

Democratic Primary Candidate Adam Bell

<http://voteadambell.com>

The Red Ledger: What is your stance on the wall proposed by President Trump?

Adam Bell: I think the border wall is a failed idea. The idea that we're going to secure our borders by putting up a wall just on one of the borders doesn't make a lot of sense. We know that migration from the southern border has actually decreased significantly and that the majority of immigration happens actually in Los Angeles and John F. Kennedy international airports. The only thing I can really think of is that there is some sort of racial idea here, to keep one class of people out of the country. The idea that we have terrorists coming in from the southern border—it's obviously a possibility, but any terrorist acts that have actually happened on our soil were by people who came in through an airport. So if we build a wall on the southern border to protect against terrorism, wouldn't they probably just come from the northern border? So it means a waste of close to \$25 billion unless you're going to go whole-hog and build a wall around the entire country. I've talked to people who are concerned about drugs coming across the southern border, but a wall's not going to stop a drug dealer, I can tell you that. The cartels have figured out ways of getting around any existing walls that we got now. They've tunneled, they've imported narcotics through shipping channels, boats—any other way they could possibly think of is not going to be addressed by a wall. So I don't think it's a terribly great idea. And then, the last idea on it, that we're going to have another country pay for something that we're building seems a little bit laughable, and it's created a tension between our closest trade partner, Mexico, and it's damaged trade, too.

TRL: Regarding DACA, what is the scenario you would most like to win out?

AB: I've outlined a pretty detailed policy on immigration in total, but DACA, specifically—these kids are not kids anymore sometimes. These are people who have grown up in this country and may not speak the native language of where they're from. They may not know anything about that country. They're essential, in all aspects, Americans, except for a piece of paper. These are kids that have graduated and are contributing to our society, they're paying taxes, they're doing everything possible to make sure that they're contributing back, and we've got an administration that's trying to push them away. I would definitely like to make sure that we have protection for the Dreamers, and we can get them on track to make sure they are on a path to be citizens as soon as possible. We need to be a little more thoughtful about what we're saying as a nation. I know that you can get 535 other congressmen that will say one thing or the other, but the bottom line is our administration, our president, is the voice, the mouthpiece for our country, and when he says some of the things he says about excluding a class or a country, or saying something is an "s-hole" country, it diminishes our standing as a world leader, so I'd like to get to a more balanced and accepting tone.

TRL: President Trump has threatened to cut federal funding for “sanctuary cities.” What is your opinion on that and on “sanctuary cities” in general?

AB: The idea that we’re forcing local municipalities and local governments to fulfill the duties of the federal government– it seems a bit counter-intuitive. I mean, we pay taxes to both entities. We pay our taxes to municipal governments to run municipal functions, not to deal with immigration problems. I think that the mayors of the sanctuary cities have sent a pretty clear message that they’re not going to be told that they have to manage this immigration problem for immigration enforcement. The idea that the federal government’s going to withhold any type of funds if these cities don’t play ball is pretty ridiculous, I think, because these are dollars that we’ve paid into the federal tax system, into a structure that’s designed to give back to the municipalities, and just seems so un-American to me that we have an administration right now that just keeps mouth piecing this rhetoric that’s trying to threaten people and strong-arm people. It seems like he's trying to play people the way he's always played them in his business, and I’m pretty proud of the mayors that have stood up and said “We’re not going to get pushed around by you. We’re going to protect our people, and it’s your job to deal with Immigration.”

TRL: Regarding healthcare, what would you say is your biggest concern?

AB: My biggest concern is that we have 535 legislators in the Senate and House that seem to think they know exactly what’s right for everyone. I’ve gone out and I’ve met with industry providers from insurance, healthcare, physicians, patients’ groups, you name it, any aspect of health insurance, one thing that everyone’s said back to me is “nobody’s ever asked.” So the only thing that’s really wrong with healthcare policy and legislation is we have people making laws from an ill-informed position, so the first thing we need to do is understand what’s working, and what’s not working. The broad problem for people is that it’s really expensive to have health insurance, and you may not be getting the coverage that you really need. We’re working really hard to outline policies and legislation that day one we can put into law that Republicans and Democrats won’t want to change, all built on the perspective of people that are affected. We have to make sure that we have insurance available to people at an affordable price that covers their needs. I also think the rhetoric of our state executive in regards to Medicaid is pretty damaging. Texas itself is one of the worst-cared for populations in the country because of our state legislature and our state executive. Greg Abbott poignantly denied close to \$20 billion of federal reimbursement that was supposed to be coming back to us to make sure that we could expand the coverage of Medicaid so that more people are cared for. The bottom line is, we need to reduce costs for people, and if we reduce costs here in the state, it's going to bleed into opportunities to spend those dollars on other things like education, and we’ll have more money because we’ll have the money that was actually promised to us that our state legislature and executive denied to pay for the things like Medicaid that we need to pay for. Instead of robbing Peter to pay Paul, now we got a little bigger pile to pull from.

TRL: What would you say is your general abortion stance?

AB: Me personally, I couldn't imagine making a decision that would not lead to having my two girls in my life. It would be a very difficult decision. But I also can't pretend that I know what's right for everyone else. There's a lot of different things that happen in women's lives, and making a decision about their healthcare, I think would be irresponsible of me to do that. That's something that a woman needs to discuss with her family, her clergy, her doctor, and find out what's best for her, and we need to make sure that we have options so that she can make a decision that's beneficial to her life and to her child's life, one way or another. In Texas right now, we have the highest maternal mortality rate in the world, so in developed countries, Texas stands out alone, beyond the U.S., as the highest rate of maternal mortality. We're ranked as a country to be the worst. So what we have to do is we have to get away from the idea of "birth at all cost." It's very important to protect life, and very important to protect religion, and if religion plays into your decision, you need to be able to discuss that with your priest or with your pastor. But, what we've seen in Texas is a policy that is "birth at all cost," and there are no services for these young mothers to make sure that they can have a healthy baby, or that they can have a child that can be successful and fed after that child's born. And we've seen babies become sick and die after they're born because they're not taken care of, because it's so hard now for young mothers or less fortunate, poorer mothers to be able to get the care they need. So my general stance on abortion, I think I would always lend my decisions to the facts that pertain to the case that is at hand, and I would never stand in the way of a woman to make her own healthcare decisions. But me personally, I don't think that I could see myself in a position to choose to not have had my two children. It breaks my heart to think about it.

TRL: Texas has recently passed laws permitting the open carrying of firearms in public. What do you think of open carry laws?

AB: Open carry in Texas was kind of the law of the land for a really long time. The rules I can remember back when I was in high school were that if you had a gun, it had to be in the gun rack. That was the rule and not really that long ago. We didn't have this political rhetoric about open carry. I think it's pretty ridiculous that we have guys walking around with long rifles on their arms to send a message that "I'm an American. I can carry my gun anywhere I want." I think that if we're going to put something in somebody's hands that could hurt somebody else, we need to make sure that person is very, very responsible. We require that if you're going to drive a car, you got to pass a test. I think that license to carry laws need to be expanded. I think that any responsible gun owner would be very, very happy to go through a little more scrutiny to make sure their neighbor has gone through the same scrutiny. Texas is a very proud state, and we got a long heritage of gun ownership here, and I think that Texas could set the standard for the country for control of what's gotten a little out of hand. And I'm not looking to control anybody's guns. What I'm saying is control the licenser so that we have an understanding of who's got a weapon and make sure that we teach safety. It's not a matter of trying to keep

something out of somebody's hands if they're a law-abiding citizen and they're mentally stable. We have hunters here, we have people just looking to protect their families, but really what's happened now is that we're in a society where gun deaths are outpacing car deaths. People who shouldn't have their hands on weapons are getting their hands on weapons, and two-thirds of gun deaths are by suicide. People are struggling, and they find an easy way. I think we need to have an investment in mental health when we talk about common sense gun laws. We also need to really emphasize safety. Looking at the number of children that accidentally shoot themselves, that just tells me that we have some irresponsible gun owners. So if you want to have something that can hurt somebody, like a car, you need to be tested, you need to prove your ability to have that. I don't see any gun owner who is truly an upstanding citizen and very responsible shying away from that, and getting that constant reminder of how to be safe. That could eliminate a lot of gun deaths.

TRL: What is your position on student loans?

AB: I think the first thing we have to know is that the cost of education is getting out of control. Texas deregulated schools about 15 years ago, and that has made tuition unbelievably expensive. States are driving up tuition fees, and they're using that as leverage for other things. I think that the cost of education is one of our primary concerns. But on the other end, we can also incentivize students to give back a little bit. My sister's a teacher in Richardson, and she worked in a Title 1 school for five years and got her student loans forgiven. So, if you've got students saddled with enormous debt, you can have physicians go work in an underserved community for six to seven years. That can build up enough of a "bankload" to pay off that doctor's student loans, and what we're finding is that a lot of physicians are staying in these communities because they don't want to leave. They've come to love where they live, and they're getting the benefit of not being saddled with that enormous debt. And we can do that in almost any industry. These ideas have been around for quite a while. We just need to focus on where the need is, and make sure that we're making students aware of it.

TRL: What do you think are the most pressing issues regarding first-time voters?

AB: First-time voters need to tune out the rhetoric. Outside looking in, you're seeing a bunch of giant babies griping about everything, and then if you turn on any news channel, you can get five or six really crazy opinions. First-time voters need to understand the difference between spectacle news and factual news. We have news organizations that are delivering a service, but it is permeated with a lot of opinions, and I think that when students are turning 18 and are being able to vote for the first time, it's hard sometimes between opinion and what the reality is. The other thing is just getting registered and going to vote. Voting numbers for citizens between 18 and 30 are pretty low. These are not important things immediately in your life, usually. You're worried about getting a job, going to school, and when you get out of college, you're worried about getting another job. Maybe you're worried about a significant other, maybe you're starting

a family. These things are not ever-present. It's more like a burden. "Oh, I got to go vote." So there's a lot going on, because I've been there, I went through it, and I was like, "I got finals or midterms or something else going on, and I just don't care to pay attention right now." We need to make it easier to deliver facts about what's going on rather than getting this partisan, opinionated news. And I'm not referring to the new catchphrase "fake news." What I'm referring to is probably what you see when the news happens and immediately after you have five people sitting in a room saying, "I think, I think, I think," and it becomes the news.

TRL: What do you think could draw Republicans to your campaign?

AB: We're already drawing Republicans to our campaign. We've been drawing Republicans for the last three years. When we came out in 2015 as a candidacy, I was very clear that I live in Collin County, I'm your neighbor, I'm a small business owner, I'm an employer, I'm a job creator, and I also want to be fiscally responsible; I want to balance a budget. I want to make sure our government is intact and lives up to its obligations of protecting our country. But I also care about people, and I also care about civil rights. I care that if you choose to live a lifestyle that is out of the norm of what I would live or my neighbor, you're protected. That you're allowed to go pray where you want to pray, marry who you want to marry, and I'm finding that a lot of my Republican friends think the same way. They don't understand why Republicans have jumped on board and said, "We know what's best for everyone, so we're going to make laws about that." A lot of my Republican friends are saying, "Does this make me a Democrat?" No, it doesn't make you a Democrat. It makes you thoughtful, it makes you pragmatic and logical. And we're getting that crossover. We've got it in the last two elections, and we're going to get it again. Things like that, hyper-partisanship, it doesn't work for the people of Collin County. The people of Collin County are fiscally-minded and very considerate of others. We've got to get back to a place where a Republican legislature or Democratic legislature can work with the opposing party in the executive branch. We saw it in the Reagan administration, we saw it in the Clinton administration. Both parties came together, got things done. We got a budget balanced. We saw world peace. These things can happen if we work together, but if we're going to take a hard-line stance on either side, then we're going to be gridlocked like we have been for the last 10 years now.

TRL: What sets you apart from the other candidates in the Democratic primary?

AB: I've kind of been able to push past the business of learning how to be a candidate. I've been doing it for a while now, and we kind of hit the ground running right after the 2016 election. We worked to make sure we got like-minded candidates on ballots, we helped them run races, and we've met with every group, every constituency, that has ever raised a question to really understand what's going on with them, rather than toiling away at how to get a website up or how to get our information in. We're way past that. I've already been meeting with sitting representatives, and I'm getting to know these guys through campaigning these last three years,

and we've actually gotten representatives to co-sponsor bills. That's not happening with other candidacies. They're still trying to figure out which event to go to next. I think it's pretty telling when I hear in their speeches things that I said two years ago verbatim. I see on their websites and printed materials the exact same things that we started in 2015. That makes me feel really good, and that's what sets us apart, is that we're beyond those now. We're moving into actual policy and cultivating ideas that we can put into play during the first term that both sides are going to agree to. That's the idea. So I think that's what sets us apart. We blazed a trail. We showed that Democrats exist up here when Democrats were never coming out to vote and never willing to say that they were Democrats to their neighbors. A lot has changed over the last two years, and I feel like we were apart of that, and we've got a lot of momentum and a lot of foundation and infrastructure already built, and that's really what sets us apart. They're all really great people, I don't deny that for a second. I've gotten to know Sam Johnson, the new Sam Johnson, pretty well. I think the world of him, and I hope you quote it because I think he's a great guy. And Lorie's a great person, and Medrick, he's an amazing guy. But we've moved past the green stage.

TRL: Let's assume that you or one of the other Democratic candidates wins that November election. Do you think that will act as a referendum on the Trump administration?

AB: I don't think one Congressional race is going to be a referendum, especially in a midterm general election where you've got just about every other seat up. I think that if you look back at what's happened in some of the special elections, those may point more to a referendum, like when you see Alabama. Roy Moore wasn't exactly the poster child of Republican policy, but when he got turned away by his party, that sent a very strong message, and when the state of Alabama, almost the reddest state in the Union says, "No, we're moving on from this nonsense," and that Roy Moore rhetoric and that Donald Trump rhetoric was what was permeating that election, and Doug Jones rose above it, and he proved to people that he was the better choice. So that may have been more of a referendum. I would like to think that it may be a referendum on local Republican politics and business as usual for Republicans here. I've got a lot of Republican friends, including elected Republicans, and I don't necessarily agree with much of their voting record, but I think they're very great people, I think very highly of some of our representatives that are sitting now, I'm friends with some of them, and I think it's pretty awesome when we're out at an event together and we're able to say, "Hey, let's work on something together," and that's pretty awesome to know that there's that like-minded feeling on the other side of the aisle. So to say it's a referendum on the Trump administration or anything outside of the microsphere that is Collin County may be a little bold, but it may be a referendum on business as usual for the Republicans, that hyper-conservatism is not what's really accepted here anymore.