

Candidate Column



Hello Friends:

When I married John almost thirty years ago, I knew he was going to move me to the country. I was right. Before our first year wedding anniversary, he had plucked me from my comfortable home in the heart of suburban Dallas to the rural community of Whitney, in Hill County, Texas. We purchased our first home in Whitney. We still own that home to this day. That address appears on all three of our children's birth certificates. They were all three baptized in Whitney churches and we raised our children in that rural community when they were young. I was even in charge of the annual Whitney, Texas Pioneer Day Celebration in 1996. I have opened law offices in both downtown Whitney and downtown Groesbeck, Texas to be closer to clients in those rural communities. However, as our children grew and our jobs changed, we decided to move our family to Waco. We love Whitney and our children still consider it home.

One of the great things about campaigning is exploring all of the rural towns in McLennan County. It reminds me of those simpler days when the kids were younger and we lived the rural life. On the campaign trail, I have discovered that I would much prefer shopping at Brookshires in Moody or Lorena than shopping at a Walmart anywhere. I can't wait to attend Westfest again. I can spend hours in resale and antique stores in West and McGregor chatting with the shoppers and clerks and looking for campaign buttons to add to our collection.

I have also represented literally hundreds of folks from rural Central Texas. Financial challenges and foreclosure can hit rural and urban families alike. I have represented countless farmers, ranchers and dairymen over the years. One of my favorite clients owned his family farm that had been purchased in the 1850's. We prevented his banker from taking that farm by filing a Chapter 12 family farmer reorganization plan which was approved by the federal court in Waco. Electing a new representative that has actually represented rural Americans is vital for our community in the upcoming election for some of the following reasons.

First, it is vital that we get our tax dollars paid to the federal government back to rural America by expanding Medicaid. My disabled daughter is on Medicaid. I spent Sunday with her in the Emergency Room and, because she is 100% disabled, Medicaid paid for her treatment and two prescriptions. Medicaid currently provides health care coverage for the elderly and the disabled

citizens in all fifty states. It is funded from money received from our tax dollars by the federal government. Several years ago, the federal government offered to give those tax dollars back to the states so that the states could provide health insurance to its lower income citizens. To date, thirty-nine states (including the District of Columbia) have voted to expand Medicaid and have implemented that expansion. Due to this new law, nearly 1.7 million rural Americans now have medical coverage for their primary and preventative care including behavioral health and nursing home care, but Texas does not. The three medical facilities in McLennan County – Providence Ascension Hospital, Baylor Scott and White Hospital and Waco Family Medicine – have all requested our current representative to vote to expand Medicaid, but he has repeatedly refused to do so. Medicaid provides economic stability for hospitals and rural health care providers. If we expanded Medicare, more health care providers would come to rural America to provide patient treatment. We might even get a rural hospital in West or McGregor if Medicaid was expanded. There is one reason that we don't have the expansion of Medicaid that is so vitally needed in rural Texas – our current representative refuses to vote for it. We have the opportunity to change that in November.

My opponent's party is also supporting programs that will dramatically hurt our already underfunded public school system. Voucher programs would allow property tax payers to take the tax dollars they pay on the value of their homes in the form of a "voucher" and use that voucher to pay for their children's private school education. This literally would take millions of dollars away from our public schools. In rural communities the public school is one of the biggest employers. Many small towns don't have any private schools and so rural Texas would not benefit from this program. The vouchers are so small compared to the cost of a private education that it provides little benefit to the parents of private school children, but puts a big dent in the financing of public education. Texas is ranked 45th in the nation in school funding, 43rd in the nation in education quality and 26th in the nation in public school teacher pay. Taking money away from an already underfunded system only hurts that system. Our public school system is vital. It is training our next generation, our workforce, our children and grandchildren.

As an owner of two small businesses and a product of the Texas public education system, I know the value of hard work, the importance of seeing a doctor when you are sick and the value of a good education. I have represented hundreds of folks living in the rural parts of McLennan County and I know their struggles and their concerns. As a mom, I want the best for all of our children and our loved ones. Please vote for Erin Shank for the Texas House of Representatives on November 8, 2022 because McGregor, West, Riesel, Valley Mills and all the rural portions of McLennan County deserve Medicare Expansion and fully-funded public schools.