



**City of Corpus Christi
Legislative Priorities
85th Regular Session 2017**

Outlook on 2017

The political landscape in Washington, D.C., and Austin, TX, which result from elections and the turnover in legislative branches and governmental agencies, shape the business environment in which the Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Department operates. It is constantly evolving due to those elected and administrative leadership outcomes, changes in statutes and regulations, changes in the economy, changes in community needs, and any number of other forces. The IGR Department's responsibility is to navigate the political environment to achieve the City's legislative, administrative and regulatory policy and funding needs.

In Texas, the 85th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature will convene on January 10, 2017, with significantly less turnover than previous sessions. With only one statewide office (Railroad Commissioner) up this election, very little change is expected in the operation and administration of Texas government. There are only three new State Senators out of 31 (approximately 10 percent turnover) and 24 new State Representatives out of 150 (approximately 16 percent turnover). Both chambers remain majority Republican members.

The governance structure of local, state, and federal governments with inter-mingled programs, financing, and customers creates a demand for intergovernmental cooperation. To be successful, this ever-evolving business environment requires close contact and constant communication with legislative leadership, external legislative consultants, and municipal advocacy organizations at the state and national level, statewide municipal partners, community leadership, and community stakeholders. The IGR Department must monitor an array of issues impacting municipalities – including structure and governance, finance, workforce, land use regulation, planning, zoning, housing, construction, utilities, law enforcement, fire protection, tax policy, tourism, transportation, economic development, environmental issues, and more. The IGR Department must utilize information technology, enhance personal contacts, and engage additional resources to ensure the City's legislative, administrative and regulatory policy and funding needs are communicated effectively. The City contracts with well-connected, experienced and highly professional lobbyists (Snapper Carr and Brandon Aghamalian of Focused Advocacy) at the state level to assist with its advocacy and communications efforts.

At the local level, the IGR Department must work with local and regional stakeholders, officials, agencies and organizations to create partnerships to further community support. Relationship building and the exchange of information and ideas is gained through participation and service on committees, attendance at organization meetings, and sponsorship of community functions which align with the City's goals and mission.

Texas state government includes more than 150 agencies and institutions of higher education. Governor Greg Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick and Speaker of the House Joe Straus sent a letter to all state agencies in July 2016 directing them to reduce their budget requests by four percent for the 2018-2019 biennial budget. The state leaders expect the price of oil to remain depressed impacting state revenues. The legislature also faces significant cost increases and service demands for the state's foster care system, shoring up state retirement systems, social service programs, and public and higher education. Speaker of the House Straus identified his priorities for the 85th Session including reforming the broken state foster care system (which he deemed "urgent" since a court ruled the system is unconstitutional), expanding student opportunity grants, also known as "set asides," (which is opposed by Lt. Governor Patrick) and reforming a broken school finance system. The Speaker also indicated appropriations for the next biennium will need to be strategic and prudent because tax collections were a billion dollars lower than last year.

There is a faction of state legislators with an anti-local government bias and will support legislation to place further burdens on or restrict authority of local governments. The Texas Municipal League (TML) reported beginning with the 2015 legislative session the once legislatively revered concept of local control became a bad word and is now to be avoided because critics now believe it results in local regulatory differences (i.e. "patchwork quilt" of city rules). Critics believe local control is inefficient for businesses to operate differently in every city and consider differences, such as zoning, sign and building ordinances, land use restrictions, plastic bag bans, regulations on transportation network companies, pay day and auto title lenders, an assault on their "liberty". These protectors of "liberty" support the centralization of decision-making in Austin and tell those harmed by state-imposed rules (or the lack thereof) that it's a small price to pay for a level playing field across the state. Ironically, the "liberty" groups are equally critical of federally-imposed regulatory uniformity on the states as an overreach.

The biggest threat to local government authority will come from the Lieutenant Governor and Texas Senate, where property tax caps, appraisal caps, easing tax rollbacks, and other proposals to erode local control, are likely to emanate. Several Texas Senate interim committees pursued studies in 2016 with the intent of laying the groundwork for legislative proposals in 2017 to restrict the abilities of local governments.

Besides tax issues, the Senate is exploring key municipal service issues like annexation, eminent domain, debt issuance and finance, and economic development programs. Local governments, including cities, counties, school districts, junior college districts, hospital and emergency service districts, water and wastewater districts, municipal management districts, navigation districts, drainage districts, and others will continue to spend the majority of their efforts in 2017 trying to prevent bills which weaken local control.

PRIORITIES

Municipal Governance

Support the continued ability of local officials to determine the amount of revenue necessary to provide critical services for the protection, safety and welfare of its residents and oppose stricter revenue caps, which would limit the City's ability to meet the needs of its rapidly growing population.

Support the continued ability of local elected officials to responsibly manage growth through annexation and protect the rights of city taxpayers, who bear the costs of providing services to the region's growing population and oppose eroding its annexation authority without any financial assistance from the state.

Support the continued ability of local elected officials to pass ordinances for the benefit and best interests of their constituents.

Oppose changes to the eminent domain laws.

Oppose pre-emption of its existing ordinances, which protect the public, health, safety and welfare of its residents.

Military Base Protection and Enhancement

Increase FY 2018-2019 biennial appropriation to \$60 million for the Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant (DEAAG) Program to invest in preserving jobs and economic sustainability of Texas military installations.

Prohibit construction of wind turbines within a reasonable distance of a military installation.

Prohibit school districts from granting Chapter 313, Tax Code, tax abatements for wind farms within a reasonable distances of a military installation

Add a provision to the seller's disclosure notice to make buyers of certain residential property aware that the property could be located near a military installation and could be affected by high noise or air installation compatible use zones or other operations.

Higher Education

Encourage the Texas A&M University System, the Board of Regents, communities within Nueces County and Kleberg County to discuss and review the potential merger of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and Texas A&M University-Kingsville comprehensively and be inclusive of all groups. Oppose any legislation or proposal that would adversely affect, be harmful or detrimental to those affected communities.

Windstorm Insurance

Oppose revisions to the reforms achieved in SB 900 (84th Regular Session, 2015), including the restructuring of the governing board to put policyholders on equal footing with insurance industry members, establishing TWIA financial structure that provides a stable, sustainable and affordable rate structure capable of covering a 1-in-100 year storm, requiring member insurance companies to pay allowable assessments sooner, establishing a small statewide catastrophic storm fund for excess losses, and structuring a more financially beneficial re-insurance program.

Street Funding

Support legislation that would allow local elected officials and/or voters to consider additional funding options for cities to address streets, sidewalks and other transportation needs that are not otherwise met by current funding sources.

ACTIVELY SUPPORT

Transportation

Support reliable, sustainable and predictable funding for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to build and maintain Texas' highways, roads, bridges, and multi-modal transportation infrastructure to protect the health, safety and welfare of the traveling public.

Support continued policy of non-diversion of revenue from the State Highway Fund.

Support funding for TxDOT to continue investment in the development of Interstate 69 (along US Highway 59, US Highway 77, US Highway 281, US Highway 84, Interstate 2 and State Highway 44) and Marine Highway 69 (the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway) as an international freight corridor providing strategic intermodal connections from the Texas-Mexico border and ultimately through eight states to the US-Canada border.

Support funding for TxDOT to continue investment in the development of Interstate 14 (the Gulf Coast Strategic Military Highway) to provide the energy production area of West Texas and the various Texas military facilities improved access to Corpus Christi and the Gulf Coast.

Support legislative efforts to fully implement Propositions 1 and 7 and ensure equitable distribution of funding among the districts. Oppose any efforts to reduce anticipated funding from these two revenue sources.

Ensure there is sufficient funding for engineering, right-of-way acquisition, and related project development costs to ensure that high priority projects are made shovel-ready for these new revenue sources.

Public Health

Support regulating the sale, storage, transportation, and disposal of scrap or used tires, including an adequate fee structure to implement strategies to eliminate potential mosquito breeding sites for the Zika, West Nile, and other viruses.

Cybersecurity

Amend Open Meetings Act (Chapter 551, Government Code), to clarify existing authorization for closed sessions on cybersecurity threats.

Taxation

Amend the Texas Tax Code making the State's sales tax on large marine vessels competitive with other coastal states.

Air Quality

Maximize funding at the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to assist near non-attainment communities remain in compliance with newly revised U.S. Environmental Protection Agency National Ambient Air Quality Standard for Ozone.

Tourism

Oppose changes to the school start date law (4th Monday in August), which allows Texans to vacation through August, bringing millions of sales tax dollars to the Coastal Bend.

Wastewater

Oppose bills that negatively impacts the gains made by the SSO bill last session (SB 912, 84th Regular Session 2015) or biosolids land application (HB 2248 and HB 2460, 84th Regular Session 2015).

ENDORSE

Municipal Affiliate Legislative Recommendations

- Texas Municipal League
See Attachment A

- Texas Recreation and Parks Society (TRAPS)
See Attachment B

Legislative Priorities of these affiliate entities are to be determined:

- Texas Mayors of Military Communities
- Texas Coalition for Affordable Power
- Transportation Advocates of Texas
- Alliance for I-69 Texas
- Gulf Coast Strategic Military Highway Coalition
- Texas Chapter of Solid Waste Association of North America (TxSWANA)
- Water Environment Association of Texas (WEAT)
- Texas Water Conservation Association (TWCA)
- Texas Society of Certified Public Accountants
- Government Finance Officers Association of Texas (GFOAT)
- Texas Court Clerks Association (TCCA)
- Texas Municipal Courts Association
- Texas Court Clerks Association
- Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers (TAMIO)