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1210 San Antonio • Austin, TX 78701 • P.O. Box 2131 • Austin, TX 78768-2131  
512-478-8753 • 800-456-5974 • 512-478-0519 FAX

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CONTACT  
Jody Seaborn  
(512) 294-6266  
jodys@county.org

## **Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar Discusses State's Budget Outlook at Opening Session of Texas Association of Counties' 2020 Legislative Conference**

*Annual Gathering of County Officials and Staff Goes Virtual Amid COVID-19 Pandemic*

AUSTIN – The Texas Association of Counties' 2020 Legislative Conference opened Wednesday afternoon with Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar discussing the revenue and economic effects of COVID-19 on state and county governments. The unforeseen challenge that the pandemic has put before Texas is the transformation of "a multibillion-dollar revenue cushion into a multibillion-dollar shortfall," Hegar told county officials by video conferencing.

Because of COVID-19, the Texas Association of Counties (TAC) took this year's Legislative Conference online, turning the annual gathering into a virtual event that attracted more than 1,000 registrations, a record. The annual conference provides a forum for county officials, who have played a leading role in responding to COVID-19, to talk through legislative issues affecting their constituents. This year's conference also looks ahead to the 87th session of the Texas Legislature.

The economic slowdown caused by the pandemic and low oil and gas prices has sharply reduced the state's revenue collections and left legislators anticipating a budget crisis when they convene in January. In July, Hegar [issued a revised revenue estimate](#) projecting a \$4.6 billion deficit when the current two-year budget cycle ends in August 2021; he originally had projected a \$2.9 billion surplus. He will provide a revenue estimate for the 2022-23 biennium before the Legislature convenes in January.

A primary difficulty with forecasting COVID-19's economic impact is its "course and repercussions can't be confidently predicted," Hegar said. But "difficulties don't amount to excuses" for state and local leaders, who must navigate the uncertain course before them, the comptroller added.

Hegar said that as his family, like many Texas families, has negotiated the uncertainties surrounding the new school year, he's told his three children, "In 2020, one of the words is 'flexibility.' Another is 'adaptability.'" They're words worth keeping in mind as the state gets closer to next year's session, he said.

Hegar said he expects the rainy day fund to end fiscal 2021 with an \$8.8 billion balance. "Frankly, the rainy day fund was designed for purposes just like this," Hegar said of the emergency account formally known as the Economic Stabilization Fund.

The TAC Legislative Conference continues Thursday and Friday. Sessions include discussions of mental health resources available to Texas counties, law enforcement's response to COVID-19, the requirements of Senate Bill 2 during the pandemic, preparations for November's general election, and the 2020 Census and redistricting.

Scheduled panelists include state Rep. Jeff Leach, R-Plano; state Rep. Geanie Morrison, R-Victoria; and state Sen. Lois Kolkhorst, R-Brenham.

For more information about the conference, visit the [Texas Association of Counties' website](#).

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*The Texas Association of Counties was established in 1969 to provide services to Texas counties and to promote the value of county government statewide. TAC is the representative voice for all 254 Texas counties and county officials. Through TAC, counties communicate the county perspective to state officials and the citizens of Texas.*