



Each biennium the Commissioners Court of Bexar County adopts a program to communicate its position on state legislation. The following document is intended to be a guide for the county's governmental affairs efforts during the 86th Texas Legislature.

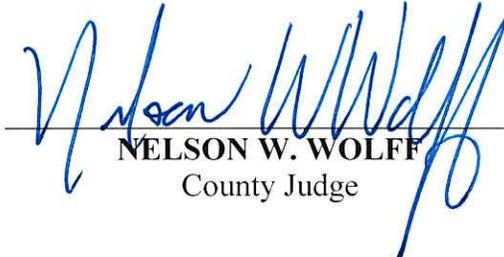
The program is divided into three categories:

- Initiatives: priority items that will be actively pursued to promote passage of a bill;
- Policies: provide guidance as to the general position of the commissioners court; and,
- Cooperative Support: commissioners court support of local partners' legislative initiatives.

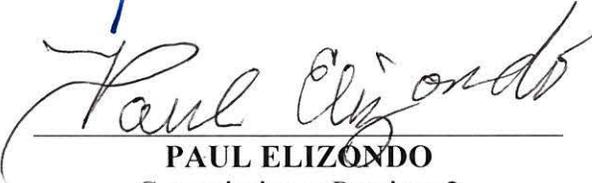
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE COUNTY OF BEXAR COMMISSIONERS COURT ADOPTED ITS:

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM FOR THE 86TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE

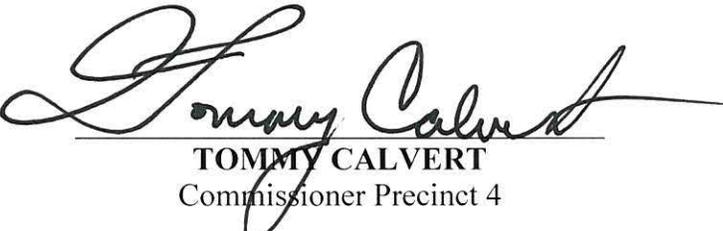
PASSED AND APPROVED by the Commissioners Court of the County of Bexar, Texas on this the 4TH day of DECEMBER, 2018.


NELSON W. WOLFF
County Judge


SERGIO "CHICO" RODRIGUEZ
Commissioner Precinct 1


PAUL ELIZONDO
Commissioner Precinct 2


KEVIN A. WOLFF
Commissioner Precinct 3


TOMMY CALVERT
Commissioner Precinct 4

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INITIATIVES

Issues that have a direct impact and are of such importance to Bexar County that they will be actively pursued by the county's team to promote passage of a bill.

- **Accomplice Witness**

Section 20A.04 of the Penal Code provides that an individual can be convicted on the uncorroborated testimony of a participant to human trafficking. Bexar County proposes to add language to Section 20A.04 to ensure that the correct corroboration is required. The new language will allow a court to determine if accomplice witness instruction should be given in situations in which the party to the offense is more of an adult, willing participant rather than a victim/party to the offense.

- **Building Permits & Inspections**

Chapter 233 of the Local Government Code allows certain populous counties to adopt and enforce a fire code to regulate commercial, public, and multifamily structures in unincorporated areas of the county. However, Chapter 233 does not address structures that are owned or leased by a county. Therefore, Bexar County seeks to allow a county fire marshal to permit and inspect all county-owned or -leased buildings regardless of the location within a county. The proposed changes will create efficiencies and ultimately save taxpayers money by eliminating the requirement that counties pay municipality permitting and inspection fees.

- **Food Permitting**

Language in the Health and Safety Code does not allow a county to regulate food service establishments operating on county-owned or -leased property within a municipality's incorporated limits. Bexar County is seeking to amend the Code in an effort to create efficiencies for the public, counties, and municipalities.

- **Vehicle Registration Fees**

The Texas Transportation Code allows the Department of Motor Vehicles to collect a registration fee from all vehicle owners, 100% of which is dedicated to the state's highway fund. Counties also have the authority to collect local fees up to \$11.50 to be used for road and bridge projects, and child safety programs. Additionally, some counties have the authority to collect an additional fee not to exceed \$10 for transportation projects, and if approved by voters in counties with a population of less than 700,000, the fee can be increased to a maximum of \$20. Bexar County seeks to amend the

Transportation Code to include certain populous counties in those who can increase the additional fee up to \$20.

POLICIES

Due to their potential impact, topics that the commissioners court supports or opposes.

- **Addiction & Mental Health**

Support improvements to addiction and mental healthcare systems that deliver treatment services for frequent utilizers of jails and/or hospital emergency rooms, as well as for those children in our foster care system. Jail and hospital resources are increasingly being used by those who require mental health or alcohol and/or drug treatment. These individuals are exhausting vital resources that are needed for those who need medical attention, or truly need to be incarcerated, and in addition to supporting more treatment resources it is equally as important to provide stable housing and assisted living to anchor the return of productivity to Texans.

- **Annexation / Incorporation**

Support legislation that empowers citizens located in unincorporated areas, extraterritorial jurisdictions and special districts to determine their future when facing annexation or seeking to incorporate.

- **Appraisal Caps**

Oppose the reduction of the residential homestead appraisal cap from the current 10%. Appraisal caps limit the amount that homestead taxable property values can rise each year, thus shifting the tax burden from high-growth areas. This market distortion means others assume the tax burden for the few people who benefit.

- **Certificates of Obligation**

Oppose legislation that affects the ability of local jurisdictions to issue certificates of obligation. Local governments use CO's to quickly finance projects such as: public works construction, purchase of equipment, and facility improvements.

- **Civil Beds**

Support expansion of the state hospitals' civil bed capacity. With limited access, individuals requiring mental health treatment go to local hospitals, which are not equipped for the level of care these patients need, or the length of stay required. The result has created a backlog in emergency rooms and increases in hospital in-patient admissions, causing specialized care to be diluted.

- **Drug Courts**

Support legislation that increases drug court funding. In 2001, the state required the creation of drug courts in counties with a population of 550,000 or more. These counties are currently able to assess a \$60 fee for intoxication and drug convictions. Even though drug courts have proven to be an effective treatment strategy, this underfunded directive has caused a drain on the mandated counties.

- **Elections**
Support legislation and funding that reinforces elections security, improves election infrastructure, secures the election process, and generally supports election officials' efforts to provide an accessible and secure voting process for all.
- **Environmental Regulations**
Support legislation that improves the county's ability to enforce clean air, water and environmental laws, and alleviates restrictions placed on local governments.
- **Franchise Tax**
Support reforms to the corporate franchise tax system. The revamped system has never produced the revenue that was expected; a corporate profits tax may be the better option to ensure that consumers and companies are paying their fair share.
- **Fireworks**
Support the regulation of fireworks in the unincorporated jurisdiction of counties. The unregulated usage of fireworks can create hazardous conditions for public safety and infringe on the quality of life of others; therefore, reasonable local control should be granted to counties which are best positioned to regulate fireworks in the unincorporated areas.
- **Indigent Criminal Defense**
Support increased funding to cover the costs associated with mandated indigent criminal defense. Criminal defendants are guaranteed the right to legal counsel, even if the defendant is unable to pay for an attorney. The Texas Fair Defense Act created the framework for distributing state funding to local entities, and it required that all criminal courts adopt formal procedures for providing attorneys to indigent defendants. However, the state has failed to adequately fund the mandate. In 2016, according to the Texas Indigent Defense Commission, the state funded only \$1.5 million of Bexar County's \$12 million indigent defense costs.
- **Land Bank Demonstration Program**
Support legislation that allows counties to adopt a land bank demonstration program to address blight and develop affordable housing, particularly in their unincorporated areas. Currently, the cities of Dallas and San Antonio are permitted to adopt such a program, which allows these municipalities to permit an exclusive and private sale of tax foreclosed property to a land bank to be developed into affordable housing, among other purposes.
- **Local Control**
Oppose legislation that infringes on local control; or, imposes limits or adds impediments to a jurisdiction's ability to exercise local control. A long held belief is that the government closest to the people is in the best position to serve the people. Similarly, counties deal with issues in various ways, as one size does not fit all across 254 counties. Any effort to pre-empt cities and counties from establishing their own policies is ill advised.

- **Military Missions**
Oppose legislation that allows encroachment on military installations; or, creates incompatible land use or interference with the military's capacity to sustain its missions.
- **Opioid Epidemic**
Increased funding for prevention and treatment of substance misuse, in support of the high degree of collaboration between the local entities cited by state and federal experts as a model for fighting the opioid crisis occurring in our community.
- **Paper Ready Inmates**
Support legislation that ensures the state transfers "paper ready" inmates to state prisons within the required 45 days; or, compensate counties for housing inmates awaiting transfer after the 45 days.
- **Pretrial Justice Reform**
Support reforms to the pretrial process to ensure justice and create efficiencies; assesses defendants arrested for misdemeanors/felonies by using a validated pretrial risk assessment prior to appearance before a magistrate; and, supports pretrial release, leaving discretion with judges to utilize all existing forms of bail.
- **Public School Funding**
Support increases to public school funding. Much like unfunded mandates passed to local governments, the gradual and consistent decrease in state public school funding has caused school districts to rely heavily on revenue generated from local property taxes.
- **Records Archive & Management**
Support legislation that allows for the extension of the effective dates that county clerks can collect the maximum \$10 in records archive and records management fees.
- **Revenue Caps**
Oppose legislation that places restrictions on local revenues by creating or expanding revenue caps. County revenues are already limited by the state, restricting revenues further will continue to dilute the control of a commissioners court which must fund mandates, fulfill increased service demands, and respond to emergencies. More than 60% of Bexar County's general fund comes from ad valorem taxes, yet the county represents only 14% of the unincorporated taxpayer burden and even less within the limits of the multiple municipalities located within the county's jurisdiction. Still, Bexar County has maintained or lowered the property tax rate for over 20 years, without interference from the legislature, by adopting and applying sound fiscal policies and employing efficient and innovative management practices.
- **Sales Price Disclosure**
Support legislation that requires property sales price disclosure. Texas is one of only 12 states that do not require property sale prices to be publicly disclosed; requiring disclosure of property sales prices would assist appraisal districts in establishing a property's true market value.

- **TCDRS**

Oppose legislation that adversely affects the Texas County and District Retirement System. TCDRS is governed by state and federal law, but does not receive any state funding; each plan is funded by investment earnings, employers and employees. Counties define their individual plan and have control to decide on benefit levels offered. This affords counties the flexibility when managing their own plans to fit their needs and current economic trends.

- **Transportation**

Support the establishment and implementation of transportation funding mechanisms; prevent diversions of transportation revenue; and, continue alternative transportation funding mechanisms for local entities.

- **Unfunded Mandates**

Oppose any legislation that creates partially or wholly unfunded mandates, which ultimately force increases in local property taxes. If new mandates are required, local jurisdictions must be granted the authority to opt out until funding is provided. Bexar County works to maintain or lower its property tax rate while planning for explosive growth and absorbing explicit and implied mandates from the state. In the past 10 years alone, the county has financed \$294.6 million to accelerate the construction of state-owned roads because the state could not afford to complete them.

- **Vehicle Registration**

Support legislation that authorizes tax assessors-collectors to process all online vehicle registration transactions, to include the mailing of all vehicle registrations within their county.

- **Voter Registration**

Support legislation that allows for online voter registration. Current paper-based systems do not meet the needs of an increasingly mobile society, they are expensive to maintain, and are subject to errors. Online registration allows citizens to register through a secure and accessible online system. Currently, 38 states plus the District of Columbia, allow for online voter registration, or will soon offer it.

- **Workforce Development**

Support legislation that encourages workforce development to meet the employment needs of the region through flexible certification programs; academic alignment with the workforce; and, funding of training programs between institutions of higher education and public schools as well as veterans, transitioning military, and other target populations re-entering the workforce. Additionally, funding for literacy and skill training are extremely important for college and career ready graduates to enter higher education, training, or the workforce.

COOPERATIVE SUPPORT

Because of the joint benefit to the community and as long as they do not conflict with those of the county, the Bexar County Commissioners Court supports the following local partners in their state legislative activities:

- Alamo Area Council of Governments
- Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Alamo Regional Mobility Authority
- Bexar Appraisal District
- Brooks
- Cities of: Alamo Heights, Balcones Heights, Castle Hills, China Grove, Converse, Elmendorf, Fair Oaks Ranch, Grey Forest, Helotes, Hill Country Village, Hollywood Park, Kirby, Leon Valley, Live Oak, Lytle, Olmos Park, Sandy Oaks, Saint Hedwig, San Antonio, Schertz, Selma, Shavano Park, Somerset, Terrell Hills, Universal City, Von Ormy, and Windcrest
- Chambers of Commerce
- Colleges and Universities
- CPS Energy
- Port San Antonio
- San Antonio Mobility Coalition
- San Antonio River Authority
- San Antonio Water System
- University Health System
- VIA Metropolitan Transit