

UNIVERSITY of  
**HOUSTON**

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

**Label:** UB-58006

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**Sponsor(s):** Executive Assistant White, President Darbin, Vice President Alghafir, Director of Outreach Bennett, Attorney General Hutcherson, Senator Cheatum, Senator Sanchez, Associate Director of Community Relations Lucky-Dania, Community Outreach Coordinator Menon, Associate Director of Governmental Relations Lopez-Gil

**Committee:** Student Life

**Draft:** First

**Creation of the Civic Engagement and Advocacy University Committee**

**Whereas,** civic engagement is a critical component of our democratic process;

**Whereas,** civic health and engagement are not solely determined by registering and voting in national elections, but also and are not limited to: signing petitions, contacting representatives, donating to political causes, discussing politics with family and friends, volunteering, group involvement, and social connectedness;

**Whereas,** Texas ranks among the lowest in the nation for political participation and civic involvement<sup>1</sup>;

**Whereas,** “communities with strong indicators of civic health as measured by the Civic Health Index have higher employment rates, stronger schools, better physical health, and more responsive governments”<sup>2</sup>;

**Whereas,** the 2020 election cycle saw a record-breaking voter turnout in Harris County with over 1,600,000 ballots cast<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> [https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/2018-Texas\\_Civic\\_Health\\_Index.pdf](https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/2018-Texas_Civic_Health_Index.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/historical/harris.shtml>



**Whereas**, over 1,000,000 voters in Texas under the age of 30 casted their ballots by the end of the early voting period in 2020, vis-à-vis the efforts of students and faculty organizing on campus to create opportunities for engagement<sup>4</sup>;

**Whereas**, although past administrations of the Student Government Association have made strong efforts to promote student civic engagement, this trend may not continue in future administrations due to different agenda priorities;

**Whereas**, the University of Houston lacks a centralized position, organization, group, (designated) office or department to oversee and promote civic engagement on campus;

**Whereas**, numerous individuals, groups, departments, and organizations have struggled in the past to coordinate and consolidate the many different civic engagement and voter advocacy efforts on campus, that best and most efficiently reach students;

**Whereas**, civic engagement has steadily declined nationally over the last two decades, it is important that we take time to explore what engagement tools, strategies, and processes will best meet the needs and conditions of specific populations, specifically students at the University of Houston.

**Therefore, be it enacted by the Senate of the Student Government Association of the University of Houston:**

That the new “Civic Engagement and Advocacy University Committee” will be housed under the Dean of Students Office and will consist of at least three (3) and a maximum of five (5) Student Government representatives. There must be at least one (1) and a maximum of two (2) voting representatives from within the Student Government Executive Branch. All other Student Government representatives can be Senators or members of the general student body. All Student Government representatives will be nominated by the Vice President and confirmed by the Senate;

**Be it further enacted**, that there be at least one (1) and a maximum of two (2) voting representatives confirmed and appointed by the University of Houston Faculty Senate;

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.texasobserver.org/young-voters-texas-2020/>



**Be it further enacted**, that there be one (1) voting representative from each relevant, or civically focused group, organization, and/or department on campus that expresses interest in joining the committee, with a maximum of ten (10) seats available for this. These representatives will be selected at the discretion of each of the groups, organizations, and/or departments. After selecting representatives, each group will complete and submit an interest application form to the committee chair and will be admitted once they have been confirmed by the committee according to the committee bylaws;

**Be it further enacted**, that the purpose and goal of this committee is to facilitate collaboration and foster cooperation on civic engagement related endeavors and initiatives on campus amongst different relevant groups, organizations, and/or departments;

**Be it further enacted**, that the committee will work towards fulfilling its purpose and achieving its goals by executing all of its mandatory requirements and/or tasks, including:

1. Advertising upcoming city, county, state, and federal election voting hours and polling locations on campus through coordination with local election officials;
2. Semi-regular (at least once a month) accessible voter registration tablins throughout the academic year, availability permitting;
3. Planning and hosting at least one (1) large voter registration and/or election related event each academic year;
4. Planning and hosting at least one (1) Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar training on campus or online each academic year (or semester);
5. Submitting a report to the Director of External Affairs, President, and Speaker within four (4) weeks following a large event that will include, but is not limited to, statistics, feedback, pros and cons, and recommendations for the future. The report will then be sent out to the Senate by the Speaker with the next Senate Meeting agenda.

Arsalan Darbin

**APPROVED**

Arsalan Darbin

Student Government President

Date of President's Approval: 10-13-2021

David Paul Hilton

David Paul Hilton

Speaker of the Senate

Date of Senate Approval: 10-13-2021

