said.

McNamara anticipates many Republicans having to make difficult decisions while voting in this election.

“I think it’s going to be a little tricky,” he said. “We’ve got a congressional race with more than 10 people in it,” McNamara added.

Eleven GOP candidates are vying in the U.S. District 26 congressional race.

The Democratic primary ballot looks significantly different from previous election years, said Democratic Party Chairman Sherman Moore.

“We have more candidates on the ballot than we’ve had in probably the last four or five cycles,” Moore said.

This includes multiple candidates for the U.S. Senate seat and a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives.

“There’s going to be Democrats on the ticket at everything – except county commissioner,” he said.

Moore pointed out that some Democratic Cooke County voters who want to vote for county commissioner participate in the Republican primary election instead.

Even though Democratic candidates are on the ballot this year, Moore still expects voting results to reflect the large Republican majority in Cooke County, calling it traditional for the area.

But Moore said the Democratic challengers in the Texas House and Senate race are raising important issues that he said he hasn’t heard about from Republicans.

“They’re not talking about transportation for people who just need a job; they’re not talking about making housing affordable for people; they’re not talking about just raising teacher pay,” Moore said.

“We as Democrats are just trying to put all of the conversation on the table,” Moore said.

Moore also mentioned that he and the Cooke County Democratic Party put heavy emphasis on voter registration.

“We’re hopeful of dovetailing the efforts to be sure that we get all voters registered – especially young voters,” Moore said.

The county clerk reported that most early voters this year are aged 65 to 74. Voters aged 18 to 24 have the lowest turnout so far.

Although early voting numbers thus far don’t reflect wide-spread enthusiasm, McNamara said he anticipates seeing a bigger turnout on the last day of early voting as well as a large crowd on election day.

“I think a lot of people do like election day,” McNamara said.

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