Working with the Legislature

Texas Association of Counties

Legislative Services Division
Presentation Overview

I. Overview of Legislative Services Division

II. Working with the Legislature

III. Preview of the 86th Legislative Session
What We Do

Legislative Support

- Review and monitor legislation and legislative activities affecting county government.

- We are an information resource for legislators and provide assistance at their request.

- Work with county officials to communicate county government interests on legislative matters.

- Support the affiliate county official associations in achieving their legislative goals.
County Information Program

- Acts as a central clearinghouse for county-related information.

- Prepares fiscal notes to help explain the financial impact of proposed legislation on counties to the Legislature.

- Prepares custom analysis, reports and maps at the request of county officials, the Legislature, and state and federal agencies.
What We Do

Legislative Communications

- Electronic newsletter – information on significant policy issues and legislative actions
  - Weekly during the legislative session; includes TAC on the LEGE video segments
  - Monthly during the legislative interim

- Electronic alerts – information on time-critical legislative issues

- Twitter Account – Follow us, we’re @TexasCounties
What We Do

- Tuesday morning breakfast meetings during the legislative session
Counties at the Capitol 2017

➤ Tuesday, February 5, 2019
County Government Day 2017

➤ Tuesday, April 30, 2019
Local Government Capitol Press Conference Special Session 2017

➢ Legislative Exchange regional meetings during the interim

➢ Legislative Conference – September 4-6, 2019
GET TO KNOW YOUR LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Garry A. Merritt
garrym@county.org
Director and General Counsel
Legal and Legislative Services

Paul J. Sugg
pauls@county.org
Legislative Manager
Liaison to the County Auditors Association

Rick Thompson
rickt@county.org
Senior Legislative Manager
Liaison to the County Judges and Commissioners Association

Aurora Flores
auroraf@county.org
Legislative Manager
Liaison to the County Treasurers’ Association

Noe Barrios
noeb@county.org
Senior Legislative Manager
Liaison to the Sheriffs’ Association

Nanette Forbes
nanettef@county.org
Legislative Manager
Liaison to the County and District Clerks’ Association

Laura V. Garcia
laurag@county.org
Senior Legislative Counsel
Liaison to the District and County Attorneys Association

Kelsey Bernstein
kelseyb@county.org
Legislative Manager
Liaison to the Justices of the Peace and Constables Association

Texas Association of Counties
GET TO KNOW YOUR LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Katy Reagan
katyrcounty.org
Legislative Manager
Liaison to Tax Assessor-Collectors Association

Tim Brown
timbcounty.org
Senior Analyst
County Information Program

Rhita Koches
rhitakcounty.org
Core Legislative Group Coordinator

Bruce Barr
brucebcounty.org
County G.I.S. Analyst
County Information Program

Amy Ruedas
amyrcounty.org
Legislative Operations Manager

Paul K. Emerson
paulecounty.org
State Financial Analyst
County Information Program
Working with the Legislature

Texas Association of Counties
Working with the Legislature

Why is it important to get involved?

- Every session, hundreds of bills are filed that impact county government and your county office.

- Legislators need to hear the county perspective.
  
  - You can provide insight and information on how a particular bill will impact your county and office.

  - You can highlight any unintended consequences of a bill.

- As an elected official, you have a great deal of influence.
  
  - You represent the same constituents as your legislators.
Working with the Legislature

How to get involved

- Relationships are key – Get to know your legislators.
  - Visit your legislator in his or her district office and/or at community events.
  - Volunteer to provide them with information on legislative issues impacting your office and county as they arise.

We can assist you in developing and providing this information, as well.
Working with the Legislature

At the Capitol

- Make an appointment to visit with your legislator and/or staff to discuss a particular bill or issue.
  
  Get to know a legislator’s staff. They often have a great deal of influence on the member.

- Provide testimony at committee hearings.
  
  Make sure to share any concerns about a particular bill prior to a hearing.

- If you are unable to testify, but you are at the capitol, you can also submit a witness card indicating your support or opposition on a bill.
Working with the Legislature

Outside the Capitol

➢ Communication is influential
  - Phone calls/e-mail messages/text messages/social media
    - Important avenues to share your concerns or support for a particular issue/bill.
    - Can help move a bill along or delay it.

➢ Fiscal Notes
  - Provide information on how a bill financially impacts your county’s operations.
    - This is particularly important to help identify unfunded mandates to the Legislature.
Working with the Legislature

You can also get involved by joining our Core Legislative Group.

- Let us know what issues interest you.
  - Criminal Justice?
  - Health and Human Services?
  - Natural Resources?
  - Tax Policy?
  - Others?

- Let us know if you have an existing relationship with any legislators.
Preview of the 86th Legislative Session

Texas Association of Counties
Issues in the 86th Session

Legislative Landscape

County Issues

Unfunded Mandates

Local Decision Making

Behavioral Health

Hurricane Harvey

Additional County Issues
Core Legislative Group

PRESERVE LOCAL DECISION MAKING IN YOUR COUNTY

Join TAC’s Core Legislative Group

As a member on the front lines, you’ll:
• Contact your local legislators in person, by phone, email, Twitter or in writing;
• Provide testimony (written or verbal) at committee hearings;
• Complete witness cards for or against legislation at committee hearings; and
• Supply TAC with your valuable opinions regarding legislation that could impact county government.

Join now.

Contact Legislative Group Coordinator Rhita Koches at RhitaK@county.org or visit www.county.org/CLG for more information.

(800) 456-5974 county.org