#Vote4MentalHealth - Promote mental health this election season

Let’s get ready to vote! Texas is holding its party primary elections on March 3rd, and NAMI Texas is focused on educating voters and candidates on critical mental health policies we hope to see pass in 2021 and beyond.

Voting Starts Next Week!!!

The primary election is on March 3rd, but early voting runs from February 18th-28th. Now is the time to check your voter registration, find your polling place, and make sure you have the ID you need to vote.

You can find more information on the elections here: https://www.vote411.org/texas.

The League of Women Voters has released statewide and local voter guides that provide voter education and non-partisan information on where each candidate running in the elections stand on critical issues.

You can find the guide here: https://my.lwv.org/texas/election-information.

#SickofItTX Needs Mental Health Voices

NAMI Texas is partnering with #SickofItTX, a non-partisan grassroots network of engaged activists committed to making healthcare the key issue for Texas policy makers in the 2020 elections and 2021 legislative session.

Access to quality healthcare is a core part of recovery. We need NAMI members to not only help with this movement, but also represent NAMI locally and highlight the need for strong mental health services as part of this healthcare movement.

Learn about this critical movement here and how to get involved here: https://sickofittx.org/join.

Federal: Voters for Cure Volunteers Still Needed!

The Voters for Cures (VFC) coalition is still looking for volunteers in Texas who are interested in federal
The Voters for Cures (VFC) coalition is still looking for volunteers in Texas who are interested in federal mental health advocacy. The VFC mission is to support medical progress and the policies that make new medicines possible. VFC members have the opportunity to advocate for proposals that support the next generation of treatments and cures and that ensure people can get the medicines they need. VFC efforts focus on three core areas:

**Making Sure Patients Can Afford Their Medicines**
We need to make sure that patients who need medicines can get them without the burden of high-deductibles or out-of-pocket costs. We must work with policymakers to ensure that Americans continue to benefit from the research and development of new treatments that improve how we treat the most complex health challenges.

**Supporting the Next Generation of Treatments and Cures**
Vital medicines are only successful if the people who need them can get them. We need to make sure that federal, state and local politicians support policies that improve access to these treatments for patients today and protect the innovation of tomorrow at the same time. We know we can do both.

**Protecting Medicare Benefits**
Politicians in Washington are looking to cut costs and make real changes to Medicare. Some policies would allow the government to decide which medicines Medicare beneficiaries can get, and which they can’t, in order to save money. We can’t break our promises to these beneficiaries and shrink their access to life saving treatments.

The coalition is specifically looking for constituents of these members of Congress:
- Kay Granger: https://kaygranger.house.gov/about/our-district
- Michael Burgess: https://burgess.house.gov/district/interactivemap.htm
- Marc Veasey: https://veasey.house.gov/our-district
- Will Hurd: https://hurd.house.gov/about/our-district

If you live in any of these districts and might be interested in sharing your story with federal lawmakers, please contact Greg Hansch at executive.director@namitexas.org.

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### Help Us Make 988 a Reality

Our nation is experiencing a mental health and suicide crisis; its time our emergency systems are set up to help.

**The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has proposed to make 9-8-8 the national number for mental health crisis and suicide prevention.** It’s important that the FCC hears from you to know how important an easy-to-use, 3-digit number for mental health emergencies is to our community.

Submit comments to the FCC here. Search "18-336" in the Proceedings box. Use the below template or let them know what implementing 9-8-8 as a 3-digit code for mental health emergencies will mean to you. Personal stories have a great impact so please consider including a note about the importance of easy to access crisis services.

**Sample comment to submit:**

Our nation needs a nationwide, 3-digit number (9-8-8) for suicide prevention and other mental health crises. Anyone who experiences a mental health crisis should be able to access help as easily as someone experiencing a physical health emergency. A 3-digit number should be available to every community and have the resources to provide help to every American who needs it.

I ask the FCC to make it a priority for the new 9-8-8 system to be nationally available and adequately resourced, so that my community and others can provide the services necessary to anyone in crisis.

(Insert personal paragraph about what this would mean to you, your family, or your community.)
Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and for your commitment to helping every American affected by mental illness.

Sincerely,

Name
City, State

If you have anything you would like to share with NAMI Texas advocates in these emails, please send the information to policy.fellow@namitexas.org.

- Alissa Sughrue and the NAMI Texas Public Policy Team

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**Article: Hundreds of mentally ill people sit in Texas jails waiting for hospital**

Austin ABC affiliate KVUE reported on our state’s overwhelming state hospital waitlist for individuals determined to be mentally incompetent to stand trial and the devastating consequences our families and communities suffer.

“I think the waitlist is very much a threat to the health and safety of the person and to their family and loved ones and their children,” Executive Director of Texas Jail Project Diana Claitor said. “It affects everyone.”

[Read more about this issue here.](#)

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**The Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council is seeking stakeholder feedback.**

This new agency will house the Psychology, Social Work, Professional Counselor, Marriage and Family Therapy boards and it is in strategic planning for fiscal years 2021-2025. As part of the planning process, the Council would like to ask for your input regarding trends, conditions, opportunities, and obstacles that influence the Council as an agency as well as the practices of psychology, counseling, marriage and family therapy, and social work.

If you would like to participate in this survey, [please click here.](#)

**Survey responses must be received on or before February 28, 2020 at 5pm.** Responses or comments sent or received outside of the survey or after the deadline may not be considered.
Happy Valentine's Day!

Enjoy these Health Policy Valentines from NAMI. You can read more of these (or post your own) at on Twitter under the hashtag #HealthPolicyValentines.

NAMI Texas is nonpartisan. We support policies that help people with mental health conditions and their families.