

Small groups can influence public policy

April 13, 2006
Posted: 4/13/06

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SAN ANTONIO—All the tools are available to Christians who want to influence politics, said Ross Ramsey, editor of a publication on Texas government and politics.

While to many people politics seems a distant, unchangeable machine dominated by big money, Ramsey—editor of Texas Weekly—believes small groups of people can have a large impact on political elections.

Turnout in primary elections is so low in Texas that small, organized groups of people can determine the course of elections and get their candidates on the general- election ballot, Ramsey said during the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission conference.

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In many cases, the primary elections practically determine the general elections because an area is dominated by one party.

People are motivated to vote in primaries by issues, Ramsey said. Smart groups promote issues that encourage people who are likely to vote for their candidate to come to the polls without inciting opponents to vote.

“When people really care about elections ... and they see a way they can control it, they show up,” he said.

As few as 150 people committed to working on a campaign can change the course of an election, Ramsey said. They can help by hanging posters, planting signs and passing out fliers.

“If you’re organized, your money problems will somewhat go away,” he said.

But most people remain apathetic, Ramsey said. This allows large campaign contributions to change the outcome of elections. Donors target specific contests and specific times to change people's minds.

"As long as you have 10 percent turnout or 5 percent turnout, that kind of money can turn elections," he said.

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