

Travis County Legislative Agenda

Travis County is an innovative, vibrant community that preserves its diverse cultural heritage and natural resources.

As a political subdivision of state government, Travis County requires legislative authority to enhance and improve the services it delivers. The Travis County Commissioners Court desires to effectively, efficiently, and equitably provide justice, health and safety services to improve the quality of life for the people of Travis County.

Travis County Principles for Legislative Action

The Commissioners Court has adopted the following principles for the 87th Texas Legislature:

- ★ Travis County is a unique place, and Travis County government should preserve and enhance the human, economic, cultural and natural resources of the area.
- ★ Travis County government acts as a steward of the public trust and of public resources entrusted to its care.
- ★ The Travis County Commissioners Court is committed to providing the maximum value and return on investment for all revenues entrusted to the County.
- ★ 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 Travis County Commissioners Court opposes legislation or budgeting decisions that would shift the cost of state-funded programs to local governments.
- ★ The Travis County Commissioners Court believes counties need greater authority and tools to deal with the challenges of a rapidly-urbanizing area in rapidly-changing times.
- ★ The Travis County Commissioners Court supports collaboration on legislative issues with other counties through the Conference of Urban Counties, the Texas Association of Counties and the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas, whenever its interests do not conflict with theirs.



Travis County Legislative Priorities

(Items in this list are the legislative priorities for the IGR staff and the legislative consultants. The list will be modified throughout the session as the Commissioners Court reviews and evaluates those priorities.)

Key: Ongoing legislative Priorities

Added legislative Priorities

1. Oppose legislation or budget decisions that would create unfunded mandates or divert county revenues. (TRBA-1)
2. Oppose legislation that would limit the County's ability to meet the needs of its citizens by artificially capping appraisal values or county revenues. (TRBA-2)
3. Support legislation to give counties greater flexibility in fashioning the residential homestead exemption to meet the needs of local taxpayers, so long as the authority is permissive. (TRBA-14)
4. Support legislation to remove statutory language that requires local governments to practice balance billing. (EMS-6)
5. Support legislation to require electronic submissions of competitive bids and proposals. (TRBA-17)



Travis County Policy Positions

(Items in this list are the legislative policy positions of Travis County.)

Emergency Services

1. Support legislation to amend the medical examiners' statutes to promote best practices throughout the State while preserving local control and flexibility.
2. Oppose legislation that would further limit county authority to regulate fireworks to protect public health and safety.
3. Support legislation that preserves the authority of a county fire marshal to protect health and safety.
4. Support legislation that would provide State resources for search and rescue, fire suppression, life flight and other services, including Travis County STAR Flight.
5. Support legislation that recognizes the appropriate role of county government in an improved statewide system of disaster preparedness and emergency management.
6. Support legislation to remove statutory language that requires local governments to practice balance billing.

Environment and Natural Resources

1. Support legislation to increase funding for the Texas Recreation and Parks Account Local Park Grant Program and the Texas State Park System.
2. Oppose legislation that would reduce or eliminate local control over the placement and usage of billboards.
3. Support allowing counties to recover costs and attorney's fees from a utility if they intervene on behalf of rate payers in unincorporated areas in water supply rate cases.
4. Support legislation to improve regional coordination of water resource management.
5. Support measures to improve the effectiveness of ground water management.
6. Support legislation that supports county to achieve emission reduction goals.
7. Support legislation to allow park rangers, who are certified peace officers, more flexibility and options to enforce county park regulations.
8. Support legislation that would improve the ability of the County to enforce clean air, water and other environmental laws.



Growth Management/Land Use

1. Support legislation giving counties the necessary tools to manage growth, protect property values, and preserve quality of life in the unincorporated areas.
2. Support legislation that would restrict the ability of a homeowners' association to prohibit the use of qualifying sustainable technologies on homes or property within their jurisdiction.

Health and Human Services

1. Support additional funding for health and human services programs that provide necessary benefits and services to Travis County residents.
2. Support legislation and budgeting decisions that increase funding for necessary mental health services at the state and local level for all Texans.

Justice Planning

1. Support legislation to improve the availability and continuity of mental and physical health care between the criminal justice and other community systems.
2. Support legislation to reduce recidivism and facilitate effective re-entry and enhance employment readiness and job opportunities for people with criminal histories and their families, with an emphasis on creating job opportunities and securing housing.
3. Support legislation to reimburse counties for all expenses incurred in housing state-supervised offenders.
4. Support legislation to increase opportunities for jail diversion strategies.
5. Oppose legislation that would eliminate or reduce local courts' discretion with respect to the use of bonds.
6. Support legislation to reduce the incidence of criminal defendants confined in jail for inability to pay fines, fees or costs, provided it does not place an undue burden on county finances or limit judicial discretion.
7. Support legislation allowing commissioners courts to improve the availability and efficacy of specialty court programs.
8. Support legislation that improves the delivery of information regarding the consequences of a criminal conviction to defendants.



Mobility and Transportation Funding

1. Support increased funding for transportation and other mobility needs.
2. Support legislation enabling counties, on a local option basis, to levy taxes or fees to support mobility infrastructure.
3. Support legislation to enable counties to levy an impact fee upon new land development within the unincorporated area to pay for arterial roadway improvements serving the development.
4. Support reforms to utility relocation laws and regulations at both the state and local level.
5. Support legislation that encourages innovative transportation technologies and solutions.
6. Support legislation to create new MUDs that requires the MUD to comply with the standards of whichever government will maintain the roads at the time of their construction.

Taxation, Revenues, Budget and Administration

1. Oppose legislation or budget decisions that would create or continue unfunded mandates or divert county revenues.
2. Oppose legislation that would limit the County's ability to meet the needs of its citizens by artificially capping appraisal values or county revenues.
3. Support constitutionally-based unfunded mandate protection for local governments.
4. Preserve local control over the issuance of debt to meet local needs.
5. Support legislation giving counties greater freedom and flexibility in providing public notices to their residents.
6. Support legislation that encourages economic development while preserving the authority and discretion of the commissioners court in negotiating economic development incentives.
7. Support TCDRS as a prudently and conservatively structured defined contribution pension plan with hybrid components appropriate for counties.
8. Support local control over compensation, benefits and training provided by the county.
9. Oppose legislation that would diminish the authority or discretion of a commissioners court and would not serve a court-approved public purpose.



10. Support legislation and budgeting decisions that permit counties to use technology to improve the delivery of information and services to their residents when:
 - a. it is permissive,
 - b. it improves the delivery of information and services,
 - c. allows the county to continue the delivery of services during times of emergency, and/or
 - d. the new technology is necessary to replace obsolete equipment or practices.
11. Support legislation that increases transparency at all levels of government in reasonable and cost-effective ways.
12. Oppose legislation that imposes or changes a civil court fee or criminal court cost unless:
 - a. the payer is either the direct cause or the beneficiary of the service to be provided by the fee or court cost;
 - b. the fee or court cost goes to the governmental entity that is actually funding the service; and,
 - c. the charge is not so large as to be a punishment in itself rather than a fee or cost.
13. Support legislation to increase fairness, consistency and predictability in the property appraisal and appraisal review process.
14. Support legislation to give counties greater flexibility in fashioning the residential homestead exemption to meet the needs of local taxpayers, so long as the authority is permissive.
15. Oppose legislation that would limit local control over the administration of elections.
16. Support legislation to protect and promote public participation in government decision-making, including elections, open meetings and open records, and notice and opportunity to participate in important decisions.
17. Support legislation to require electronic submissions of competitive bids and proposals.

Positions on Other Proposals Before the 87th Texas Legislature

(Items in this list are legislative positions regarding initiatives of other groups or organizations.)

