

Placeholder: City of Austin skyline

CITY OF AUSTIN
2019 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA
86TH LEGISLATURE

MAYOR & COUNCIL

Message from the Mayor:

The City of Austin looks forward to working with the 86th Legislature to best meet the needs and concerns of Austin residents. In this program you will find the City of Austin's 2019 State Legislative Agenda approved by our City Council. The result of an inclusive process, we believe that this agenda best represents the needs and concerns of Austin residents. It is our intent that this agenda guide our city staff, in coordination with our strategic partners, in their efforts to advocate on behalf of the City of Austin and its residents.

We look forward to working together on policies that make Texas, and Texas cities, greater.

Mayor Steve Adler

Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo, District 9

Ora Houston, District 1

Delia Garza, District 2

Sabino "Pio" Renteria, District 3

Greg Casar, District 4

Ann Kitchen, District 5

Jimmy Flannigan, District 6

Leslie Pool, District 7

Ellen Troxclair, District 8

Alison Alter, District 10

City Manager

Spencer Cronk

PLACEHOLDER: COUNCIL PICTURE

PLACEHOLDER: GRAPHIC ABOUT AUSTIN

PLACEHOLDER: TEXAS CAPITOL

GENERAL LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

The City of Austin's 86th State Legislative Agenda reflects the City's priorities for efficient and cost-effective government services that foster Austin's prosperity, sustainability and safety. The City of Austin supports legislation that enhances City services, reduces the cost of providing services, prioritizes a prosperous business climate and improves the quality of life for its residents. The City of Austin opposes legislation that strips Austin residents of their right to self-governance, increases taxpayer costs for City services that residents rely on, undermines the principle of home rule, negatively affects the City's financial ability to act in the best interest of its residents, or imposes on Austin taxpayers the burden of paying for State mandates or collecting revenues for the State.

To that end, the City has adopted certain legislative priorities wherein City staff and its professional Intergovernmental Relations team is directed and authorized to protect interests critical to preserving the principle of home rule and Austin residents' right of self-governance.

In addition, the City has adopted statements of support wherein City staff and its professional Intergovernmental Relations team is directed and authorized to actively support legislation related to specific position(s) adopted by the City Council while not proactively seeking introduction of legislation.

Lastly, the City has adopted statements of opposition wherein City staff and its professional Intergovernmental Relations team is directed and authorized to actively oppose any legislation that contradicts or undermines the specific position(s) adopted by the City Council.

The City of Austin also supports the legislative initiatives of strategic community partners, such as regional government entities, Texas cities, the Texas Municipal League, educational institutions, non-profits, and private sector entities that enhance educational, cultural, and infrastructure resources in the Austin region to the extent these initiatives do not conflict with the City's agenda.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The City of Austin recognizes that the Texas Legislature has identified the following issues as legislative priorities for the 86th Legislative Session and directs the City staff and the Intergovernmental Relations team to:

- ❖ Protect Austin residents' right to govern themselves and work with their City government to adopt and enforce ordinances that address the health, safety and, public welfare of the community, including but not limited to, the ability to regulate earned sick leave, short-term rentals, payday lending, and fair chance hiring.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that attempts to diminish the City's ability to govern the taxpayer's investment in municipally-owned utilities or negatively impacts the current status of Austin Energy, including the rate case approved by City Council on August 29, 2016.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that negatively affects the City's financial ability to act in the best interest of Austin's residents, including but not limited to:
 - Imposing a revenue cap of any type, including a rollback rate below eight percent, a mandatory tax rate ratification election, a lower rollback petition requirement, a limitation on overall city expenditures, or an exclusion of new property in the effective rate calculations; or
 - Lowering the homestead appraisal cap or expanding the appraisal cap to non-homestead properties.
- ❖ Preserve property value for Austin taxpayers by protecting the City's authority to promote good land use through:
 - land use and zoning regulations (including billboard regulations, tree, parkland dedication, and landscape regulations),
 - building codes,
 - planning requirements,
 - impact fees or building permit fees,
 - annexation, or
 - eminent domain.
- ❖ Preserve and protect Austin's current and future water resources and water quality.
- ❖ Protect Austin's civil rights ordinances and oppose legislation that attempts to diminish the City's ability to protect Austinites' employment, housing, public accommodation, and other civil rights that would threaten Austin's welcoming environment to businesses, conventions, and events, or tarnish Austin's status as an inclusive community for all.

STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT & OPPOSITION

TRANSPORTATION & AVIATION

- ❖ Support funding and transportation projects and initiatives dedicated to improving regional mobility and to maintaining, expanding, and improving transportation infrastructure and local transportation options.
- ❖ Support legislation increasing funding for child safety programs, school safety, and crossing guards.
- ❖ Support legislation that improves contracting options for delivery of transportation projects.
- ❖ Support increased state funding for transportation projects or legislation that creates local-option funding options for transportation projects.
- ❖ Support legislative efforts to lower the prima facie speed limit to 25 mph.
- ❖ Support legislation that provides local governments and airport authorities with sufficient resources to provide for a safe and efficient aviation system

TAX REFORM & DEBT ISSUANCE

- ❖ Support legislation that provides local options for revenue expansion and diversification and creates a tax and revenue system that promotes equity, responsiveness, and the authority for local officials to act in the best interest of residents.
- ❖ Support legislation that would require mandatory disclosure of real estate sales prices or substantially improves the real estate appraisal process, including the appeals process.
- ❖ Support legislation that simplifies and accurately notifies taxpayers of the impacts of the City's adopted property tax rate.
- ❖ Support legislation that would allow for a percentage-based homestead exemption subject to a cap on the maximum value exempted or a local-option flat-tax exemption to ad valorem taxes.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that places Austin's taxpayers with the burden of paying for State mandates and collecting revenues for the State.

WATER & WASTEWATER, ENVIRONMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY

- ❖ Support legislation that provides grants and financing assistance for high priority and security-related water and wastewater projects, repair and replacement of aging infrastructure, and the improvement and maintenance of water and wastewater infrastructure.
- ❖ Support higher water conservation standards for plumbing fixtures, irrigation, and landscape practices and protect the City's authority to establish conservation standards.
- ❖ Support legislation that promotes healthy communities and economic prosperity through the protection of the region's air, land, and water and Austin's natural resources and open spaces.
- ❖ Oppose any legislation that would restrict the City's ability to protect the floodplain.

- ❖ Preserve and protect water resources.

PUBLIC HEALTH & PROSPERITY

- ❖ Support adequate funding for health care programs, including Women's Preventative Health and Family Planning Services, behavioral health and substance abuse programs, to support the uninsured and underinsured residents of Austin, Travis County, and all local and regional health care programs.
- ❖ Protect the City's ability to enforce basic health standards for the public through restaurant, food truck, and daycare inspections.
- ❖ Support legislation that improves access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food.

ANIMAL SERVICES

- ❖ Support legislation that positively affects the mission and service delivery of municipal animal shelters, animal health, and any other animal related regulations to save shelter pet's lives, to work with rescue agencies and non-profits, and to model best practices for shelter pets and wildlife.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

- ❖ Protect the City's ability to manage and control public rights-of-way and publicly-owned land, to receive fair market compensation for use of public rights-of-way, and to require private companies to pay for the costs of relocating their facilities.

TRANSPARENT AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT

- ❖ Support legislation that clarifies and improves the state's requirements for disclosure and filing requirements for business entities contracting with the City.
- ❖ Support legislation that reduces the costs of providing services by authorizing public notices on the Internet or through electronic service.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that erodes municipal sovereign immunity.
- ❖ Maintain the ability of Austin to acquire property for uses that benefit its residents and protect local taxpayers from paying additional compensation to individuals and businesses.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that allows special districts to form inside the City limits or the ETJ without City Council approval.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that limits or prohibits the City's current ability to communicate or advocate with legislators or limits or prohibits the authority of the Texas Municipal League to use any funds to communicate with legislators.

EQUITY & AFFORDABILITY

- ❖ Support legislation that promotes equity for residents of Austin including pay-equity, education-equity, housing-equity, and health-equity.

- ❖ Support legislation and funding that will bolster the City's efforts to stabilize and sustain neighborhoods, preserve and expand the supply of housing that is affordable, expand economic opportunities, meet critical social needs, and fund other critical needs in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.
- ❖ Support legislation that aligns employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services to housing that is affordable and accessible to transit.

EDUCATION, ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ Support legislation that improves the City's ability to attract economic development, tourism, and provides economic opportunities for Austin's music, film, and entertainment sector.
- ❖ Support legislation that provides Austin students and residents with career pathway opportunities that help improve the quality of the City's workforce.
- ❖ Support legislation that improves the quality of education for successful pathways to high school graduation, college, and careers.

HOMELESSNESS

- ❖ Support funding and programs that provide social services for people experiencing homelessness.

ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- ❖ Support legislation that increases accessibility to public facilities and transit for people with disabilities.

PARKS

- ❖ Support funding for the Texas State Park System, the Texas Recreation & Parks Account Local Park Grant Program, and any program that directly benefits parks, recreation, open space, trails, and tourism.

LIBRARIES

- ❖ Support increases in state aid for public libraries.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that limits the City's ability to provide knowledge and education to the Austin community through technology and books.

PUBLIC PENSION SYSTEMS

- ❖ Support legislation that maintains joint state and local authority over City of Austin employee retirement plans.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that would negatively affect the City's public pension systems, including those for police and fire.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- ❖ Support continued funding and support of Police, Fire, and EMS operations, and oppose legislation that restricts their ability to effectively serve and protect the Austin community.
- ❖ Support legislation that improves the City's ability to administer effective municipal court programs.
- ❖ Support funding of homeland security programs that provide direct assistance to the City.

- ❖ Support legislation that reduces gun violence in coordination with local law enforcement.
- ❖ Support legislation that would limit or prevent access to firearms by domestic abusers.
- ❖ Support legislation that would regulate and prevent access to bump stocks.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that would deregulate gun silencers.
- ❖ Support legislation and funding to local governments that would expand and improve existing efforts to address the opioid epidemic, stop the illicit trafficking of fentanyl, carfentanyl, oxycodone, and other opioids, and provide for greater cooperation at the regional, state, and federal levels with regard to policy discussions on the issue of opioid abuse.
- ❖ Oppose legislation that affects the City's ability to enhance public confidence, trust, and support in the fairness and integrity of the Austin Police Department.
- ❖ Support legislation that improves the City's ability to enhance the health, welfare, and safety of municipal employees.