

A SAMPLING OF REPORTS & EDITORIAL COLUMNS FROM TEXAS NEWSPAPERS

“Across Texas, local governments saddled with state-mandated costs have had to raise taxes...Counties were hit particularly hard by a state budget that sloughed obligations onto them. Locally, our county faces pressing needs like juvenile justice, overburdened courts and jails.”

*John Young, Opinion Page Editor
Waco Tribune-Herald, Oct. 1, 2003*

“[State budget cuts] will shrink government, but they will do nothing to stanch demand driven by current need and burgeoning population. Nor will the proposed cuts prevent county governments from raising local taxes to make up the difference and, down the road, pick up the tab for added strain on emergency and trauma care centers, crisis services for patients with uncontrolled mental illness, and county-run operations, like jails and probation programs, because of the problems that festered...”

“‘The pain will fall squarely on the county’s shoulders to do more with even less funding from outside,’ Harris County Commissioner El Franco Lee says...Lee is a Democrat, but the budget concerns cut across party lines. Harris County Constable Bill Bailey, a Republican, is president of TAC...The group also is working to pass a resolution for a constitutional amendment, HJR91, that would require the state to fund all mandates it prescribes for local governments.”

*Houston Chronicle Editorial Board
May 9, 2003*

“Government is like water, says Hunt County Judge Joe Bobbitt. It all runs downhill. In Texas, county governments are at the bottom of that hill...”

“...reductions in programs like Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program will roll down the hill toward counties and force them to face their own tough questions...”

*William McKenzie, Editorial Columnist
Dallas Morning News
April 29, 2003*

“To the state of Texas: Don’t send El Paso any mandates you can’t fund. Following that common-sense advice would go a long way toward making El Paso a participant in, rather than a victim of, the state’s budget process.”

*El Paso Times Editorial Board
April 29, 2003*

“Here’s another economic lesson that taxpayers should understand: The need for health care and the delivery of it in crisis circumstances for the working poor will not end when the Legislature leaves Austin...No, the burden will shift to the John Peter Smiths (public hospitals) of Texas – and when the money runs out there, the Tarrant County Commissioners Court will have to step

up. And you do know that increased taxes from the county show up on the property tax bill, don't you?"

*Fort Worth Star-Telegram Editorial Board
May 10, 2003*

"An 'unfunded mandate' is a law passed from a higher branch of government down to a lower one with no means provided to pay for it. In many states, the practice is illegal. In Texas, counties have tried without success for years to get funding provided for all new laws. Comal County officials have long lamented unfunded state and federal mandates."

*Ron Maloney, Reporter
New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung
August 14, 2003*

"The Texas Legislature effectively pulled the plug Friday on visiting judges, leaving one felony court in Smith County with no judge and courts at law preparing to juggle increasing criminal dockets with civil tort trials expected to last for several months...(George Cowart, office manager for the First Judicial District) said dealing with unexpected court matters and crowded dockets without relying on visiting judges will be a first in Texas. 'We're trying to be as creative as possible to keep the wheels of justice from falling apart' Cowart said."

*Anne Wright, Reporter
Tyler Morning Telegraph
August 30, 2003*

"For example, it's the state that requires (El Paso's) Thomason Hospital to provide emergency medical services to anyone who walks in the door. Yet, Thomason...is not allowed to ascertain citizenship...More poor people will seek treatment in Thomason's emergency room. Simple infections that could be treated for a few dollars will cost hundreds, possibly thousands, to treat in the ER. Who will pay for this? You, the local taxpayer."

*Bernadette Self, Editorial Columnist
El Paso Times
May 9, 2003*

"...the county gets stuck prosecuting many federal drug cases, and paying to hold these inmates in the county jail. Local taxpayers are footing the bill, to the tune of millions of dollars, for state and federal responsibilities."

*Bernadette Self, Editorial Columnist
El Paso Times
May 9, 2003*