



Travis County Legislative Agenda 89th Texas Legislature

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December 6, 2024

89th Texas Legislature Overview

- The 89th Legislative Session begins January 14, 2025 and ends on June 2, 2025.
- Legislature will continue to operate with a surplus:
 - Comptroller Hegar recently announced a \$20 billion surplus for the 89th Legislative Session.
 - Will have at least \$23.8 billion in the Rainy Day Fund.
- Vouchers will continue to dominate attention.
- Development regulatory authority/elimination of the extraterritorial jurisdiction
- Increased interest in water infrastructure investments.
- Public funded lobbying prohibitions

89th Texas Legislative Membership

- **33 new House members; three new Senators**

- 11 House members retiring
- Five House members ran for other offices
- One Republican House member expelled last year
- One Republican Senate member retiring
- One Democrat Senate member ran for other office
- **Primary election impacts:**
 - One Democrat House member defeated in primary runoff
 - 15 Republican House members defeated in primary or primary runoff
- **General election impacts:**
 - Two formerly Democrat House seats flipped to Republican
 - One formerly Democrat Senate seat flipped to Republican

House partisan breakdown: 88R – 62D
Senate partisan breakdown: 20R – 11D

- House County Affairs Chair, Vice-Chair, and one member not returning
- Senate Local Government Vice-Chair not returning
- No changes to Travis County legislative delegation

Legislative Agenda Framework

Principles for Legislative Action

- Overarching values of the Travis County Commissioners Court relating to the legislative process.

Legislative Priorities

- Legislation IGR is authorized by Commissioners Court to pursue passage of.

Policy Positions

- The Court's position on issues affecting the County which the Court wishes to communicate through the legislative process.

Positions on Other Proposals

- Court-approved support for proposals from other Elected/Appointed officials and other groups (e.g. governmental partners, non-profits).

General Principles

- As a political subdivision of state government, Travis County requires legislative authority to enhance and improve the services it delivers.
- Many of the services that we provide are mandated by the state, such as operating a jail, administering elections, and providing criminal indigent defense.
- The Travis County Commissioners Court believes that local government best understands and responds to the needs of its constituents. Therefore, it seeks maximum flexibility in implementing the policies and programs mandated by the Legislature.
- The County seeks a collaborative partnership with the state in order to serve the people of Travis County but opposes legislation or budgeting decisions that would shift the cost of state or federal responsibilities to local governments.

Adopted Legislative Priorities

Austin State Hospital Ground Lease

Would allow for the State of Texas to enter into a lease agreement with Travis County to utilize vacated buildings and empty land on the Austin State Hospital campus for jail diversion efforts.

Surplus Property Donation

Currently there is a three part “test” to determine whether local governments are allowed by state statute to donate surplus property. Travis County ITS staff have desired to donate old computer to non-profit partners, but because they still have some small amount of value to them, we are unable to do so because that small value means one of the parts of the “test” is not met. This would allow the donation of surplus property if at least one of the three parts of the test is satisfied, rather than all three parts.

Adopted Legislative Priorities

Fire Code

Would allow for counties and emergency services districts (ESD) to enter into an interlocal agreement (ILA) for the administration and enforcement of the county fire code. In such instances, the Fire Marshal would be allowed to delegate the administration and enforcement of the County's fire code to the ESD in accordance with an ILA.

County Bail Bond Board Meetings

Currently, County bail bond boards are required to meet at least monthly. Travis County staff who work with the bail bond board have stated that our local bail bond board does not have a need to meet that regularly and often struggle to meet quorum to have monthly meetings. This bill would allow bail bond boards to meet less frequently, but still must meet at least six times in a twelve-month period.

Adopted Legislative Priorities

Deer Management

Would allow the County to hire professional agents for deer management in the Balcones Canyonland Preserve.

Waste Management

Currently, counties are prohibited from providing waste management services in the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) of a city, even if the city does not provide waste management services in that area. Bexar County does have a carve out in statute that allows them to provide these services in the ETJ. This bill would allow Travis County to provide waste management services in the ETJ of a city (but not require).

Policy Positions

Civic Engagement and Transparency

- Voter registration and elections
- Public notices
- County advocacy
- Transparent and accessible public participation

County Workforce Benefits

- Benefit selection
- Organizational structure

Emergency Services

- Recognizing the role of counties in emergency management
- Health and safety enforcement

Environment and Natural Resources

- Environmental enforcement and protection

Growth Management and Land Use

- Disannexation
- Land development permits
- Protecting health and safety of residents

Policy Positions

Health and Human Services

- Mental health interventions and supports
- Gun safety
- Overdose prevention
- Maternal health support
- Workforce development and childcare access and affordability

Justice Planning

- Judicial and prosecutorial discretion
- Pre-arrest diversion
- Defendant education and supports
- State reimbursement

Mobility and Transportation

- Multi-modal transportation options
- Infrastructure

Taxation, Revenue, and Budget

- Funding limitations and debt issuance
- Property appraisal reform
- Unfunded mandate protection

Technology

- Broadband affordability and expansion

Policy Positions – Changes for 89th

- **Civic Engagement and Transparency**
 - Support legislation that protects the local administration of fair, secure, transparent, and accessible elections.
- **Growth Management and Land Use**
 - Support legislation that enhances transparency and accountability for special purpose districts, including requiring that county governments and impacted residents are given ample notice before a district may be created, provide for board representation opportunities for residents serviced or contained within a district, and that newly created districts comply with county development standards, when they are constructed outside of municipal corporate limits.
- **Health and Human Services**
 - Support legislation and state budget decisions that prioritize preventative mental health care interventions and pre-arrest diversion strategies by connecting people to appropriate community-based treatment and support services outside of the criminal justice system.
- **Mobility and Transportation**
 - Support legislation that encourages innovative transportation technologies and solutions, including multi-modal and mass transportation options.
- **Taxation, Revenue, and Budget**
 - Oppose legislation that would diminish the authority or discretion of a commissioners court and would not serve a court-approved public purpose when the removal or reduction in authority would result in weakened public protections.