



Erin Shank for Texas House of Representatives

Hello Friends and Neighbors.

I am Erin Shank and I am a candidate for the Texas House of Representatives on your November 8, 2022, ballot. Last week, in my first Candidate Column, I informed you that I have been a practicing attorney in Texas for almost forty years who has personally represented over 6,000 Central Texans in and out of our federal court system here in Waco. I also informed you that I have three college degrees, from three separate Texas universities, all in politics and law. My opponent is a retired veterinarian. I therefore believe that my educational and professional experience makes me vastly more qualified to represent you in the Texas House of Representatives.

However, I believe the fact that I am a woman and a mother is the attribute that qualifies me the most to represent this community in Austin at this moment in time. As we all know, the United States Supreme Court has reversed the Roe v. Wade decision and our country went from abortion as a Constitutional right to a virtual total ban on abortion in Texas. With this dramatic change in the law, there is no question that women's reproductive issues will dominate the next legislative session in Austin.

My husband and I were older when we married and began having children. We were advised with each of our three pregnancies that I should have a test called an amniocentesis, which would have let us know if I was carrying a child with Down Syndrome, so that we could determine if we wanted to abort the pregnancy. With all three of our pregnancies, we declined the test. We have two healthy sons, and a medically fragile daughter who has Down Syndrome. Rachel is the light of my life and the inspiration for me deciding to run for the Texas House. The decision to have her and her brothers, even as older parents, is a choice that John and I would gladly make again.

Even before the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, our country was terribly divided and polarized. Now, we have politicians that are at opposite ends of this issue. One side wants Roe restored. The other side wants a total ban on abortion. The last time we were this divided, the result was the Civil War. We can not do that again.

I encourage this debate to continue. However, I think we are in an emergency situation. While the debate continues, I feel called to work to triage this emergency just like medical professionals do in an emergency room. First, the "trigger law", which my opponent voted for, punishes the doctors, nurses and medical staff after the fall of Roe v. Wade. If any medical professional assists with a pregnancy termination, unless the mother's life or bodily functions are in imminent threat, those medical professionals will face life in prison, a \$100,000.00 fine and loss of their medical license. This law would have killed my disabled daughter. Rachel's health is extremely delicate. She must take a cocktail of medications daily in order to control her seizures and propensity for blood clots. Her doctors agree that a pregnancy would be life threatening and any fetus she would carry would not be viable due to her heavy medication requirements. If she was raped and became pregnant, the pregnancy would be fatal for Rachel and her fetus, but their deaths would not be imminent. I am therefore sure that I could not find a medical professional to help me save her life due to the threat of life imprisonment that the "trigger law" (that my opponent voted for) imposes on medical professionals. Therefore, during this pandemic, John and I have had to make serious medical and legal decisions, to help insure that Rachel's life is not taken from us due to this terrible law.

There are many "Rachels" in McLennan County. We must change this law to allow for women's lives to be saved, especially in the case of non-viable fetuses, ectopic pregnancies, partial miscarriages and similar medical emergencies. Most pregnancies are beautiful and healthy. Others are not. We must enable our medical professionals to make informed medical decisions, in consultation with the mother, like they do in all other medical emergencies, without fear of being imprisoned for the rest of their lives.

Last night, I spoke to a local physician who delivers babies here in Waco. She recently cared for a woman who was 16 weeks pregnant, and her water had broken which meant she had lost her amniotic fluid that the fetus would need to survive. When they began examining the woman, she delivered the umbilical cord, but not the fetus. The fetus was not viable and the mother's life was at risk. Nevertheless, the medical professionals could not assist that mother and save her life until the non-viable fetus' heart stopped because of their fear of this "trigger law".

These are real, true life experiences that have occurred in McLennan County due to this change in the law. We also must not, ever, prosecute and jail our girls when they terminate pregnancies. Legislation will be introduced in the next session of the Texas House of Representatives, which begins in January of 2023, to prosecute and jail our young girls if they travel to another state to terminate a pregnancy. Briscoe Cain, a current member of the Texas House of Representatives, recently said, "I went to law school in order to prosecute women who terminate pregnancies". When I personally watched him say that, I almost threw up. As we adults figure out how to live together in this post Roe world, we can not imprison our girls. No. No. Never.

If we want to stop or greatly reduce pregnancies, we must work on pregnancy prevention and education. Birth control medication is available "over the counter" with no prescription required in over 100 countries, but not America. This must change. Now that there is also no exception for rape, incest or human trafficking, we must enable our young girls to protect themselves by being educated and armed with medical prevention. At this time in our nation, state and community's history, I think it is vital that we choose a woman, who has made tough reproductive health decisions for herself and her disabled daughter, to lead us through this post Roe world. For the women of McLennan County, and the men who love them, I respectfully request that you vote for Erin Shank for Texas House on November 8, 2022. I believe we definitely deserve better representation in the Texas House of Representatives.

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