

Candidate Column



I am Erin Shank, and I am asking for your vote for the Texas House of Representatives in the upcoming November 8, 2022 election. On the campaign trail, I am frequently asked what issues I would like to advance if elected to the Texas House. I am the mother, legal guardian and advocate to my disabled daughter, Rachel Shank. Rachel has Down Syndrome, Epilepsy, and a weak set of lungs. She has been hospitalized 64 times, 26 of those times she was hospitalized with pneumonia. I have advocated for her with doctors, insurance companies, school districts, teachers, Medicare and even before the Social Security Administration. She was born on Labor Day in 1998 and we call her our "Labor of Love". I believe we need a true advocate for the disabled in Austin. Living with Rachel, especially throughout the past two years during the Covid 19 Pandemic, has been challenging. I now see the world through the eyes of a disabled child. I do not think we have a true, experienced advocate for the disabled in the Texas House, and I want to be that advocate. I define the word "disabled" very broadly in this context. A disabled person is certainly someone like my daughter Rachel, or your elderly grandmother or grandfather. However, all of us can be disabled in some fashion when life deals us a tough blow. You are temporarily disabled when you are in an accident and break your leg. You are temporarily disabled when you are diagnosed with Covid 19, or experience the effects of Long Covid. Women who are pregnant can also be temporarily disabled in

that their mobility is challenging at the end of their pregnancy. Many women are advised to submit to complete bed rest when they are pregnant, especially with multiple babies like twins or in high risk pregnancies. One of the largest groups of disabled individuals are our Disabled Veterans. I have been a practicing lawyer for almost 40 years. I have an office in downtown Waco and a second office in Killeen, Texas. My Killeen office is just a few miles outside of the entrance to Ft. Hood Military Installation, the largest military installation in the world. I have represented literally thousands of Disabled Veterans, who return from serving our country with a wide variety of mental or physical disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are just as American and as Texan as the rest of us – they just are restricted either permanently or temporarily due to an issue that is disabling their ability to completely function in society. Parenting and advocating for my disabled daughter for over two decades and representing thousands of Disabled Veterans in and out of federal court in Waco, gives me a unique and very valuable perspective. When I consider any proposed legislation, this life experience of advocating for the disabled will be the lens through which I see. *"Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."* Matthew 25:40.

To learn more about my campaign for the Texas House of Representatives, visit our website www.erinshankfortexashouse.com or follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at Erin4tx.