RE-ELECT SOULI ASA SHANKLIN

FOR EDWARDS COUNTY JUDGE

REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE

The upcoming November 4th Election, along with Early Voting October 20th - 31st, is of critical importance to the future of Edwards County. When I, Souli Asa Shanklin, took office on January 1, 2011, Edwards County was on the verge of bankruptcy and was going to have to borrow money to make payroll, if we continued on the fiscal path we were on.

We had a dysfunctional clerk's office that was going to start losing our grant money that our County also depended on.

We didn't have any sister counties that were allied with Edwards County to push back on the State for unfunded mandates and the Federal Government that was trying to infringe on our water rights and on our private property.

Drastic steps had to be taken to address these issues and get our house in order. It was not a job for the timid or weak. So bold steps were undertaken and achieved.

These are a few of the achievements, what we did, and why it is a benefit to Edwards County:

A. Joined 53rd Legislative District

New Legislative District. The State asked in 2011 if we had opposition to being placed in the 53rd Legislative District, which is a Hill Country District. Our old district reached from San Antonio's west side to El Paso. We as Commissioners' Court had the opportunity to move into the 53rd from the 74th and took it. The 53rd was made up of Edwards, Kimble, Menard, Mason, Sutton, Crockett, Schleicher, Real, Llano, Kerr, Bandera, and Medina. Andy Murr, the former Kimble County Judge, is expected to be our new State Representative. Murr lives in Telegraph, Texas, and campaigned hard here in Edwards County. He asked you for your votes and your votes counted. This will make Edwards County relevant in Austin during the legislative sessions.

B. Joined New 452nd Judicial District

Our Judicial District, the 63rd based in Val Verde County, was a no action Judicial District. This was starting to cost Edwards County grant monies because our court dockets were not moving. When it came time to elect our District Judge and District Attorney, our votes here in Edwards County didn't count. So we had the opportunity to move to the 198th in Kerr County, and then form a rural Judicial District, the 452nd, in the last legislative session. And we got it done. The 452nd consists of Edwards, Kimble, Menard, Mason, and McCulloch. The District Judge and District Attorney came to Edwards County and asked you for your votes and campaigned here. Your votes count now! We now have a reduction in the court docket and cases are more quickly adjudicated.

C. Joined the Concho Valley COG

The next move that had to be made to firm up our relationships and give us more clout was to change from the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments to the Concho Valley Council of Governments. We, the Commissioners' Court, voted unanimously to withdraw from MRGCOG and petitioned to join the Concho Valley Council of Governments, which they approved. The Concho Valley COG changed their By-laws to admit Edwards County and the Governor of Texas approved the move. The Concho Valley COG is made up of the following counties: Edwards, Kimble, Mason, Menard, McCulloch, Sutton, Crockett, Schleicher, Irion, Reagan, Sterling, Coke, Concho, and Tom Green. Every one of these counties, except Tom Green, mirrors Edwards County with our needs and issues: large counties with a small population. So when we go to Austin to voice concern, we are speaking with one voice.

The Middle Rio Grande COG is the only COG in the State of Texas which has flunked its State audit consecutive years; it shows a lack of internal controls. It has lost close to 50% of its funding and two member counties have been filed on by the Secretary of State. The counties had to send the funds they had received back to the State; not back to the COG, but back to the State of Texas. The funds that Edwards County was to receive from the Middle Rio Grande COG never came through, and this has been going on for a number of years.

D. Rural Representative for MHMR

I also serve on the MHMR Board of the Hill Country. I represent Edwards, Kimble, Menard, Mason, Sutton, Crockett, and Schleicher. The MHMR of the Hill Country helps with our veterans' and our citizens' mental health issues. I, as the rural representative, bring all of the concerns of these rural counties to the table. We are in the process of hiring a new Executive Director of the Hill Country MHMR. Our voice is being heard!

E. Formed New Medical Clinic

Doctor Todd came to me in 2011 and expressed his concerns about health care being provided for the citizens of Edwards County when he retired. So we went to work on the problem and this year we were able to set up an agreement for a medical clinic between Doctor Todd, Edwards County, and Sonora Hospital District. Edwards County leased the old Nutrition Center to Sonora Hospital District and used our old hospital fund, Hazzard and Evans Fund, to pay for the remodel, at no cost to the Edwards County taxpayers.

F. Formed New SWART

We have a new Transportation District, SWART (Southwest Area Regional Transportation). This came from the wreckage of the Southwest Community Council. When it was reformed, I became one of the founding directors. Real County Judge Garry Merritt is chairman of the board. The one thing we stressed at the very first meeting was transparency, because SWCC was corrupt and imploded, and was shut down by the Federal Government. So after two plus years of operation, we at SWART have received three accreditations from the Governor for transparency; one silver award and two gold awards. We have been held up as an example for other Transportation Districts to follow. This all goes back to the staffing directors for their dedication to honesty and transparency. We operate under TxDOT's umbrella and had to complete numerous training seminars to serve on the board. In two years and six months, I have only missed three monthly meetings and no trainings.

G. Obtained Capital Cases Insurance

We now have in Edwards County an insurance policy from Regional Public Defender for Capital Cases. If a capital crime is committed by an indigent in Edwards County, the County is responsible for the legal defense cost which could be in the 100s of thousands of dollars. It took Commissioners' Court two tries to pass this through the Court. After we passed and bought the insurance policy, a capital crime was committed in Edwards County. From the time of the murder to the plea, it took 262 days. The defendant plead and received 75 years. The Regional Public Defender for Capital Cases insurance policy paid for his defense. The cost to the County was less than $3,000.00 for our insurance policy.

H. Courthouse Restoration Completed

The Courthouse Restoration project was a process that started in 2007 and completed in 2014. Construction started in 2012 and the prospect of paying for the project was a scary proposition with our financial situation here in Edwards County. We as County Government didn't want to burden taxpayers with another debt. So with 86.31% of the total cost coming from the State, Edwards County needed to come up with 13.69%. So with some luck and donations from locals, the Gilmer Foundation, DCP, PumpCo, and the Texas State Comptroller, Edwards County's proportion was met and didn't come out of the County coffers. The complete renovation of the Courthouse was completed debt free.

I. Homeland Security

Our Homeland Security alignment has been shifted to the north to connect Edwards County with Sutton and Crockett counties.

J. Implemented Comptroller's and TAC's Financial Recommendations

The challenges we faced coming into office were as unpleasant a situation as any elected official would face. Edwards County's financial situation was bad and we started looking at any and everything we could do to educate ourselves on how to retrain the County staff and Commissioners' Court. We learned of a State program that the Comptroller's office provided to Counties at no cost. The Comptroller's office performed an extensive study of the County's financial situation, including each department's budget. Interviews were conducted of each department head, before and after each study. The Comptroller provided a detailed study and made a list of recommendations.

Edwards County then sent the Comptroller's study and recommendations to the Texas Association of Counties (TAC). TAC reviewed the study and gave recommendations. They came to Edwards County and conducted a training on what could be done to improve the budgeting process, add financial efficiencies, and save money. Edwards County had supplied the Comptroller's office and TAC with our budgets going back to 2006, along with our effective tax rates going back to 1996, and all of our County audits from fiscal year 2006 to 2013. We gave them every piece of financial information we had on the County. They made recommendations and we immediately implemented the Comptroller's and TAC's proposal that fit Edwards

County. The benefits from these programs have helped Edwards County have a balanced budget for the fiscal year 2014-2015. The County needs only enough money for the maintenance and operation of the County in any fiscal year, no more and no less. The reserves are built up by spending less than the balanced budget.

Many people blame me as County Judge for the closure of the Nutrition Center. When I came into office, Edwards County was in the middle of a lawsuit involving the Nutrition Center. We were also being sued by the National Labor Relations Board because the kitchen help were being underpaid. We contested the lawsuit and won, but we still had to pay our attorneys. We also had to pay the back wages to the employees. The Nutrition Center had been running over budget $90,000.00 plus each year because the funding from the COG kept going down along with mismanagement. I got the Commissioners to give me one year to try to find funding to keep it open, but was unsuccessful on finding enough funds to keep it operating. You also have to keep in mind what shape the County was in financially. So it was closed and a non-profit was formed by the local folks to keep the Nutrition Center open. Edwards County would pay the utilities, insurance on the building, and give them $30,000.00 a year and help the group find other sources for funding. This non-profit group, God bless them, couldn't make it work either. It was a difficult decision for the non-profit group to close the Nutrition Center, but it could not be helped.

On the subject of entities closing, neither Edwards County nor I had anything to do with the closing of Little Miracles or the Blue School. They were funded by the aforementioned Southwest Community Council. The IRS and the Federal Government closed the doors.

K. Set Up Dedicated Fund for Road & Bridge

Under advice from our auditor, the Comptroller's office, and TAC, we set up a separate account for our Road Department because the Road and Bridge is a separate tax and a dedicated fund, and the funds cannot legally be co-mingled with the general funds. When Commissioners' Court did this we were better able to control and keep account of these funds. Now we have been able to buy the new machinery the County needed, pay cash for it, and not have to go into debt. The County has purchased one new Challenger Tractor, a new rock crusher, and two new blades.

L. Enacted Policies for Transparency and Accountability

As County Judge and a taxpayer, I know it is important for your County Government to be transparent and accountable to the taxpayers and the public in general. So the Commissioners' Court enacted two policies:

1. The County Facebook page gives an in-depth look at all Commissioners' Court meetings. All meetings are recorded and transcribed to the Facebook page so Edwards County citizens can read at their leisure which actions, discussions, and proceedings took place during Commissioners' Court.

2. The second plan we just passed and enacted is our webpage. I have pushed for a webpage since coming into office and just got it passed this year after the Comptroller's office and TAC recommended we do it. Everything a taxpayer would want to know about Edwards County's business will be on that webpage. The webpage will give a transparent look at all of Edwards County's financial business, salaries, incomes, expenditures, and department budgets; where the money came from, and where it went and why. It's yours, the taxpayer's money, so you should know what happened to it.

    a. We are also in the process of adopting an ethics policy for the Commissioners' Court to adhere to.

When I took office, I cut my own salary and reduced my office budget by $100,000 to help balance the County budget. I pay for all my own County travel expenses. I pay all my own mandatory education expenses, and I have not taken a vacation on County time since I took office. The County has never paid one penny on any of my travels to Austin to address the legislation, or meals or lodging. I have never turned one receipt into the County Treasurer for reimbursement. I pay for everything out of my own pocket. I do this because I am a public servant.

I have the most active County Criminal Court in the history of Edwards County with a 90% completion record of criminal cases. We do this because of a State mandate or we lose grant monies. We adhere to the law.

I have worked to form alliances with our sister counties that share the same interests and values as Edwards County. These counties that we share our Legislative, Judicial, Concho Valley COG, and our TxDOT District with will help Edwards County in the future, especially when addressing our water issues and our property rights, and push back on unfunded mandates.

Over the past three years and nine months, Edwards County has received nearly three million dollars in grant monies ranging from roads, bathrooms at the baseball field, vehicles for the Sheriff's department, to infrastructure improvements in the Barksdale area, the Colonia Areas, and the Courthouse. We are always looking for alternative sources of funding to not over burden the taxpayers.

The Edwards Central Appraisal District represents all of the taxing entities in Edwards County: Rocksprings Independent School District, the Nueces Canyon School District, the City of Rocksprings, Edwards County, and the Real-Edwards Conservation and Reclamation District. The Appraisal District is an entity of its own and is separate from the County by State law. Two taxing entities that are separate are not able to extend control over the other. This is State Law governed by the Property Tax Code and the Property Tax Law.

No one can predict the future, but it is my job to prepare for the future by forming these alliances with other counties, getting Edwards County out of debt on the Annex, and prepare for any financial setbacks by building up our reserves.

Everyone should be proud to call Edwards County home. We want all citizens to boast about being from Edwards County as a great place to raise a family and grow old; where people care about each other; and where public service is done from the heart.

The only promise I made to the voting public was that I would tell you the truth whether you liked it or not. When I made the commitment to quit drinking 18 years ago, I had to make some hard choices about myself and make myself admit the truth that all my problems were my own fault and no one else's. So when you have enough courage to admit to your own faults and short comings then the truth telling becomes natural even when others may not want to hear it.

It's been said that it takes 10,000 hours of work to just be competent at a task or job. That is why I have taken four times the amount of education courses required by law each year I have been in office. I have always wanted to be more than just good at every task I have taken on. I owe it to the voters who put me in office and to those who didn't vote for me because I represent all the citizens of Edwards County, not just a select few.

If you like the direction Edwards County is going, I would appreciate your vote in the upcoming election and may God bless you.

Souli Asa Shanklin
Edwards County Judge

Politically paid advertisement by the Harris, Waugh, and Wolcott families.

Re-elect
P.O. Box 334
Rocksprings, Texas 78880

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Kerrville, TX
HERRING
PRINTING