

## News Flash! Politicians, The People Need to hear from you

Written by Jeffrey L. Boney  
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All across the African-American communities of Houston, registered voters and those that have become jaded by the process of voting altogether, are crying out for those seeking elected office to reach out to them and help them better understand how these elected officials impact the average citizen on a daily basis.

They are demanding that the same energy and efforts used to garner votes be duplicated when it comes to educating the African-American community about issues that impact them.

Sadly, many African-Americans are not as familiar with elected positions other than that of President of the United States and maybe the Governor of their respective state. In addition to that, many are not aware how their U.S. and state Representatives, U.S. and state Senators, state education agencies and judges impact them.

If African-Americans would take a moment of reflection and think about whether their currently elected officials (not just the African-American ones), adequately reached out to their community to educate them on major issues and other critical information, they would begin to see the true reality.

All of these elected offices impact you in some way and to simply ignore them and be ignored is not smart. It is extremely important that the right to vote is exercised and that the knowledge of understanding who you are voting for in every position on the ballot is even more important.

## **TEXAS PRIMARY DATE SET**

After all the legal wrangling, community outrage and political gridlock over the state's electoral maps, Texas will hold its general primary election for 2012 on May 29. The ruling, handed down by a panel of three federal judges out of San Antonio, approved interim electoral maps in an effort to resolve differences over congressional redistricting. The judges approved the interim maps on February 28, 2012.

Many community leaders, elected officials and civil rights organizations believed the initial electoral maps disenfranchised minority groups across many parts of Texas.

## **IMPORTANCE OF ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Elected officials are extremely integral to the landscape of our society. Holding elected office is not just a position, it is an honor and a privilege. It is important for citizens to know that these elected officials make decisions on many key issues and matters that impact our daily lives, from your neighborhood to your city, county, state and even the nation.

Every ordinance, policy and law that is passed, was introduced and voted on by an elected official. Elected officials have and continue to make decisions on everything from your taxes, education, house appraisal, health, voting and the environment.

Every single issue, implemented policy change or law that impacts the black community should be shared in layman's terms to the community. Many people don't understand the legal and political jargon, but a politician can help their constituents by empowering them with information.

Just like an interpreter is there to decipher the words for people that don't understand differing languages, elected officials and those seeking higher office must be the interpreter for their constituents and provide clear meaning to policies and laws.

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### **TAKEN FOR GRANTED**

Many elected officials that currently hold office take the African-American community for granted and will never truly reach out to them to ensure that they are educated on the issues or the importance of what they plan to do in their communities.

It is time out for just letting currently elected officials run up in your church, give a rousing ten minute speech and disappear from your church and your community until the next election cycle.

The African-American community want leaders that will dedicate themselves or their staff to go out in the community and educate the community and constituents. Granted, not every elected official can attend every event; however, they can effectively spend money and time to train individuals on their staff to represent them and be their mouthpiece in the community; communicating critical, time-sensitive and important information.

Take a good look at the current elected officials or the challengers that are seeking elected office. They should be challenged to explain why they are running for their position or why they should be re-elected.

Don't just give them your vote because they are African-American or because they are the incumbent or because they are in a particular party.

Nobody outright owns the African-American vote.

### **UNDERSTANDING THE BLACK VOTER**

These are some very important times and those seeking elected office need to figure out how to reach potential voters in the African-American community.

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Strategic preparation is the most important part of what currently elected officials and their challengers will have to do to better understand how to reach African-American voters.

Those seeking to earn the right to represent their constituents must use creative methods and ways to capture their attention. Simply getting African-Americans to vote is not enough. African-Americans must be educated on the importance of voting and what they are voting for.

African-American voters must take a “what’s in it for me” approach to their vote, because these will be the elected officials that will impact their communities. First, however, those seeking elected office must capture the attention of the African-American voter.



### GETTING OUR ATTENTION

In spite of the redistricting fiasco, there have been a few candidates canvassing the community seeking to educate potential voters on why they should be in office. Sadly, most of those doing this are not incumbents, but challengers.

Are incumbents comfortable in their belief that African-Americans don't care and will vote for them strictly on the strength of their tenure and resume?

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Are they no longer hungry for the vote of the African-American community, because they believe they will get it anyway?

Some candidates are utilizing social media and technology to reach voters, similar to the strategy incorporated by then-candidate Barack Obama. Others are using unconventional means to reach voters, like Elaine Palmer, a candidate for Judge seeking the 215<sup>th</sup> Civil District Court seat.

If you listen to 1430 KCOH Radio or attend local lounges, you will find DJ's playing her catchy jingle and encouraging people to memorize it and sing it karaoke style. She has been seen on the streets and her signs seem to appear everywhere. She has people on corners putting on displays, while holding up her signs in an attempt to capture the attention of those that will stop and listen to her message.

The main objective is not to emphasize the theatrics, but to capture the attention of potential voters by creative methods, and then talk to them about what a civil court judge does. This is an important way to educate and reach that potential voter.

Many of the potential voters Palmer has been able to connect to would probably not even care to learn more about what a civil court judge does or even think about voting for any of the down ballot races. The African-American voter is a sleeping giant, so going the extra mile to reach them and explain how it would impact them, is what is needed to wake them up.

### **LEADERSHIP IS THE KEY**

If you are a leader and no one is following you, you are just taking a walk. A lot of politicians are just taking a walk because they have nobody following their level of progression or growth.

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If the constituents of elected officials have not progressed, and are no more educated or advanced as a result of that lack of leadership, then the taxpaying voters should not continue to vote for them.

An informed voter is an educated voter. Those seeking office and seeking to remain in office should do everything they can to inform and educate African-Americans, starting today.

As the Forward Times reported last month, we are working with community leaders and activists to help African-American people realize their true power and be a part of a movement that impacts local, county and state races, in addition to the commonly supported federal elections.{jcomments on}