

BLACK RESTAURANT WEEK Continued from Front Page



Black Restaurant Week participant, Gotti’s Restaurant and Bar



Ray’s Real Pit BBQ Shack has grown with support from Black Restaurant Week.

Week’s campaign since its inception 10 years ago, such as Frenchy’s, Café Abuja, Davis St. at Hermann Park, Lucille’s, Ray’s BBQ, Reggae Hut, and more, especially during some of the toughest times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The systemic barriers faced by Black-owned restaurants, such as disproportionate access to business loans, demonstrate the importance of Black Restaurant Week. These disparities grew during the COVID-19 pandemic, as 41% of Black-owned businesses shuttered, compared to 17% of white-owned businesses.

“Since 2016, we aspired to set ourselves apart from similar organizations,” states Ferrell, Black Restaurant Week’s Operations Managing Partner. “Black Restaurant Week is solely guided by business owners and operators. They are in the trenches every day and experience the ebbs and flows of running a business during one of the most difficult periods in U.S. history—the current state of inflation.”

According to the Independent Restaurant Coalition, 500,000 restaurants and bars are faced with an uncertain future due to lost revenue and increased debt over the past four years.

Most small businesses cannot afford costly marketing campaigns, which is why Black Restaurant Week has helped more than 5,000 culinary businesses since its inception gain visibility through a 10- or 14-day marketing blitz that includes social media promotion, print, online materials, and public relations services. Additionally, 1.1 million minority-owned businesses often face heightened challenges and disparities when securing business funding. These shocking statistics have driven Black Restaurant Week to continue its efforts.

“Employee turnover is high, and the price of food is soaring. From being overlooked for revitalization funds to inflation, most Black-owned culinary businesses cannot afford advertisements, PR, and marketing to build awareness and attract consumers,” Luckett shared. “That’s why we proudly do this at a fraction of the cost—it’s peer-to-peer support for 10 or 14 days (depending on the market) within each market, and for the past 10 years.”

As for their plans to empower Black culinary entrepreneurs nationwide in the future, the Black Restaurant Week team tells *Forward Times* that they plan to expand into more markets in North America and eventually scale internationally.

“The sole purpose is for us to go into nearly all major U.S. cities and stimulate Black-owned culinary businesses with our marketing campaigns,” the team states.

The Black Restaurant Week team affirms that the only way they can be successful in their mission to feed and fuel the cultural famine—especially with an emphasis on reviving and saving the Black restaurant industry—is through community support and educating consumers on the abundance of cultural cuisines while dispelling ethnic untruths.

“The community can hire Black-owned chefs and caterers and express their interest in seeing these establishments at community-driven events during the year, such as conferences, trade shows, concerts, festivals, etc., outside of our 10–14-day campaign,” the team emphasized to *Forward Times*. “When you have visitors in town, take them to a neighboring Black-owned culinary establishment. If you are traveling and sharing the best takeaways about your city, be sure to mention your favorite Black-owned restaurants.”

For more information about Black Restaurant Week, its events, and participating restaurants, visit [blackrestaurantweek.com](http://blackrestaurantweek.com) and stop by one of the participating restaurants before the 2025 Black Restaurant Week campaign concludes on April 13th.

### CLASSIFIEDS

#### REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

**Request for Proposal – Houston-Galveston Area Council – Public Services – Trenchless Pipeline Rehabilitation Services – TP07-25**

H-GAC is soliciting responses for selecting qualified providers of trenchless pipeline rehabilitation products and services to make them available to Customers of the HGACBuy Cooperative Purchasing Program under blanket type contracts.

To view the solicitation documents, visit <https://www.hgacbuy.org/bid-notices>.

**Response Deadline: May 7, 2025 @ 12:00 P.M. CDT**

### LEGAL NOTICE

Choice Partners (CP), a division of the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE), is accepting proposals in response to the following Requests for Proposals (RFP). Interested proposers may go to [www.choicepartners.org](http://www.choicepartners.org) to register to download the solicitation or call 877-696-2122.

- RFP #25/027AK Ice Cream Products, due by Friday, May 2nd, 2025 @ 2:00 PM CT
- RFP #25/029TP Wireless Temperature Monitoring Systems and Other Related Products, due by Friday, May 2nd, 2025 @ 2:00 PM CT
- RFP #25/028TC Retail Energy Purchase, due by Thursday, May 1st, 2025 @ 2:00 PM CT

**All proposals must be submitted via the HCDE online eBid System at the following link: <https://hcdeebid.ionwave.net>.** Proposals will be opened via Zoom; Information regarding dates, times, and a link to join the meeting is (located within) the eBid System under the “Activities” tab specific to the solicitation.

VOTING RIGHTS Continued from Front Page



- for citizenship and immigration
- A consular report of birth abroad for citizens born outside the U.S.

Some elderly Black citizens, for instance, may not be able to locate their birth certificates, and not all African Americans have ever held a passport. If a Black person born in the U.S. can’t locate those documents or doesn’t have the resources to apply for another birth certificate, **they** could essentially be shut out of the voting process.

It is important to note that SB 16 would apply to all Texans who are already registered to vote in Texas, even if you have voted in elections prior—not just new applicants.

On top of that, local election officials would have to routinely check the citizenship status of all voters on their rolls, and any found violations could result in potential felony charges for lapses.

Emily French, who serves as the Director of Policy for Common Cause Texas, recently spoke on the proposed legislation that would require Texans to show documentary proof of citizenship to register or update voter information at a recent Houston Community Media News Briefing.

The news briefing brought together several key voices in voting rights and community organizing to share insights and answer community questions.

“This is a solution in search of a problem,” said French. “There’s no evidence that non-citizens are voting in any significant numbers.”

French warned that this would not only disproportionately affect recently naturalized citizens, but also married women, potentially downgrading voters to “limited ballots” that exclude key races.



Emily French, Director of Policy, Common Cause Texas

“If this law had been in effect when I got married, I would’ve had to go in person twice—once to change my name, and again to change my address—both with proof of citizenship,” French emphasized.

A few other items came out of the news briefing that are tied to voter access and voting rights.

Carl Blair, Senior Election Attorney with the Texas Civil Rights Project, also outlined efforts to roll back countywide polling, which currently allows voters in about 90 Texas counties to vote at any polling location on Election Day.

“There’s bipartisan support for countywide polling—yet there’s still a push to abolish it and force people back to precinct-only voting,” said Blair.

Blair went on to explain that ending this option would increase logistical strain and create more confusion for voters, especially in densely populated areas like Harris County.

Lastly, as it relates to name changes, Katie Shumway, who serves as Executive Director at the League of Women Voters of Houston, highlighted how bureaucratic disconnects between agencies complicate voter registration for married women.

“Roughly 86% of married women change their last name—but if your ID doesn’t match your birth certificate, and you don’t have a current passport, you can’t register,” said Shumway.

The community is being asked to take action on these matters, including:

- Contact your state representative weekly about voting bills.
- Show up at local legislative offices, even if you can’t travel to Austin.
- Educate others: Share voter guides, host discussions, or organize information sessions at churches or schools.
- Register voters through deputy volunteer programs while they’re still active.

“One call isn’t enough,” Shumway concluded. “Set a calendar reminder—Friday at

