

Voices: Weighing our values and actions

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Daily, we weigh values and prioritize actions. Our Christian faith, the call of God on our lives, guides us. It is not a spectator sport.

Recently, I have toggled back and forth at the Texas Legislature and can see what values are resting on the scales held by state decision-makers. Legislators seriously consider dozens of bills. It is mind-boggling and, like a mirror, reflective of our state.

Bills considered by legislators

Within a few hours, they considered the following.

HB 126

[House Bill 126](#) would have allowed state universities to contract with youngsters as young as 8th grade for their commitment to play sports at said university. The contract—with parental consent—is for money, direct payments, to be made to them once they are enrolled in the university.

People asked: It may be good for sports programs, but is it good for kids?

Supporters say: Texas needs to keep up with other states who recruit this way.

The motion was withdrawn May 25.

SB 646

[Senate Bill 646](#) proposes expansion to a long-standing loan repayment

program to help with critical work shortages, adding school counselors and school psychologists to loan repayment in Texas.

This became controversial because, as I have heard, some describe many school counselors as “bad actors who are socially transitioning students, [and] we shouldn’t support them (the profession) with loan repayment.” During [floor debate](#), Rep. Nate Schatzline noted the Texas GOP platform is firmly against loan repayment.

People asked: Is this a fair criticism and punishment of the school counseling profession?

Supporters say: The need is urgent. Counselor ratios are 1 to 395 students.

SB 646 passed the second reading in the Texas House May 27 and awaits third reading.

SB 1261

[Senate Bill 1261](#), a comprehensive water projects bill, was challenged with an amendment by East Texas leaders to remove a major reservoir from the plans. The lake would use imminent domain to take 70,000 acres of private land from East Texans and provide water to the metroplex.

People asked: Should one area of the state sacrifice for another and give up generations of farms?

Supporters say: Texans need water. East Texas has land.

SB 1261 was sent to Gov. Abbott on May 22.

Everyday faith

Mostly, I can coast along and never really confront thorny questions and issues of major consequence until I see it on display firsthand. It is not a

bad exercise for Christian thinkers.

I am reminded of the Book of Esther, and Esther's dilemma to ask a king for a risky favor.

Will Willimon in his sermon "[Unspectacular Faith](#)" has this reflection on her struggle: "What Esther did was not particularly spectacular, but that's good, because most of us are not spectacular. Fortunately, most of the good that God needs doing in this world is not spectacular."

"Now, someday," Willimon continued, "there may be somebody here who is required to die for the faith that you profess, but not likely. More likely, you will be given the opportunity, or the dilemma, of summoning up the courage to speak out ... at some elegant dinner party or maybe at some business meeting ... to put up a good word to the boss in behalf of somebody who doesn't have the voice to speak. Not large. Not grand. Not spectacular. But good."

Weighing our part

As Christians, we live in a world that, on the whole, neither worships nor obeys our God. In such a climate, we are tempted to let ourselves off the hook too easily, to say: "I'm no martyr. I'm just one person. What can I do?"

Each Gospel account shows Jesus, when instructing the disciples, drawing them into the importance of their words and actions. In little ordinary ways, the kingdom of God is being defeated or advanced through us.

We are weighing values and seeking solutions. Are they reflections of our discipleship? Our words are important—even words to elected officials, work colleagues and opponents of our opinions, who also are weighing values and seeking solutions.

It's a challenge to weigh in, but in God's hands, big things happen as a

result of our small investments.

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