
City of Austin Legislative Program

For the 82nd Texas Legislature

General Principles

Austin supports legislation that enhances the City's ability to solve problems and improve the quality of life for our Citizens. Austin opposes legislation that reduces the City's authority, increases the City's costs, or otherwise erodes the City's ability to govern our own local affairs. Our goal is to work with other cities and the Texas Municipal League in a spirit of collaboration and teamwork. When their positions are consistent with ours, we will support the League and other cities in their legislative efforts even if Austin is not directly impacted.

The overriding issue during the regular session of the 82nd Texas Legislature is the State budget crisis and the need for an estimated \$15-25 billion in new revenue to keep State services at their current level. All Texas cities will need to make sure that State government costs or revenue needs are not shifted to local taxpayers and residents out of proportion to the benefits obtained.

Primary Issues

- Monitor all legislation related to the electric utility industry, including Sunset legislation for the Public Utility Commission, and take action to both protect the current status of the Texas electric markets and to maintain local control of taxpayer investment in Austin Energy.
- Oppose any reduction of Austin's water rights or future water resources.
- Oppose appraisal and/or revenue caps that would limit Austin's ability to raise revenues needed to provide necessary city services.
- Protect Austin's citizens and taxpayers from bearing the burden of paying for State mandates and from the costs of collecting revenues for the State.
- Protect municipal authority over rights-of-way and ensure that Austin can continue to be compensated for the private, commercial use of public property.
- Support the zoning authority cities currently have. Protect the city's annexation and extra-territorial (ETJ) authority.
- Oppose any legislation that would reduce Austin's authority to protect the environment or protect water quality.
- Maintain the current ability of Austin to acquire property for uses that benefit its citizens and protect local taxpayers from paying additional compensation to individuals and businesses for decisions made in the public interest.
- Oppose any legislation that erodes municipal sovereign immunity.
- Seek adequate funding for health care programs to support the uninsured and underinsured residents of Austin, Travis County, and all of our local health care programs.

Seek Introduction and Passage

- Legislation amending the COA Employees' Retirement System statute, as approved by the Austin City Council and the Board of Trustees for the Pension System.
- Legislation codifying changes to COA Police Retirement System as agreed to by the meet-and-confer agreement between the City and the Austin Police Association.
- Legislation authorizing the use of Texas toll tags to pay ABIA parking fees.

Support

- Providing additional funding options for city and regional transportation projects.
- Adjusting Public Improvement District (PID) bond interest rates to make the bonds competitive.
- Increasing fines and fees designated for child safety programs, school safety, and crossing guards.
- Authorizing more "pass-through funding" agreements and availability through TxDOT.
- Clarifying the use of electronic devices for pedestrian crossings.
- Authorizing metro transit authority vehicles to operate on the shoulders of congested freeways as permitted by the TxDOT District Engineer after considering the safety and benefits.
- Promoting higher water conservation standards for plumbing fixtures, better irrigation and landscape practices, and protecting city authority to set conservation standards.
- Providing greater indemnification for property owners granting easements for public trails.
- Continuing State funding for social services, including homeless programs.
- Continuing State funding for public libraries.
- Authorizing meet-and-confer bargaining for non-civil service employees.

Endorse

- Authorizing increased land development regulation powers for urban counties.
- Requiring a beverage container deposit, redeemable from distributors, on beer, soft drinks and wine coolers.

Oppose

- Oppose legislation prohibiting the authority of City officials to use municipal funds to communicate with legislators.