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## **City of Austin Legislative Positions for the 79th Legislative Session**

***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 or increases the City's costs. Our aim is to work with other cities in a spirit of collaboration and teamwork. We will support the legislative positions of other cities and the Texas Municipal League when their positions are consistent with Austin's.***

***The overriding issue during the 79<sup>th</sup> Legislature will be state taxation and school finance. Cities will need to make sure that state costs or negative municipal revenue impacts are not shifted to city taxpayers and ratepayers.***

### **Primary Issue Categories**

#### **1. *Right-of-Way***

Protect the authority of cities to regulate the use of their rights-of-way and to collect reasonable rental fees for their use.

Support legislation requiring utility companies to pay for relocation of their facilities in a local government's right-of-way if relocation is necessary for the construction, maintenance, or repair of city infrastructure in the ROW.

#### **2. *Land Use, Annexation***

Support the zoning authority that cities currently have. Protect the City's annexation and ETJ authority.

#### **3. *Water***

Support the current permitting structure including requirements for effluent reuse and for the existing system of surface water rights.

Maintain the City's authority over special districts in its ETJ.

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Support the seniority of in-basin water rights.

4. *Electric Utility*

The Austin Energy agenda will be to monitor legislation related to the electric utility industry and to take action as needed to protect our interests. We would oppose any legislation that would negatively affect local control, increase costs to AE customers or that would require municipal utilities to deregulate. Austin Energy seeks to maintain the SB 7 framework that governs the electric industry. Austin Energy will keep the City Manager, Mayor and City Council informed on a regular basis regarding legislation affecting Austin Energy.

**Departmental Issues**

*City Auditor*

Support legislation that exempts from public disclosure the audit working papers of auditors of political subdivisions.

Support Legislation that allows all cities to obtain from the state comptroller information relating to the sales tax remittances made by specific remitters.

*Aviation*

Support legislation that provides grants for security improvements at airports including medium and large hub airports. Also support legislation that provides incentives for direct flights from smaller airports to Austin.

*City Clerk*

Support legislation that allows municipalities to use the same procedure of electronically posting agendas as is established for the state.

*Community Care*

Support legislation reversing changes to Medicaid and CHIP programs made last session. These changes indirectly increased demand for our (locally subsidized) services.

Support legislation mandating that the new privatized Medicaid enrollment process (call centers) does not decrease the number of people enrolled because of staff / time limitations.

Support legislation giving the Travis County Hospital District authority to issue tax anticipation notes and giving the District the ability to increase the collections for costs incurred by residents of other counties.

#### *Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services*

Support state incentives for the film industry to make Texas more competitive with other states in attracting film business activity.

#### *Emergency Medical Services*

Support the expansion of the Rural Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) program into a state-wide program to provide EMD services to rural areas.

#### *Emergency Management*

Support legislation creating a Disaster Contingency Fund for the State of Texas to provide individual and government funding assistance for disasters that do not qualify for federal assistance.

Support legislation that authorizes local and county governments to enter into disaster mutual aid agreements or compacts instead of a series of one-on-one inter-local agreements.

#### *Finance and Administrative Services*

Support legislation requiring the full disclosure of sales price information to the appraisal district.

#### *Health*

Support legislation that allows unlimited prescription benefits for Medicaid.

Support legislation to provide access to dental care for Medicaid adults.

Support legislation to streamline and simplify eligibility processes for Medicaid that will encourage more eligible but non-covered individuals to take advantage of this program.

#### *Housing*

Support legislation that allows the maintenance of stability and affordability for city residents and neighborhoods.

#### *Human Resources*

Support legislation that would allow cities to reappoint their civil service commissioners.

Support the creation of a long-term care insurance pool for public sector employer groups.

#### *Library*

Support increased funding for the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, which funds direct aid to local libraries.

#### *Police*

Monitor legislation giving the police department new tools for law enforcement.

Support legislation amending Education Code Section 54.2081 to allow for a waiver of tuition for peace officers enrolled in law enforcement degree programs at public colleges and universities.

#### *Purchasing*

Support legislation that would enable municipalities to publish bids electronically, rather than through newspapers.

Monitor legislation allowing the splitting of awards to multiple vendors for the same product or service even though not all are the lowest bidder when a single vendor is unable to provide the product or service in the time allowed.

#### *Public Works and Traffic Management*

Monitor legislation allowing automated enforcement of traffic lights.

Support legislation adding SH 130 to the list of Scenic Highways, as passed and approved by CAMPO resolution on November 18, 2002. Also support adding SH 45 to the list of Scenic Highways.

Support legislation establishing a *prima facie* speed limit of 25 mph on residential streets.

### *Water Utility*

Support legislation that protects the rights of municipalities regarding Certificates of Convenience and Necessity so that urban standards are achieved.

Support legislation removing the cap on the production fees only on new conditional use permits of the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District while the water use fee assessed against the City of Austin will continue to be in an amount not to exceed 60 percent of the total funding of the District received from water use fees assessed against only existing permittees of the District. If Austin seeks permits for additional water, the fees for new permits will apply.

Support legislation aimed at adding safety provisions to Ch. 756 of the Health and Safety Code related to trench safety.

Support legislation that sets higher water conservation standards for plumbing fixtures.

### *Watershed Protection and Neighborhood Planning and Zoning*

Support legislation that would provide stricter regulation of quarries and stone crushers relative to the threats they pose to water quality and quantity.

Support statewide adoption of building codes, mechanical codes, and plumbing codes.

Support increased pipeline safety regulation.

*Austin also supports the legislative agenda, attached, adopted by the Community Action Network of Austin*



## **COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK**

### **LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 2005**

*The Community Action Network (CAN) strongly supports investments for a healthier, more educated and productive community; while also preparing for rapidly changing demographics.*

#### **COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK PROVIDES FULL AND ACTIVE SUPPORT FOR THE FOLLOWING LEGISLATIVE ITEMS:**

##### **Self Sufficiency**

***Invest in strategic, preventative actions that will produce long-term results for the health, well-being, and self-sufficiency of Texas children, adults and families (such as, early education, education, physical and mental health, protective services, substance abuse, job training, and wellness programs)***

- Restore Medicaid Benefits and Funding including vision, dental and mental health services
- Restore Children's Health Insurance (CHIP) benefits and funding including vision, dental and mental health services
- Protect and expand access to prescription medications, particularly mental health medications while emphasizing efficiencies
- Move resources from more costly strategies, e.g., high rates of incarceration for non-violent crimes, into community and evidence based substance abuse, mental health treatment, prevention and re-entry services
- Restore funding to community colleges
- Ensure that working poor families (below 200% of poverty) maintain access to child care funds
- Restore 2002 levels of funding from the Health and Human Services Commission to all 211 Centers statewide

##### ***Sustainable Economic Development***

**Create a tax system that provides a sufficient and stable source of revenue to**

**finance needed public education and public services while not unfairly**

**burdening particular industries, products, neighborhoods or forms of business.**

- Implement new broad based state tax options to offset any reduction in property taxes
- Increase cigarette and alcohol taxes and reserve the revenue for health and human services
- Promote legislation that maximizes the leveraging of federal dollars
- Protect against unfunded mandates to local entities while emphasizing effectiveness and cost savings
- Provide full funding for grant programs to help close the Higher Education enrollment gap through Texas Grant/Texas Grant II, Be on Time, and Texas Equalization Grant (TEG) programs
- Enable hospital districts to obtain increased compensation for indigent care provided to patients outside the district

**CAN CONTACT INFORMATION: [www.caction.org](http://www.caction.org) ph: 414-8203**

**CAN Partners:** Austin Area Research Organization ~ Austin Independent School District ~ Austin Area Human Services Association Austin Area Interreligious Ministries ~ Austin Travis County MHMR Center ~ Capital Metro ~ City of Austin Community Justice Council ~ Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce ~ Health Partnerships 2010 ~ Higher Education Coalition Travis County ~ United Way Capital Area ~ WorkSource-Greater Austin Area Workforce Board