

North Texas Commission 2017 Legislative Priorities

REGIONAL SCORECARD

The North Texas Commission supports pro-growth state tax and regulatory policies that grow our economy and attract investment. We encourage policy makers to work to ensure such investment is unfettered and that Texas is able to capitalize on innovation to fuel additional job growth, business expansion and investment.

SUPPORT: Continuation of Texas Enterprise Fund at an increased level that keeps Texas competitive with other states.

RESULT: *The Texas Enterprise Fund was allocated \$86 million for the biennium, a reduction of approximately \$30 million from two years ago but significant in a challenging budget year.*

SUPPORT: Continuation and amendment of the Ch. 313 tax code to enable Texas to compete for major, capital intensive projects with other states.

RESULT: *No action taken.*

SUPPORT: Local control of property taxation decisions and appraisals.

RESULT: *This is a contentious issue but no action was taken.*

It is an action item for the Special Session. It is expected that Senate Bill 2 from the Regular session will be reintroduced which would limit local tax increases.

OPPOSE: Any legislation that would result in a “split roll” between residential and business property taxation.

RESULT: *No action taken.*

SUPPORT: Continued increases in sales tax rebate incentives for broadband, wireless, cable and telecommunications materials and equipment to incent investment while attracting and retaining Texas businesses.

RESULT: *No action taken by the legislature.*

In a related action, legislation was approved and signed by the Governor for deployment of technology and establishing a statewide fee structure for the introduction of the 5G network. This will allow for an expanded communications base for the state as well as pave the way for the introduction of autonomous vehicles.

OPPOSE: Any bill that would be discriminatory or otherwise damage Texas' reputation as a "business-friendly" State.

RESULT: *The heatedly debated and controversial "Bathroom Bill" was in the Senate but that version was set aside in the House which passed a much more limited bill which was rejected by the Senate. **This issue is among the 20 items that are included in the Governor's order for a Special Session.***

TRANSPORTATION

SUPPORT: Continuing the policy of no diversions from the Highway Fund.

RESULT: *Despite efforts to access the Fund for various projects, no diversions were made.*

SUPPORT: High-speed rail and the regulatory changes necessary to grant TxDOT legal authority to implement and regulate high-speed rail projects.

RESULT: *Numerous bills were introduced to limit or stop the development of the High Speed Rail project from Houston to Dallas, but none were successful. Thus the project proceeds on schedule.*

SUPPORT: Continuation of eminent domain authority and related tools to allow planning and development of new and/or expanded transportation corridors including high speed rail, commuter rail, freight rail and highways.

RESULT: *No action taken to limit eminent domain authority or other tools that would affect development of new or expanded transportation corridors.*

SUPPORT: All tools necessary for successful construction of transportation projects including toll roads, tolled managed lanes, design build, concessions and any other financing avenues available.

RESULT: *The bill providing for Comprehensive Development Agreements (CDA's) was defeated in the House. This bill would have authorized an expanded number of public/private partnerships to build large transportation projects statewide.*

SUPPORT: An update in transportation funding formulas to reflect current data and work with Texas Transportation Commissioners at the Federal level to accomplish this.

RESULT: *Ongoing educational efforts underway at both the state and federal levels.*

SUPPORT: Utilize revenue generated from comprehensive tax reform to address structural inequities in the federal transportation formulas. Educate Congress that when the current authorization bill expires at the end of Fiscal Year 2020, the funding formulas will be 15 years old and based on population data that is 20 years old. Transportation funding should be directed to states based on current data, current lane miles, and current population information reflecting the explosive growth of states and cities in several regions of the country.

RESULT: *Ongoing educational efforts underway at both the state and federal levels.*

WATER

SUPPORT: Streamlining state and federal processes for environmental permitting and Federal Section 404/401 water certification.

RESULT: *No action taken but ongoing educational efforts continue.*

SUPPORT: Policies to reduce barriers to interbasin transfers.

RESULT: *No action taken.*

SUPPORT: The continued use of eminent domain authority for water providers in order to ensure a reliable water supply to growing communities.

RESULT: *No action taken to diminish eminent domain authority.*

OPPOSE: Limitations on the authority of Texas Water Development Board or other water utility entities from exercising their ability to implement water management strategies in the State Water Plan.

RESULT: *No action taken to limit such authority.*

The most significant development for water in the North Texas Region is the Lower Bois D'Arc reservoir. Working with the North Texas Congressional Delegation, the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers, the project is on track for completion in the early 2020's.

EDUCATION

SUPPORT: Programs to enhance the development of Tier One Universities in North Texas, including funding for the Texas Research Incentive Program (TRIP) and for core research support.

RESULT: *With limited funds available, the TRIP program was funded but at a reduced level. The three North Texas research institutions (UNT, UTA and UTD), despite continued growing enrollment, had funding marginally reduced.*

SUPPORT: Initiatives to attract more world class researchers to North Texas, including funding for the Governor's University Research Initiative.

RESULT: *The Governor's University Research Initiative was allocated \$15.6 million, a reduction from the \$40 million appropriated two years ago.*

SUPPORT: Measures to advance the objectives of the 60x30 goal established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board with emphasis on improved college readiness for high school graduates and an increased level of postsecondary educational attainment by 2030.

RESULT: *No action taken.*

SUPPORT: Increased funding for health related institutions (HRIs), including increasing the current Research Formula match and the graduate medical education (GME) funding formula.

RESULT: *Despite proposals to reduce funding for HRI's for the most part current funding levels were maintained though there were some reductions.*

SUPPORT: Increased funding for high quality pre-K and early childhood education for all eligible children.

RESULT: *There was no increase in pre-K and early childhood education.*

HEALTH CARE

SUPPORT: Reducing the number of uninsured Texans by securing available federal and state funds to reform and renew Medicaid coverage, thus providing financial relief to hospitals, medical providers and taxpayers.

SUPPORT: Developing and implementing public/private approaches to healthcare coverage improvement and reform that are market-based and capable of addressing the unique needs of Texas.

SUPPORT: Continuation and long-term extension of the Medicaid 1115 Waiver.

SUPPORT: Providing stable and adequate funding for public and private safety net hospitals in the Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) program.

RESULT: *No action taken due to uncertainty about the future of the federal Affordable Care Act. However, funding for Medicaid was reduced by \$2 billion and there is expected to be a \$1 billion shortfall in Medicaid by the next Legislative Session in 2019.*