

## **Denton County Voters on Election Day**

### Stories from our polling places

#### **Dan Burnam, Denton**

I have served as an election worker every two years for the past 20 years in Denton County. In November 2024, I worked as an Election Judge on Election Day at the Denton North Branch Library. I asked the election workers at my location to track how many voters we had to redirect.

That day we processed 596 votes. Our informal count indicated we redirected 191 potential voters to alternative locations. So out of 787 potential voters to enter our polling site, **24% were redirected.**

Overall being an election worker is a great experience. However, the most painful part comes on Election Day when it is required that voters be at their precinct's assigned voting location. We always end up redirecting large numbers.

The county realized the problem was bad, so they added a feature to the poll pad that will look up each voter's assigned voting location and print a map with driving instructions or send them directly to their phone.

This certainly has helped, but still many people are being inconvenienced. And who knows how many are able to make it to the correct place in time to vote.

#### **Albert Picardi, Flower Mound**

Albert Picardi has been an Election Judge or Clerk in Denton County since 2008. He has this conversation with over and over again with voters in Flower Mound on every Election Day:

"But my wife voted here on Friday," the gentlemen tells me.

"Yes, this was an Early Voting site, and anyone from Denton County could vote here during early voting. Today is Election Day, and Texas has some very specific Election Day voting rules.

"Texas law says that in Denton County you must vote at your precinct voting location on Election Day. If you want your vote to count, you must go to your Precinct Voting Location."

"That is the stupidest rule I've ever heard," he said.

"I agree, but you'll need to go to the elementary school to vote today."

**Emily Meisner, Denton**

Everyone behind the scenes, including the election workers, is unified in their frustration in having to redirect so many voters who report to the wrong Election Day polling locations. Many voters even get redirected multiple times to different locations.

This yields to an influx of angry voters and unnecessary amounts of provisional ballots, many of which end up not being counted.

**Vickie Pine, Aubrey**

I started working in Denton County elections after I retired from teaching math in 2019. In the past five years, our team has worked every single election, all over East Denton County.

We noticed that on Election Day we would have more people at the wrong location than voters. I suggested to my election judge that we start keeping count and we learned that we were redirecting 15-20 percent of the voters.

For Election Day in the March 2024 primary, we were at a Democratic primary polling location in Little Elm. This polling location had 2 voters and redirected 300 people.

Redirected voters get upset and angry with us when we tell them that they are at the wrong location. I tell them to call their county commissioner.

**Jane Scholz, Denton**

In March 2024, I worked as a clerk at the Denton North Branch Library, a Democratic primary polling location. When the polls opened at 7 am, people started streaming in. We were busy all day.

It quickly became obvious that for every voter who was able to cast a ballot at the library, another was in the wrong place and told to go somewhere else to vote.

By the end of the day, 301 valid ballots were cast. We didn't count the number of voters who were sent elsewhere, but it must have been 300 or more. Because we were a Democratic voting location, the vast majority of those turned away were Republican voters.

A few stand out in my memory: Elderly men and women who wheeled in unsteadily on walkers and were told that they had to get back in their cars and vote elsewhere. Then there here was an emaciated, severely ill man in a heavy motorized wheelchair with an oxygen tank strapped to the back who was accompanied by a caregiver. He was told to get back in his vehicle and head for Aubrey. His caregiver was told she would have to vote in Krum for her ballot to count.

**Jennifer Lane, Denton**

I have registered voters since the 1980s, long before moving to Denton in 2007. I have been a VDR in Denton County since 2013, have also been a DVR for Dallas, Collin and Tarrant counties, and I have worked elections in Denton County since at least **2016**.

For the past several years, I have worked as a clerk and alternate judge, though more often as a volunteer driving voters who show up at the wrong polling location on Election Day to the polling place where they can cast a ballot. There are always lots of them.

In June 2024, I worked the Democratic primary runoff election. Every single person who came to that polling location by mistake was a GOP voter. They always say, 'but this is where I always vote.' We redirected them. We don't know if they made it.

This past November, I organized 14 drivers and assigned them to specific polling locations. I created a mechanism for them to reach one another and me throughout the day if they needed help. Over the years, I have driven people to their correct poll, sometimes getting them there within two minutes before the polling place closed.

On the evening of November 5 I drove a young lady from the Wesley Center at UNT to Little Elm, getting her to her assigned polling place 15 minutes before the polls closed.

She had voted a provisional ballot at UNT, which would not have been counted. An election judge in Little Elm called the Wesley Center to get the provisional ballot voided and she was then able to cast a valid vote at her home precinct in Little Elm. This trip was an hour each way. We got back to UNT in time for me to drop her off at the Student Government Association Election Watch Party and take a quick selfie.

In the two hours we were together we never discussed *how* she would vote, only that I was determined she be able to vote. We're still in touch and sends me best wishes every holiday. During those last two hours on Election Day, who knows how many people never made it to the location to which they were redirected.

**Annick Cook, Savannah**

On Election Day in November 2022 at Frisco Fire Station 6, a small bus pulled up from Bethesda Gardens Assisted Living with a dozen elderly people who wanted to vote.

Most had mobility issues and were accompanied by a caregiver. As we started processing them, we realized that most were at the wrong polling location because they still had their voter registration at their own home.

Of the 12 people on the bus, only three were able to vote at the fire station. We printed out directions to correct polling locations for each voter and told the caregivers that they would have to drive to three more locations so that everybody would be able to vote that day.

This took about 30 minutes, checking everyone's proper polling location, printing out their instructions and getting them all back on the bus. They really wanted to exercise their right to vote that day and getting in and out of the bus was hard for them.

With vote centers, it would have been much easier for these disabled people to vote in a single location.

I worked as an Election Clerk during the 2024 primaries. On Election Day, I was at Little Elm Community Center for the Democratic primary. Even though we had clear signage saying we were a Democratic primary voting location, we had an enormous amount of Republican voters.

A lot of them were not very pleasant about being told they were at the wrong place since that's where they were used to voting in Republican primaries.

One voter showed up just before 7 pm as the polls were about to close, asking where he was supposed to set up to host his Republican precinct convention event. He was a Republican Precinct Chair and even he did not know that he was at the wrong location. Fortunately, the GOP voting location was just one block away so probably nobody missed out on voting. Nonetheless, a lot of Republicans were not happy and they let us know it.

### **Christie Wood, Denton**

My name is Christie Wood. I live in Denton, and I have been an election judge, early voting lead clerk, or alternate judge since 2016.

I've been an election judge at Denia Recreation Center, North Lakes Rec Center, Justin City Hall, Crossroads, South Branch Library, TWU, Denton's Civic Center, DISD Stevens Admin Building, and Carriage House Assisted Living Center. I've worked early voting and election day in each location.

In every one of those locations, changing from a countywide vote centers during early voting to assigned precinct-only voting on Election Day causes voter confusion, misdirection of voters, voter frustration, and extra work for the election team.

For example, during the 2024 Party Primary election, Justin City Hall was used for Early Voting. Everything ran smoothly.

But on Election Day, the City Hall location served as the Democratic Party primary-only location, while Republicans were sent to First Baptist Church of Justin.

Despite plenty of "Democrats Only" signs at City Hall, many Republicans still assumed they were voting at City Hall and came inside only to be redirected. There was much grumbling about having to drive to another location, even if it was only 4 blocks

away. Many voters said they felt County Government was deliberately making voting difficult.

The most egregious incident occurred when a Republican electioneer deliberately misdirected other Justin Republican voters, telling them they had to vote in Argyle. (This happened during a contentious Republican Party primary.) I stationed a clerk outside to stop this deliberate misdirecting.

I later found out from my Republican counterpart at First Baptist Church that his location also experienced deliberate voter misdirection from electioneers.

These issues would be eliminated if Denton County moved to countywide voting — Vote Centers — for Election Day.

### **Jackie Massey, Flower Mound**

As an Election Lead and Judge, I often have to redirect voters to their correct precincts on Election Day.

I have experienced voters who respect and gracefully accept the redirection, but there are also those who will argue or be irate. Then there are those who come in at the last-minute thinking that they are in the correct voting location who become really angry when they are told they must go somewhere else to vote.

On one of these occasions, a young lady came to vote on Election Day at my location in Lewisville. When she presented her government ID, the clerk found she was in the wrong location.

We explained that she was at the wrong location and then gave her printed directions to the correct location. She said that she had just come from that location, and that they had sent her to us. She became irate, argumentative and disturbed the other voters in the room.

I took her to another room, called the Denton County Elections Office and spoke to an Election Judge. This judge looked up her voter information and redirected her to the correct precinct location to vote – which was **the first location she had visited, where they told her to go to my polling location.**

We told her that she could fill out a provisional ballot at my location, though the Denton County Judge added that it might not count because it would be from the wrong precinct.

She started swearing while we were speaking, and when I asked that she refrain from using profanity, she continued to swear loudly.

Over the phone, the judge told me to call the police. When the voter heard that she left the polling place swearing loudly on her way out the door.

She was NOT a happy voter. And it was not a good experience for me or for the judge in the Elections office.

This would not have happened if we had Vote Centers.