



**2016 Republican Primary:
Smith County Commissioner Race,
Precinct 3**

See map of the Commissioners' precincts and boundaries [here](#).

After numerous meetings and discussions, the Grassroots America Board of Directors was unable to achieve a “7 of 10” super majority to endorse in this race.

Since its birth in 2009, the Grassroots America Board of Directors has always had a policy of full disclosure regarding these important decisions. In an effort to be fair to the divided positions on the Board, Executive Director JoAnn Fleming and Board President Ernie Clark describe the results as follows:

“The mindset of the Board can best be described as half voting to make no endorsement and half being in support of challenger candidate Bill Bala. A subsequent vote failed to garner votes for a recommendation due to the Executive Director and a Board Member (who also serves as a precinct chair) taking themselves out of the vote. The result continued in a tie decision.

The five board members strongly advocating no endorsement were very concerned about two issues 1) the impact a decision would have on active investigations into the Smith County Judge and Commissioners by the Texas Attorney General and the FBI, and 2) the late timing of challenger candidates getting into the race and their ability to run competitive campaigns. Regarding any perceived conflict with the investigations, Executive Director Fleming was advised that Grassroots America should conduct its business as usual.

Five other Grassroots America Board members were unhappy with Commissioner Phillips' responses to questions about taking the full pay raise, his failure to raise public objections to the lack of transparency in county budget decisions, the failure (for many years) to publicly call for improvements on agenda wording for compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, his participation in numerous closed door meetings over the years that appear to be flagrant violations of the Texas Open Meetings Act, and his failure to speak out on the need for full disclosure on several dubious county projects. Several members agreed that if Mr. Phillips had ever publicly refused to participate in the backroom meetings, he could have incentivized other commissioners to walk out with him, making the situation more visible, thus stopping the pattern long before the County Judge and Commissioners ever got to the expensive 10-year traffic camera contract scandal. See the latest Tyler Morning Telegraph article [here](#). Grassroots America filed the [original complaints](#), which have resulted in the current investigations by the Texas Attorney General and the FBI.

In discussions, these board members cited Bill Bala's expertise as a former county engineer, his credentials, and his strong position on ending the back door meetings as strong positives.