

CITY OF EL PASO
STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR
86TH TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
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Strategic Policy Statements: The City Council of the City of El Paso has met to formulate strategic goals and policies to serve as guiding principles for the governance of the City of El Paso. Decisions regarding City of El Paso positions on legislative matters will be weighed against these guiding principles when formulating positions.

1. **Goal 1:** Create an Environment Conducive to Strong, Sustainable Economic Development
2. **Goal 2:** Set the Standard for a Safe and Secure City
3. **Goal 3:** Promote the Visual Image of El Paso
4. **Goal 4:** Enhance El Paso's Quality of Life through Recreational, Cultural and Educational Environments
5. **Goal 5:** Promote Transparent and Consistent Communication Among All Members of the Community
6. **Goal 6:** Set the Standard for Sound Governance and Fiscal Management
7. **Goal 7:** Enhance and Sustain El Paso's Infrastructure Network
8. **Goal 8:** Nurture and Promote a Healthy, Sustainable Community

General Principles: The City of El Paso supports legislation that enhances the City's ability to solve problems and improve the quality of life for its citizens. The City of El Paso opposes legislation that reduces the City's authority or increases the City's costs. We will work with other Cities to enhance and protect the authority of municipalities and to ensure that City taxpayers are not burdened with additional unfunded mandates.

The City of El Paso will also support legislative initiatives of community partners that enhance the educational, cultural, and infrastructure resources in our region.

The City of El Paso will oppose legislation that reduces a municipality's ordinance making authority.

This document reflects the City's adopted legislative policy as approved by City Council. The City's legislative program is organized into three categories:

- I. **Priority Legislative Initiatives** - The City will actively seek to secure legislators to author bills for these initiatives, unless otherwise noted. The City will support and provide positive testimony for these initiatives and actively pursue passage of the bill.
- II. **Statement of Support or Opposition** – City staff and authorized representatives will make known the City's position on these issues. Depending on the issue, staff will work to either assist in the passage of the bill or work against passage to preserve the City's interests. The important distinction between this category and the earlier

category is that the City will not seek introduction of any legislation, but will vocalize the City's position in support or opposition.

- III. Issues to Monitor** – City staff and authorized representatives will monitor and track the development of any related legislation. Staff will seek advice and direction from the Mayor before taking an official position or taking any action to influence an outcome.

For more information, please feel free to contact:

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PRIORITY LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

The City will actively seek the passage of the following initiatives using City staff and authorized representatives to secure legislators to author a bill, provide testimony, and advocate for the bill's passage throughout the legislative process:

- 1) Clarify the qualified hotel project laws regarding land ownership requirements, distance requirements, and the eligibility of taxes collected at nearby ancillary facilities.
- 2) Appropriate money for the Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant (DEEAG) program to fund military value projects that strengthen Texas military installations.
- 3) Clarify Rider 49 from the General Appropriations Act to authorize funding for the design, construction, acquisition and installation of an Intelligent Transportation System at the City's Ports of Entry at Zaragoza and Bridge of Americas.
- 4) Appropriate money for the Moving Image Industry Incentive Program (MIIP) and create supplemental tools for local communities to attract moving image projects and related jobs.
- 5) Authorize the El Paso Central Appraisal District to more accurately appraise the value of local commercial properties by either:
 - a) requiring sales price disclosure of certain commercial properties, or
 - b) authorizing a tax "roll back" for each of the previous five years in which the land received a lower appraisal (similar to Tax Code Section 23.55 for land qualified as agricultural).
- 6) Authorize the El Paso Central Appraisal District to recover attorney fees if successful in property value litigation with certain commercial properties.
- 7) Appropriate funding for the Wyler Aerial Tramway.

STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION

The City will either support or oppose legislation regarding the following issues meaning that, if a bill is introduced, then City staff and authorized representatives will make known the City's position on these issues and will work to either pass or defeat the legislation accordingly. The important distinction between this category and the "priority" category is that the City will not work to seek introduction of any legislation but will engage if a bill is otherwise introduced.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Support legislation that:

- a. provides incentives for the development of an entertainment and sports arena;
- b. preserves the full funding for Texas tourism; and

- c. provides for a law school to be located in El Paso.
- d. Reauthorizes ad-valorem tax abatements (Tax Code, Chapter 312)

Oppose legislation that:

- a. would reduce or eliminate the current Event Trust Fund Program;
- b. would harm the city's viability to compete for conventions, sporting events and corporate relocations.

PROPERTY TAX REFORM & DEBT ISSUANCE

Support legislation that:

- a. authorizes property tax exemptions at a specified dollar amount in lieu of a percentage of taxable value; or
- b. improves the Central Appraisal District's appeal process.
- c. Requires the Central Appraisal District staff and/or appraisal appeal boards to receive additional training and/or certifications that will improve the accuracy of the appraisals of property.

Oppose legislation that:

- a. lowers the appraisal cap;
- b. imposes revenue caps including a lowered rollback rate, mandatory tax rate ratification elections, or lowered rollback petition requirements; or
- c. unnecessarily restricts the City's ability to issue debt or imposes undue burdens on debt issuance referendums.

UTILITIES

Oppose Legislation that removes the City's "original jurisdiction" of the rate setting process for gas and electric service or removes the City's ability to recover expenses associated with conducting or intervening in gas and electric rate cases.

EQUITABLE ZONING RULES

Support legislation that requires the General Land Office to comply with local zoning and other regulations governing development and land use when the state retains an ownership in a private company (i.e. – when the State leases state land to third parties for commercial enterprises).

MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Support legislation that:

- a. assists military personnel and their dependents including legislation that address wait times for veterans seeking care at VA clinics and medical centers and legislation that address the mental health needs of Texas veterans; or
- b. improves workforce development programs for military personnel and veterans.

TRANSPORTATION

Support legislation that:

- a. creates financing options for roads and transit projects through a sustainable and predictable funding source; or
- b. eliminates the diversions of State transportation revenue to non-transportation uses.
- c. provides more funding allocated specifically for increasing TXDOT financial contribution in the maintenance of landscaping located on state highways within municipalities.

Oppose legislation that mandates that municipalities participate in the Texas Department of Transportation “Turnback Program.”

PARKS

Support legislation that:

- a. provides funding for the Texas State Park System and the Texas Recreation & Parks Account Local Park Grant Program;
- b. directly benefits parks, recreation, open space, trails, tourism, health and wellness;
- c. provides that the sales tax from sporting good sales is fairly and equitably distributed to state and local parks;
- d. provides the pass through of federal dollars for parks, recreation, open space, trails and tourism; or
- e. creates a fair distribution of the sporting goods sales tax revenue for local and state parks and require projects to be subject to a competitive scoring system established by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Support legislation that:

- a. requires or enhances the use of renewable energy “buy back” programs in the State of Texas;
- b. creates renewable energy tax credits that complement federal renewable energy tax credits;
- c. advances clean energy solutions by creating incentives and rebates to encourage the use of solar panels and energy efficiency; or
- d. allocates the Fund 5000 funds to projects identified by the local municipalities.
- e. provides for economic incentives/support for solar and renewable energy initiatives.

BRIDGE WAIT TIMES/PORTS OF ENTRY

Support legislation that:

- a. grants authority for assessment of fees for use of City streets by trucks crossing international bridges;
- b. creates a one-stop safety inspection facility for commercial trucks at the land ports of entry in the El Paso region; or
- c. continues or expands the Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) funding and prioritizes funding by port of entry.

DEVELOPMENT

Support legislation that requires school bond elections for the construction of new schools to include associated infrastructure costs for municipalities.

ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Support legislation that increases accessibility for people with disabilities and reduces barriers to public facilities and transit.

PAYDAY LENDING REFORMS

Support legislation that would cap fees/rates on any loans brokered by Credit Service Organizations.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Support legislation to allow cities to recover costs associated with addressing blighted or abandoned properties.

WAGE THEFT

Support legislation that enhances penalties for wage theft and provides protection for employees who report and seek to recover wages.

GAMING

Support legislation that restores gaming rights on tribal land.

LIBRARIES

Support increased state aid for public libraries.

Support legislation that prohibits a firearm license holder from the carrying of firearms into a library.

HOMELESSNESS

Support funding and programs to address homelessness issues.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Support:

- a. More funding for the Woody L. Hunt School of Medicine.
- b. University of Texas
 - Adds new funds into the formulas to maintain the quality and integrity of educational programs.
 - Provides for Researching (Tier 1) University Support (Core Research funds and TRIP) and Hazelwood Exemptions

- Funding for Exception Items regarding pharmacy extension, Technology, Research & Innovation Acceleration Institute (TRIAc) and student success initiative.
- c. preservation of the special line item appropriation and formula funding for the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine;
- d. funding for a simulation institute for the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine; or

ANIMAL CONTROL

Oppose legislation that would impose more stringent requirements or regulations on municipal owned animal shelters or clinics that provide low cost spay/neuter procedures and vaccinations.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Support legislation that:

- a. allocates funding for Zika prevention and readiness; or
- b. reduces the background check requirements for telecommunicators.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Support legislation that allows cities to publish certain notices via the internet.

ANNEXATION

Oppose legislation that would further restrict municipal authority to annex land or impose more stringent requirements on a municipality's ability to annex land.

WATER AND WASTEWATER

Support legislation approving placing a constitutional amendment on the ballot to increase bonding authority for the Economically Distressed Areas Program

Support legislation that allows certain municipally owned utilities to provide for a customer assistance program to low income customers.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Support legislation that:

- a. Increases existing or creates new grant program funding that provides financial assistance to local governmental law enforcement agencies for public safety resources.
- b. Increases and identifies funding earmarked for local government/law enforcement agencies located at the border.

Oppose legislation that will allow U.S. Border Patrol agents to be carried as state peace officers.

MENTAL HEALTH

Support legislation that continues to fund or provides funding for state and local mental health programs.

AIRPORT

Support legislation that will enhance the economic opportunities and development of municipal airports

GENERAL LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

- The City of El Paso ***supports*** legislation that enhances the City's ability to enhance services and improve the quality of life for its citizens.
- The City of El Paso also ***supports*** the legislative initiatives of the Texas Municipal League and other community partners that enhance the educational, cultural, and infrastructure resources in our region to the extent these initiatives do not conflict with the City's agenda.
- The City of El Paso ***opposes*** legislation that reduces the City's authority, increases the City's costs of providing services, undermines the principle of home rule, results in loss of revenue, diminishes the current authority of cities to regulate development, or imposes unfunded mandates.

ISSUES TO MONITOR

City staff and authorized representatives will monitor and track legislation related to the following issues and will seek advice and direction from the City Council before taking any action to influence an outcome:

Legislation affecting:

1. all economic development tools including;
 - a. property tax abatements;
 - b. reinvestment zones;
 - c. Chapter 380; and
 - d. the Major Events Trust Fund and Special Events Trust Fund.
2. local bid preferences;
3. the City's pension system;
4. Municipal Utility Districts or any other special development districts within the county limits;
5. red light cameras;
6. bridge/ports of entry wait time;
7. eminent domain;
8. the potential importation of water from city owned properties outside El Paso County;
9. Groundwater Conservation Districts; and
10. The City's zoning authority in the extraterritorial jurisdiction.
11. Legislation related to dog grooming or animal cruelty
12. Legislation related to Senate Bill 4.