

CITY OF EL PASO
STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR
84TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

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I. 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 bills passage throughout the legislative process:

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

- Seek passage of legislation that clearly authorizes municipalities to contribute publicly owned land in economic development incentive packages (specifically 380 agreements).
- Seek passage of legislation that clearly authorizes privately owned land to be included in public-private partnership proposals.

2. SUPPORT FT. BLISS

- Working in partnership with other Texas cities that are home to military installations, seek funding for the State's Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant Program to fund military value projects that strengthen Texas bases.

3. TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

- Working in partnership with other transportation advocates and stakeholders to seek legislation that provides additional funding options for local transportation projects.

4. APPRAISAL DISTRICT REFORM

- Seek passage of legislation that establishes increased minimum qualifications for members serving on the Appraisal Review Board.

5. KEEP EL PASO CLEAN

- Seek passage of legislation that authorizes the City of El Paso to improve local enforcement efforts regarding illegal tire disposal and tire recycling.

6. PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

- Seek passage of legislation that authorizes the City of El Paso to fund local capital improvement projects and reduce the burden of property taxes for homeowners and businesses.

7. UTILITIES

Oppose Legislation that:

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

II. 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. decreases the time to process Texas Enterprise Fund applications;
- b. reduces the standard minimum of 75 newly created jobs to 50 for urban communities that apply for Texas Enterprise Fund grants;
- c. creates a competitive state loan program that operates at market or below market rates;
- d. amends state convention center hotel incentive programs to allow refurbishing and expansion of an existing hotel to qualify for state tax rebates; or
- e. provides incentives for the development of a entertainment and sports arena.

PROPERTY TAX REFORM & DEBT ISSUANCE

Support legislation that:

- a. requires sales price disclosure for commercial properties to improve accuracy in the appraisal;
- b. changes the equity appraisal statute that assists in ensuring accurate and fair property tax appraisals;
- c. authorizes property tax exemptions at a specified dollar amount in lieu of a percentage of taxable value; or
- d. improves the Central Appraisal District's appeal process and training requirements for board members.

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

Support legislation that adjusts the military base discount to allow for either a cap or shared burden with El Paso Electric Company and eliminates the mandate for the Energy Efficiency Cost Recovery Factor.

PARKS

Support funding for:

- a. the construction of a visitor's center at the Franklin Mountain State Park; or
- b. the Texas State Park System and the Texas Recreation & Parks Account Local Park Grant Program.

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.

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

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; or
- c. advances clean energy solutions by creating incentives and rebates to encourage the use of solar panels and energy efficiency.

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; or
- b. creates a one-stop safety inspection facility for commercial trucks at the land ports of entry in the El Paso region.

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

ELECTIONS

Support legislation that requires candidates who run for state office to be ineligible if they owe local, state or federal taxes.

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.

HOMELESSNESS

Support funding and programs to address homelessness issues.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Support:

- a. restoration of higher education formula funding to previous levels;
- b. the issuance of new tuition revenue bonds to support capital construction needs including:
 - \$100 million for a new research/academic facility at UTEP; and
 - Research and clinical building for the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine;
- c. funding for a pharmacy program at UTEP;
- d. preservation of the special line item appropriation and formula funding for the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine;
- e. funding for a simulation institute for the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine; or
- f. the 5-Point campaign adopted by the El Paso Community College regarding workforce and skills alignment, measuring and funding success, college readiness, transfer and articulation, and affordability and availability of higher education for students.

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, El Paso County, El Paso Chamber of Commerce, 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.

III. 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.