

PERSONAL INJURY POST

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Your Vote Does Make an Impact

In a different year, this October newsletter would probably showcase fun Halloween memories, tips for how to prepare for the holidays, or a variety of other less "serious" topics. But this is not an ordinary year, nor is it an ordinary October. With a major election just weeks away, I'd like to use this platform as an opportunity to talk to you about voting.

The right to vote is a profoundly important aspect of American life. Over the years, it has been earned through the sacrifices of countless men and women. Voting can be the most powerful tool our populace has to make their voices heard by the elected officials who dictate how we live our daily lives. But this power must be utilized to have any impact. In 2016, with only 51.6% of its registered voters showing up to the polls, Texas ranked amongst the bottom five states in the nation for registered voter turnout. There are many, often complicated reasons for these poor turnout numbers, but the one I'd like to focus on is voter apathy.

When I ask my friends and family why they aren't planning on voting, the most common answer I get is, "because it doesn't matter." This answer has different meanings to different people, but it is incorrect, nonetheless. For some, regardless of their political affiliation, they may feel that living in Texas, their vote will not sway some of the bigger elections on the ballot. Some people might say, "my candidate is safe" or "my candidate has no chance," thus feeling that there is no harm in skipping the polls. For others, years of dissatisfaction with those in charge may have turned them off and instilled a "They're all the same" attitude. Whatever the reason for feeling that your vote plays no role this November, I humbly ask that you reconsider.

This year's election brings with it more than just a chance to decide who will reside in the White House or who will represent Texas in Congress next year. It also brings the opportunity to choose who will represent your district on a state level. To choose who will be allocating the budgets that are applied to the schools our children attend or are used for infrastructure in the areas we live in. You will have a chance to choose the sheriffs who look after our communities and to

vote on the justices and judges who may someday hear your case. Local elections generally have a much more direct and immediate impact on your community, and they are often swung by handfuls of votes.

This election brings with it many important choices for each and every one of us. It also brings certain obstacles. The threat of the continued spread of COVID-19 will have an impact. For that reason, I ask that you and your family have a plan to vote as safely as possible. If you can, make it a point to vote early to avoid potential crowds on election day. Wear your mask at all times and respect the personal space of your fellow voters.

Regardless of your personal beliefs, values, or general political affiliation, it is important that you make your voice heard this November. I promise you, your vote counts, your vote matters, and your vote will have an impact.

Below are some resources to help you register to vote, find out where you can vote, and to know what dates and times voting is available to you. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to give us a call. We will be more than happy to assist you.

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

Election Day: Nov. 3, 2020

Register to vote: Oct. 5, 2020

Early voting: Oct. 13 – Oct. 30, 2020

Request mail-in ballot: Oct. 23, 2020

Vote by mail:

- Postmarked by Nov. 3, 2020
- Received no later than 5 p.m., Nov. 4, 2020.

(PLEASE NOTE: USPS is anticipating delays and requests that you mail your ballot at least one week early.)

To check your registration status, how to request a mail-in ballot, where your precinct is located, where you can vote early, and more, please visit either of the following websites: **Vote.org** or **VoteTexas.org**.

Romeo Rendon
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"This year's election brings with it more than just a chance to decide who will reside in the White House or who will represent Texas in Congress next year."

DON'T TURN YOUR FACE MASKS INTO PETRI DISHES

Tips for Proper Care and Cleaning

In the span of a few months, face masks went from being something Americans only saw in hospital settings to an item we can't leave home without. Since everyday use of face masks is still relatively new in the United States, here are some answers from Johns Hopkins Medicine to common questions regarding the proper care and cleaning of your face mask.

'How often should I clean my face mask?'

Disposable, surgical face masks cannot be cleaned. Johns Hopkins recommends throwing surgical masks away when they are "visibly soiled or damaged." If you wear a reusable fabric face mask, then you should wash your mask after each day of use to help prevent bacterial growth.

'What's the best way to clean my face mask?'

Earlier this year, a video circulated on social media claiming that you could use a rice cooker to sanitize disposable face masks. This claim is untrue. As stated previously, disposable face masks cannot be cleaned. However, fabric face masks, especially those made of cotton, can be washed with the rest of your laundry. Run them through the washing machine with hot water, then tumble dry on high heat. If you are sensitive to perfumes, use an unscented laundry detergent.

'Is it safe to hand-wash face masks?'

Since fabric face masks need to be washed after each use, running a wash cycle just to clean a couple of masks can feel pretty wasteful — like doing a load of laundry only to wash the socks you wore yesterday. The Johns Hopkins Medicine website states that you can hand-wash your face masks if needed. Use hot, soapy water to wash your masks, scrub the mask for at least 20 seconds, and dry on high heat in your dryer.

'Where should I store my cloth face masks when I'm not wearing them?'

Put used cloth face masks directly into the laundry basket when you arrive home to ensure they get cleaned in a timely manner and to prevent you from accidentally spreading germs. Have a sanitized place designated to store clean face masks only. Avoid putting face masks in your pocket or purse.

Face masks are supposed to help keep us all healthy. Follow these tips to make sure your mask doesn't become a petri dish.



THE HURT CAUSED BY NEGLIGENCE

Fighting for a Premature Loss of Life

Losing a parent is one of the hardest things we can experience, and that is made all the harder when we lose a parent far too early. Unfortunately, these grievous moments do occur in life. Yet, when a loss of life is caused by the negligence of another, this tragedy is far worse. Here is a case our firm recently settled, where our team fought for the rights of one such family who lost a wonderful family member.

Case Facts: While driving westbound on FM 3354 in Nueces County, Texas, our clients' mother began merging onto U.S. Highway 77. The defendant, driving a 1996 Freightliner Tractor, was speeding as he headed northbound on 77; that's when our clients' mother crossed over onto the highway. Because the defendant had failed to keep the speed of the trailer at a reasonable pace, he was forced to take evasive maneuvers in an attempt to avoid a collision — which proved to be ineffective. The trailer collided with the vehicle, resulting in a crash that caused our client's mother to sustain fatal injuries.

FIRE SAFETY MONTH

Some Helpful Tips





The Outcome: Were it not for the negligence of the driver, our clients' mother would be alive today. The defendant knew that by failing to control his speed, he put other drivers at risk. Yet, he chose to do so anyway. This directly resulted in the loss of life, and hurt a family that will never completely heal from these traumatic events. While we cannot undo this hurt, our attorneys set out to ensure as many of these wrongs were put right.

That is why our firm exists — when someone has been wronged, we stand up to speak on their behalf. It is not just to address the injustice suffered by the injured and deceased; we also fight for the families and friends who are impacted and mourning for their loved ones. Garcia & Ochoa are here to fight for you and your family, no matter what injustice you may face.

October is Fire Safety Month, which means this is a great chance to review fire safety at the office, at home, or both. Here are a few helpful tips on how to keep your home and workplace safe by minimizing fire hazards.

Keep Fire Extinguishers Close

Fire extinguishers are great tools to use if a small fire breaks out at home or at the office. Be sure to know how many are in a building and that they're inspected every month by a proper inspector. It's also important that, before you ever need to use an extinguisher, you know how to use it. If you're unsure of your ability to use one, get out of the building and call 911.

Know Your Exits

In a workplace, it is essential to know the emergency exit routes and to have these routes posted up around the facility. An emergency exit plan is also essential to have at home. Be sure to talk with your family about the appropriate routes to take (and where you will safely meet up outside) if a fire does occur in your home.

Tidy Up

Old letters, a pile of blankets, old pens, heaps of laundry, toys, and stacks of books are all the types of clutter that are usually a source of fuel for a house fire. Household clutter allows the fire to burn, gain ferocity, and spread far more quickly. Additionally, clutter can impede — or even prevent — timely access to an exit. Take the time to keep your home and workplace as clean as you can.

Pick a Smoking Area

Whether you're at work or at home, designating a smoking area can be exactly what you need to prevent fires. By designating a spot outside — in the backyard, on the porch, or at the back of your office building — you can take precautionary measures to prevent a fire. Keep a fire extinguisher on hand in those areas and be sure to provide the materials needed to safely extinguish a cigarette.

SPOOKY STRAWBERRY GHOSTS

Inspired by Candiquik.com

These adorable chocolate-dipped strawberry ghosts will be the stars of your Halloween party!

INGREDIENTS

- 16 oz white chocolate, chopped
- 24 strawberries
- 1 package mini dark chocolate chips

DIRECTIONS

1. In a microwave-safe bowl, heat the white chocolate at 50% power for 30 seconds. Remove it and stir, then repeat the process until melted.
2. Lay out a sheet of parchment paper.
3. One by one, dip the strawberries into the melted white chocolate and set them on the parchment. Allow the extra chocolate to pool to form a "tail" effect.
4. Before the chocolate coating fully cools, add three mini chocolate chips to each berry to form two eyes and a mouth.
5. Let chocolate set, then serve your spooky snacks!



BE INSPIRED

"If you have good thoughts they will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely."

ROALD DAHL

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Spooky City Regulations Halloween Laws Across the U.S.

Halloween can be a mischievous holiday. The most innocent of us reserve it for backyard parties and trick-or-treating, but some like to get a little rowdier than others. That's exactly why various city councils across the U.S. have passed some seemingly unusual laws to regulate spooky festivities.

Rehoboth Beach, Delaware: No Sunday Trick-or-Treating

If Halloween falls on a Sunday, children in Rehoboth Beach are required to trick-or-treat the night before. The explanation in the city code is simple, but ambiguous: to prevent children and their guardians from going door to door on Sunday evenings. Rehoboth Beach law also forbids children from roaming the streets on Halloween "with the intent to cause trouble," but what exactly that means is ambiguous as well.

Hollywood, California: No Silly String

The Los Angeles City Council has banned Silly String and all other brands of aerosol string from use on Halloween in the Hollywood area. From midnight on Oct. 31 until noon on Nov. 1, no one is allowed to spray, sell, or distribute Silly String in public locations. Use of Silly String got so popular in the city on

Halloween that the mess left behind became a strain on sanitation workers, and the city sympathized with them.

Belleville, Illinois: No 8th Graders

Trick-or-treating is most often viewed as an activity reserved for younger generations, but how do you determine what age is "too old" for this type of generally good-natured fun? Well, the city of Belleville settled the ambiguity by passing a law restricting teenagers who are past the eighth grade — generally older than 13 — from going door to door on Halloween.

Walnut, California: No Masks Without Permits

In a simpler time, there was no paperwork required to celebrate Halloween to the fullest. But in the city of Walnut, no one can wear a mask or other disguise on public streets without a permit from the sheriff. The law doesn't specify any exceptions, so residents are left to assume that everyone from age 5 to 100 must abide.

Whatever your Halloween celebrations might look like this year, it's important to have fun, but remember to abide by any rules or laws your city might have in place in an effort to keep its citizens safe.