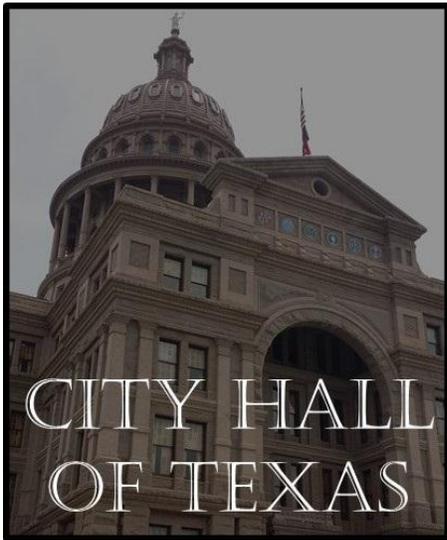




Legislative UPDATE



June 9, 2017
Number 23

Governor Calls Special Session

On Tuesday of this week, Governor Abbott called for a special legislative session to begin on July 18th. Of the 20 topics added to the special call, at least eight would restrict or preempt Texas cities.

The city-related topics added to the call include:

1. Revenue caps (the governor urged the legislature to pass S.B. 2 from the regular session – a four-percent property tax cap – or an even “better law”).
2. Spending caps for both the state and cities equal to population growth plus inflation (this bill was not filed during the regular session).
3. Annexation reform.
4. Tree ordinance preemption.
5. City permit vesting reform.
6. City permit streamlining.
7. Union dues checkoff prohibition.

8. Cell phone/texting preemption (presumably to the extent that city ordinances are stricter than the just-passed state texting while driving ban).

There were many other issues added to call that do not directly affect cities, including school finance, abortion, voter fraud, and bathrooms.

Obviously, Texas cities have our work cut out for us this summer. Centralizing power at the state level, as the eight items above seek to do, would be a disturbing development. Seventy-four percent of Texans live in our 1,215 cities, and the decisions they have made at the local level have put Texas cities at the top of the nation in economic and infrastructure success. Stifling their voices through an all-powerful, overreaching state government is a recipe for disaster.

City officials who visit with their legislative delegation during the short break between sessions should consider discussing the following: (1) thank them for leaving local decision making largely intact during the 2017 regular session; (2) urge them to continue that trend during the special session by focusing on core state issues and not on local ones; and (3) invite them to come take a tour of your fire and police facilities so they can better understand that caps and other artificial restrictions will have the greatest effect on public safety.

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