



Texas Cities Do the State's Local Work: Safe Communities, Essential Infrastructure, Vital Services

Cities, the government closest to the people, embody the idea that “We the People” should be in control. Cities provide the services that we cannot do without. Those services reflect the will of the local taxpayers. They are not the kind of services people think of when they say they want less government. **Put simply: City services are the nuts and bolts of our society.**

Starting with Texas' statehood in 1845, the legislature began creating cities to do its local work. **The Texas Municipal League now represents more than 1,100 cities of every size, shape, and service level.** The locally-elected city councils in those cities decide – based on the wants of their citizens – how to provide appropriate services.

They provide police and fire protection, the roads we drive on, local business development, the utilities we need to survive and prosper, the protection of property values through thoughtful rules that benefit everyone, and more. It costs money to provide these services, but **keeping taxes low while meeting citizens' demand for services** is a core value of city officials.

Cities don't typically seek funding from the state, and they receive virtually nothing from the state. What cities need in lieu of state funding is **to be treated as partners in keeping Texas great.** They want to continue providing local services in the way they were elected to do. That leads to the following legislative priorities:

1. Ensure that local decisions are made locally by supporting reasonable enhancements to regulatory authority and by opposing attempts to harm the ability of cities to:
 - Protect property values by imposing reasonable development standards;
 - Enact zoning ordinances; and
 - Respond to citizen demands for orderly development.
2. Protect and enhance essential infrastructure by opposing efforts to diminish municipal revenue and by supporting initiatives that will meet the needs of our cities for:
 - Streets, roads, and bridges;
 - Clean water;
 - Safe and effective wastewater treatment;
 - Stormwater management; and
 - Sustainable solid waste collection and disposal.
3. Ensure funding for vital community services by vigorously opposing efforts to erode revenue needed to:
 - Keep cities safe from crime;
 - Respond to emergencies;
 - Enhance economic growth and job creation;
 - Provide recreational facilities, parks, and libraries; and
 - Protect the natural environment.

**The City Message to Legislators is Clear:
Continue Partnering with Cities to do the State's Local Work**

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Texas Cities: Did You Know?

1. Texas cities **lead the nation in population growth**. In fact, seven of the 15 fastest growing cities in the nation are in Texas. On average, somewhere around **1,000 people are added to the Texas population each day**. [*U.S. Census Bureau.*]
2. **Seventy-four percent of Texas residents live in incorporated cities** (of which there are 1,216) and 86 percent of Texans live in urban areas. [*U.S. Census Bureau.*]
3. **From 1990 to 2011, the total city property tax levy rose an average of 5.48 percent per year**. This increase is closely aligned with Texas' population growth plus inflation over the same period of time, which averaged out to a 4.7 percent average yearly increase. [*Texas Comptroller, Biennial Property Tax report for 2010 and 2011 and U.S. Census Bureau.*]
4. From 2009-2013, **total outstanding state debt increased by 27.8 percent**, total outstanding local debt increased by 14.9 percent, and **total outstanding city debt increased by only 13.7 percent**. [*Texas Bond Review Board, 2013 Annual Report and 2013 Local Annual Report.*]
5. Seventeen percent of property taxes statewide go to cities. **The majority of property taxes (54 percent) go to fund public schools**. Of the remainder, sixteen percent goes to counties, and 13 percent goes to special districts. [*Texas Comptroller, Annual Property Tax Report for Tax Year 2009.*]
6. **Texas cities receive virtually no financial assistance from the state**. In fact, Texas ranks 49th out of the 50 states in the amount of general revenue it receives from state government. [*National League of Cities, City and State Fiscal Structure (2008).*]
7. Using a unique concept dubbed "reverse intergovernmental aid," the Texas Legislature requires **cities to generate and remit to the state over \$200 million annually to fund state programs**. [*TML article, Reverse Intergovernmental Aid Revisited, Again (2013).*]
8. In fiscal year 2012, **cities pitched in more than \$112 million** in cash and much more in right-of-way donations and in-kind services **for state highway projects initiated by TxDOT**. [*TML article, Reverse Intergovernmental Aid Revisited, Again (2013).*]
9. **Local economic development incentives dwarf the economic development incentives offered by the state**. [*Committee Testimony by Executive Director of Governor's Office for Economic Development and Tourism, House Economic and Small Business Development Committee (2014).*]

