

## EL PASO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT ORDER



### Invocation Policy

**Adopted Date:** March 11, 2019

**Revised Date:** January 25, 2021

#### I. **Commissioners Court agenda**

Regular Commissioners Court meetings will begin with an Invocation message or a moment of silence which will be placed on the regular meeting agenda after the Pledge of Allegiance.

The principal audience for these messages is not the public but lawmakers themselves. No member of the public may be compelled to participate in any manner in an invocation nor should any member of the public or employee of the County feel obligated to participate.

The El Paso County Commissioners Court serves constituents of all faiths, expresses no faith preference, and recognizes no faith as superior or inferior to others.

#### II. **Invocation**

The message will be within the limits of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The County Administration Department will set up the rotation for the Invocation schedule.

A. The message may be a prayer, a reflective moment of silence, or other solemnizing message of the speaker's choice.

B. The message may be delivered by any adult citizen of El Paso County. The El Paso County Commissioners Court will not exclude any citizen on the basis of religion, and the opportunity to deliver a message is open to citizens of any faith or belief. A citizen need not be a member of the clergy.

C. Speakers will be randomly selected from the Speakers List. No speaker will be scheduled more than once every 5 regular meetings.

D. If the speaker does not appear at the meeting for which he or she is scheduled to deliver the opening message, the El Paso County Commissioners Court may elect instead to have a moment of silence.

E. When inviting citizens to deliver an opening message, the County will maintain a policy of nondiscrimination.

### **III. Invocation guidelines**

While the day's message will not be subject to prior approval or editing by the Commissioners Court, the day's message should follow these guidelines:

- (1) Be prepared in a way that it addresses members from a variety of faith traditions;
- (2) Avoids proselytizing, advancing or disparaging any faith or belief;
- (3) Be less than 90 seconds. The Commissioners Court/Boards Coordinator will notify the speaker his or her time has lapsed.

The Commissioners Court actions will not be influenced by participation or non-participation in the Invocation; and participation is not required for any employee or member of the public.

In the event that a speaker denigrates nonbelievers or religious minorities, disparages any religious belief, threatens damnation, or proselytizes or preaches conversion, the El Paso County Commissioners Court will take reasonable steps to prevent the recurrence of such conduct, up to and including removal of the speaker from the Speakers List.

Commissioners Court may not direct the public to participate in the Invocation.