

# Why I Like Sarah Palin

By Williamson Co. Commissioner Lisa Birkman

I like Governor Sarah Palin. When I got a text message that she had been chosen as the Republican vice presidential nominee, I had never heard of her, but just the fact that she was a Republican woman, like me, excited me right away. I wanted to find out more about her. I found out that she has a history a lot like mine. She is just a few years younger, but we both first got started in politics through interest in local issues affecting our families.

About the time she was running for the city council in her small town in Alaska, I was running for the Brushy Creek MUD board. And, she faced the same issues as a mother of young children involved in politics. When I ran for the MUD board in 2000, my daughters were young, aged 5 and 4. I was working part time for our family business, having given up teaching as it took too much time away from my family. My opponent accused me of being "just a mom." I was asked at a candidate forum if I could attend the evening board meetings, since I might not have adequate child care, even though it was well known that I am married.

My opponent also had young children, but his child care arrangements were never mentioned. Admittedly, I won as I don't think his tactics won him many votes, especially from other moms. Then, when I ran for county commissioner in 2004, I had successfully served on the board for four years, but both of my opponents were former mayors of Round Rock, which, of course, is much larger. Some said that I did not have enough experience to serve as commissioner. And, at the time, no other woman had ever served on the commissioner's court. Some voters actually told me that they would not vote for a woman period. Again, I won and I appreciate the majority of the voters giving me the honor of serving as the first woman commissioner in our county. So, now as Sarah Palin's family life, child care arrangements and experience in office are questioned by some, it really hits a chord with me. For real equality for all in America, we should not question these things for female candidates. Candidates of both genders should be chosen because of the unique perspectives and views on issues they bring to the office they seek, not because of their child care arrangements or gender.

Another thing that a lot of "talking heads" on TV do not seem to understand is that folks like to vote for someone who is like themselves. I also found this out when I was first running for the MUD board. I had prepared a lot of answers to questions on taxes, water rates and such before I first went door to door asking for votes. What I found was most voters wanted to find out more about me as a person. The top three questions I was asked then and even now when meeting voters are, "Where do you live?" "Are you married?" "Do you have children?".

I have thought a lot about why this is so. I think voters want to elect someone who they can relate to and who shares their life experiences. Most people live busy lives and do not keep up with the day to day governing of those we elect. For example, in commissioner's court, we typically vote on at least twenty-five or more items each week. Most of the items are routine and not reported in the press. The people of my precinct have given me the honor of making those decisions for them and they want me to have similar values when I am making those choices. Governor Palin is popular because many Americans can identify with her life story. I am one of the many who is proud to wear a "Moms for McCain/Palin" t-shirt!

Thanks,  
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