



City of Austin Legislative Program For the 84th Session of the Texas Legislature

General Principles

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

Primary Issues

- Monitor all legislation related to the electric utility industry and take appropriate 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 for providing necessary city services.
- Protect Austin's citizens and taxpayers from bearing the burden of paying for State mandates and from 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 and protect the city's annexation and extra-territorial 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 local and regional health care programs.
- Support legislation that would require mandatory disclosure of real estate sales prices.
- Support additional funding options for city and regional transportation programs.

Support

- Capital Metro's efforts to authorize metro transit authority vehicles to operate on the shoulders of congested freeways as permitted by the Texas Department of Transportation Engineer after considering the safety and benefits.
- Legislation strengthening municipal burglar alarm response and permitting standards.
- Increasing fines and fees designed for child safety programs, school safety, and crossing guards.
- Higher water conservation standards for plumbing fixtures, better irrigation and landscape practices, and protecting city authority to establish conservation standards.
- Maintaining joint state and local authority over City of Austin employee retirement plans.
- Continuing State funding for social services, including homeless programs.
- Continuing State funding for public libraries.
- Legislation modifying the Construction Manager at Risk statute to restore purchaser's ability to examine subcontractor data prior to bid acceptance.
- Legislation regarding Design Build Contracts for civil projects to require that the construction phase is protected by performance bonds, and other minor changes to minimize risk to cities.
- Legislation that positively affects the mission of municipal animal shelters, animal health, veterinary medicine, and any animal related regulations.

Endorse

- Authorizing increased land development regulation powers including fire safety regulations for urban counties.
- Legislation making municipal court compliance dismissals consistent relative to the fees charged and dates by which compliance must be achieved.

Oppose

- Prohibiting the authority of City officials to use municipal funds to communicate with legislators.
- Preempting or prohibiting the regulation by a city of businesses that make, obtain, or provide advice or assistance to consumers in obtaining payday or auto title loans.

Items added by Council resolution after the approval of the 83rd Legislative Program

Support

1. Legislation that would close existing and potential loopholes, to both state and municipal regulations, that are used or could be used by businesses that make, obtain, or provide advice or assistance to consumers in obtaining payday or auto title loans.
2. Full expansion of Medicaid coverage to all eligible adults in Texas who are living at or below 133% of the Federal Poverty Level, plus 5% income disregard, in accordance with the provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010.
3. Legislation that would distribute air quality funds collected from the Inspection & Maintenance program back to local areas based on the program's intended purpose, as well as reinstating

Rider 8 funds to their pre-2012 levels in order to maintain local air quality programs at an effective level.

4. Restoring full state funding of Women's Preventative Health and Family Planning Services to pre-2011 budget cut levels.
5. Including only unbiased, non-leading, scientifically founded information in the Women's Right to Know pamphlets provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services.
6. Constitutional Amendment and legislation allowing for a local-option flat-tax exemption to ad valorem taxes by local governments.
7. Prioritizing access to transit for the TDHCA Low Income Tax Credit Program.
8. Legislation that addresses unfair disparities in pay, including, but not limited to the Texas Lilly Ledbetter Act.
9. Legislation that increases the statewide minimum wages or authorizes municipal governments to enact higher local minimum wages.
10. Legislation mandating real estate sales price disclosure and other property tax and sales tax laws that would help cities fairly raise revenue from sources other than residential property taxes.
11. Legislation that would create an affirmative defense to prosecution for patients who are being treated by a licensed physician and who use medical marijuana; or legislation to legalize the use of medical marijuana.
12. Legislation that would reduce regulatory barriers to auxiliary water use that are consistent with public health requirements.
13. Legislation that would repeal any and all provisions that were passed in House Bill 2 (83rd Special Session) relating to the regulation of abortion procedures, providers and facilities.
14. Legislation that would create a hybrid homestead exemption that would allow for a percentage-based homestead exemption subject to a cap on the maximum value exempted.