

Inside the YG State Conference numbers



**MEET THE CANDIDATES**  
Everything you need to know to make an informed choice

What the heck is a 'Delegate' anyway?

# Golden Gavel



Saturday, January 30, 2016

TEXAS YOUTH GOVERNMENT

PROFILE

## INSIDE THE MIND OF THE GOVERNOR

By Jack Densmore  
Reporter, District 2 & 7

Six years of learning, leading, building.

When Quentin Keller of District 3 learned that he'd been elected Youth Governor at last year's



conference, the rush of emotions was overwhelming.

"It was a moment of relief, shock, excitement, it was pretty much every feeling you could have in that moment happened," Keller said. "It happened so fast, but it was probably every single feeling that you could have in one moment."

Many people have said that Youth and Government has changed them, and Keller is no exception.

"It's changed who I am as a person," he said. "It's changed my life outcome. It's given me a lot of confidence, especially to be an officer at a conference that's this big. It's given me a new perspective on life, and it's one of those things that's a building block to form the man that I am today."

From traveling to the Council on National Affairs to the Governors' Conference in Washington, D.C., Keller has gained a wealth of great experiences through his position. But he says it's the lessons learned through YG that will help him most down the road.

"I gained a lot of self confidence," he said. "I learned a lot about government. I learned about the executive branch. I learned about public speaking, and probably my favorite thing that I've learned so far is that having a different political ideology with others doesn't mean you can't be the best of friends. We have to realize that it is bigger than politics, we are human beings, we're all created by God and we're all equal."

Keller is a senior this year, which means he won't be a part of the program again next year. But he did give some final thoughts to new delegates to come.

"At first, you might not be turned on to the program," he said. "There might be something that leaves a sour taste in your mouth, but I would say to persevere. Really give it your best shot, because if you put in a lot to this program, it can give back ten-fold. It can give back so much more than you expect."

## Gender-Neutral Restrooms Locked Out of Debate

By Naod Ermias & Jonathan Wallace  
Reporters, District 4

Despite overwhelming support in committee, a bill that would require gender-neutral restrooms in Texas public schools failed to make it onto this weekend's legislative docket.

According to House Bill 094 author Emily Morales from the Northwest YMCA in Dallas, "Gender is no longer just male or female, [many] people are transgender or gender nonconforming, and 59% of them are denied [access] to the restroom that they identify...

with...and I feel like they deserve the right to use the facility that best fits them."

According to Morales, "Transphobia" is prevalent in many Texas public schools. As a result, she says many gender-neutral and gender-nonconforming students feel uncomfortable using men's and/or women's restrooms. Because of this, Morales says that a gender neutral-restroom would be conducive to the learning and overall environment of the students.

At a cost of under \$1,000 for these adaptive facilities, Morales

contends that budgetary restraints should not be an obstacle for local school districts, especially when weighed against the benefits.

By implementing gender-neutral restrooms, she says gender nonconforming individuals will be free from any possible judgment or harassment.

**What do you think? Weigh in with your opinion on twitter @texasyg.**



### GOLDEN GAVEL IN-DEPTH: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM VS. CHILD PROTECTION

## Faith-Healing Parent Acquitted in Child Death

By Austin Graham & Heather Costello  
Reporter, District 2 & 7

In a stunning victory for proponents of religious freedom, Austin parent Don Coleson was acquitted in the death of his four-year-old daughter.

Annabelle Coleson, daughter of Don Coleson, died of diabetic ketoacidosis on February 2, 2015. DKA comes from failure to receive the right amounts of insulin for a person with diabetes. Don Coleson refused to get Annabelle any type of medical help due to his religious beliefs, those of the First Church of the Divine Healing of Our Lord which is a Christian denomination whose core beliefs are that the only way to cure illness is through the divine healing of God. Coleson testified that he doesn't regret his choice of not taking Annabelle to the hospital earlier.

"No, no, of course not," Coleson said. "I believe that I did everything that I could [to help Annabelle]. I regret calling 911. I believe that was a mistake."

Coleson's stated that he believes that the only healing can come through God because of scriptures in the bible that showed prophecies of Jesus being a healer and him fulfilling them. If one is to receive healing from God, they must conform and understand the word of the bible and faith is absolutely required above all else.

"I honestly don't think so [that Annabelle would still be alive if given doctor care]," Coleson



A witness testifies in the case of Don Coleson, who was acquitted in the death of his daughter, Annebelle, who died of complications from Diabetes.

said. "I believe hospitals are very dangerous. I honestly have no idea what I was thinking. I was just so panicked and I was trying to do anything I could. I was willing to try anything."

In bringing charges of manslaughter and injury to a child in the second degree against Coleson, the prosecution stated that he was acted recklessly as a father and endangered his child by not taking her to the hospital.

The judge ruled in favor of Coleson in this case saying that he was not guilty on the accused charges. She talked in depth about how he was exercising his religious freedoms and agreed with the defense's main arguments.

"The prosecution did not mention his recklessness," Judge Elizabeth Velasquez said. "Either by omission or towards disregarding his daughter's health."

The judge stated that government's role in religious freedom is to protect that of the American people. If it weren't for the government doing it's job, many Americans would continually have their religious and other rights impeded on by others.

The ruling was not without precedent. In the 1993 court case Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. Hialeah, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the church regarding a city ban on animal sacrifice, stating that the core failures of the ordinances were that they applied exclusively to the church. Similar to the case of Coleson, the prosecution in both these cases were saying that the defendant was in the wrong because their religious beliefs were not agreeable to social norms and took them to court for expressing their religious freedoms.



# Searles' Run for Governor an Opportunity to Give Back

By Kyle Gehman  
Reporter, District 2 & 7

After six years of participating in Youth & Government and qualifying for the Conference on National Affairs (CONA) twice, Jessie Searles from District 5 McKinney High School is running for governor.

"I've been so impacted by this program," Searles said. "You can see it in my everyday life, the things I do. I've been changed forever, and I want to do that for other kids. I want other kids to be blessed with the experience I was so blessed with."

Searles started the YG experience in sixth grade for three reasons. First, her mom pushed her to do it because she knew it would be good for her. Secondly, both her cousins got full scholarships to college in public speaking; and, lastly, her history teacher was the adviser for the program, so she decided to try it.

"I am so much more confident now," Searles said. "I am not afraid to go up and talk to people and share my opinions."

Now it's a major part of her life and something very important to her. "It's the family I've been given. Every state conference, every CONA, it feels like a family reunion," Searles said. "It's cool to see this network across the state of these people that all care, and we all look out for each other."

Outside of YG, she is involved in engineering club at her school, which is currently in the funding stages of building the first living roof in the country by the students. She also is the Vice President in her National Charity League class, a volleyball coach for a 13s national team. She does lots of other forms of community service.

"Everything I do has taught me leadership skills and how to work with people, which is something a governor will have to do," Searles said.



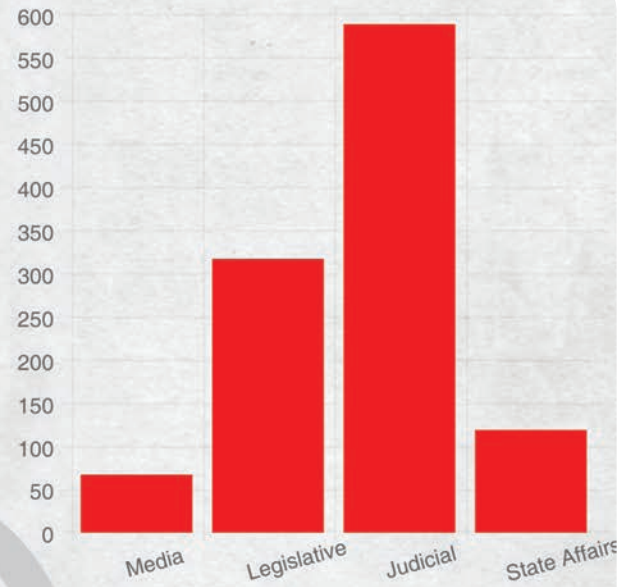
## BY THE NUMBERS

1,112 TOTAL DELEGATES  
69 YEARS OF YG

4:1 STUDENT TO VOLUNTEERS

BIGGEST DELEGATION: DALLAS - 389 DELEGATES

317 BILLS BEING DEBATED



By Gracie Porter and Olivia Crouch

Q&A

### Kennedy Montgomery

Gubernatorial Candidate

#### Why did you decide to run for governor?

I definitely want to serve, that's one of the main reasons why I want to be governor. And I was inspired by my close friend Charlie Bingham, who was Youth Governor in Michigan where I used to live. I was able to be his right-hand man as his campaign manager. When we ran 2014 and he got elected, I was able to serve on the Governor's Cabinet, and I received an award for "Excellent Performance." And all that just inspired me to want to run for governor.

#### In your speech, an overarching theme you had was the idea of "unity." What inspired you to come up with



#### that key word?

My friends, my family, my teachers, and my environment have each helped me form the idea of "unity." I experienced unity at CONA. It helped me realize and emphasize that we need everybody. As far as a lack of unity, I have observed it in our world and daily struggles, especially in race relations. For example, one day we were on our way to lunch and I remember this kid was alienated-- he might've

been a new student--and I noticed a large division between him and the other students.

#### How can you fix the lack of unity as Governor?

I think misunderstanding is a major key in lack of unity. People fear what they don't understand. As Governor, I would like to get a basic understanding of delegates by letting my guard down. I want to emphasize the idea that if we all let our guard down and come behind one idea, we can unite.

#### How are you going to achieve that - by communicating with other leaders or through the laws you decide to pass?

Unity is something we have to imprint in our minds and our hearts. It is mental and in our souls and our connection, but I also plan to implement physical things and work with leaders and do things personally. If I am elected, I do want the bills to correlate with unity.

OPINION

## Definitions vary, but all 'delegates' strive for good

By Gracie Porter  
Reporter, District 4

The word "delegate" has been used to describe the members of Youth & Government since the beginning of the program. As years have passed and the program has grown, the meaning of the word "delegate" has undergone an evolution.

A delegate is defined as a person who is sent to represent a group of individuals in a selected area, such as in the program's legislative and judicial sections. But ask around the Youth & Government conference and you'll hear many different meanings.

Gubernatorial candidate Jessie Searles of District 5 describes it as "Somebody who debates in legislative."

Zachary Pale of District 4 described a delegate as "an active member of the House and Senate."

In truth, a delegate is a friend, supporter, and a voice for the voiceless.

Delegates walk around the conference every day with a badge around their neck, and with a goal in mind: to make a change.

Our delegates are infused with good ideas and caffeine, constantly pushing their boundaries and forming new relationships. Sofia Evans of District 4 described her favorite part of being a delegate as "the social attribute, meeting new people and forming new relationships."

The Delegates are brought together into one solid unit, bouncing ideas off of one another to help develop new ideas.

No matter what branch you are in, you are a part of this unit, constantly building towards something new. You create bonds with delegates you see all the time, and delegates you only see once a year. The friendships we have cultivated during our time at YG are not the only things we delegates walk away with. We walk away with the knowledge and experience to continue our lives with the tools we have learned from our fellow delegates.

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