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500 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street  
Austin, TX 78701  
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## Policy Committee Meeting

Omni Corpus Christi Hotel  
January 12, 2018 | 12:30 PM

### AGENDA

12:30 PM Convene.

1. Welcome, Introductions.
2. Administrative items. [Robin Morris]
  - a) Consider the minutes from the November 16, 2017 meeting. [pg. 2]
  - b) Next Meeting: Thursday, May 24, 2018 at 9:30 AM.
  - c) 2018-2019 Policy Committee member contact information. [pg. 4]
  - d) Discuss paperless meetings in 2018.
3. Discuss the 1115 waiver update. [Windy Johnson]. [pg. 5]
4. Discuss blue warrant data. [Windy Johnson]. [pg. 7]
5. Discuss tax abatement sunset date. [Windy Johnson]. [pg. 9]
6. Discuss Children's Health Insurance Program updates. [Windy Johnson]. [pg. 10]
7. Discuss Interim Committee Charges and current Urban Counties Policy Platform. [John Dahill]. [pg. 11]
8. New business.

2:30 PM Adjourn.

**Policy Committee Meeting**  
Travis County | 700 Lavaca, Austin, TX 78701

**November 16, 2017**

**Minutes**

**Members Present**

Judge Ed Emmett (Chair), Harris County  
Commissioner Kevin Wolff, Bexar County  
Judge Matt Sebesta, Brazoria County  
Commissioner Theresa Daniel, Dallas County  
Commissioner David Stout, El Paso County (Proxy Claudia Russell)  
Judge Robert Hebert, Fort Bend County  
Commissioner Ken Clark, Galveston County  
Judge Bill Magers, Grayson County  
Commissioner Eddie Arnold, Jefferson County  
Judge Bruce Wood, Kaufman County (Proxy Commissioner Jackie Allen)  
Commissioner Bill McCay, Lubbock County  
Judge Mike Bradford, Midland County  
Judge Craig Doyal, Montgomery County  
Judge Loyd Neal, Nueces County  
Judge Glen Whitley, Tarrant County (Proxy G. K. Maenius)  
Judge Sarah Eckhardt, Travis County  
Judge Dan Gattis, Williamson County (Proxy Rebecca Clemons)  
Commissioner Kevin Burns, Wise County

**Others Present**

Craig Pardue, Bedrock Strategy  
Charles Reed, Dallas County  
Melissa Shannon, Bexar County  
Michael Young, Bexar County  
Ann Werlein, Fort Bend County  
Beth Wolf, Fort Bend County  
Donna Warndorf, Harris County  
Chandler Merritt, Tarrant County  
Russell Schaffer, Tarrant County  
Julie Wheeler, Travis County  
John Dahill, Texas Conference of Urban Counties  
Robin Morris, Texas Conference of Urban Counties  
Windy Johnson, Texas Conference of Urban Counties  
Gabriela Villareal, Texas Conference of Urban Counties  
Veronikah Sanford, Texas Conference of Urban Counties

Judge Emmett called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM

The Committee discussed agenda **item 2**, administrative items.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 3**, attendance record. On a motion by Judge Neal and second by Commissioner Arnold, the absences of Commissioner Fletcher and Commissioner Mitchell were excused.

The Committee considered agenda **item 4**, approval of the minutes of the August 3, 2017 meeting. On a motion by Judge Neal and a second by Judge Wood the minutes were approved as presented.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 5**, Urban Counties Policy Committee appointments and elections for 2018-2019.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 6**, proposed revisions to the Policy Platform. On a motion by Judge Bradford and a second by Judge Hebert, the Platform was approved as revised.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 7**, Hurricane Harvey response and related interim charges.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 8**, interim committee charges.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 9**, tax proposals impacting deductions for state and local taxes.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 10**, Bexar County recommended interim charge to study and review the processes within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, and examine the associated costs required to house parole violators in county facilities.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 11**, the State Hospital Plan funding.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 12**, new business. On a motion by Judge Wood and a second by Judge Bradford, Judge Magers' absence was excused from the previous meeting on August 3, 2017.

The meeting adjourned at 11:47 AM

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Judge Ed Emmett  
Vice Chairman of Policy

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Date

**Policy Committee Contact List**  
**2018 - 2019 Term**  
*Revised 1/04/2018*

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January 12, 2018

To: Urban Counties Policy Committee  
From: Windy Johnson, Program Manager  
Re: **(3) 1115 Waiver Update**

**Background:**

Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have reached an agreement to continue the 1115 Waiver in the amount of \$25 billion over the next five years. The current extension for the waiver was set to expire on December 31st.

The waiver funds uncompensated care at the current level at \$3.1 billion each year for the first and second year of the five-year agreement. CMS has granted Texas an additional year of a transitional UC pool funding level, in light of the significant impact of Hurricane Harvey on Texas health care providers' operations and financial stability. During the first year of the extension, CMS expects Texas will work with its providers seeking to participate in the UC pool so that they accurately report the extent of their charity care in alignment with Medicare cost reporting principles.

In the third year and moving forward, CMS will transition to a new method of distributing uncompensated care payments to hospitals. The new methodology, according to HHSC, will account for all provider types and will be based upon uncompensated charity care costs.

The Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) funding pool will be maintained at level funding for the first two years of the waiver extension. The DSRIP pool is funded at more than \$11 billion and will be phased out over four years under the waiver. Delivery-system reform initiatives include infrastructure development, system redesign and improvements targeting clinical outcomes and population health.

The DSRIP program will transition to a systemic effort that focuses on health system performance measurement and improvement that achieves sustainable and effective delivery system reform. In order for additional extension the State will be required to indicate how they will:

1. Strengthen the measurement set to include more outcome measures, assure uniform reporting on measures within bundles, and eliminate measures and bundles that are not specified.
2. Define and incorporate an attribution model for beneficiaries to providers that reflects generally accepted standards for attribution, and assure that all of the beneficiaries attributed to a provider related to a particular measure be included in the denominators.
3. Assure that the distribution of incentive funds to providers, based on their performance on a bundle of measures, is in proportion to the predetermined value of the bundle, and distribute funding within a bundle proportionately across all required measures.
4. Include a suitable and accountable performance measurement and payment methodology for incentive payments for providers that have high and/or maximized performance baselines.
5. Require participating providers to specify and link needed core activities to their selected bundles and measures, advance these activities, and report on their progress.

**Recommended Resolution:**

None.



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 Wise

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To: Urban Counties Policy Committee  
 From: Windy Johnson, Program Manager  
 Re: **(4) Blue Warrant Data**

**Background:**

During the previous policy committee meeting, data was requested on blue warrant holds in county jails. Data collected from the Texas Jail Commission indicates blue warrant holds have increased on average 55% from November 2015 to November 2017.

Policy Member Counties	Nov. 2015	Nov. 2017	% Increase/Decrease
Bell	25	34	36%
Bexar	97	156	61%
Brazoria	14	11	-21%
Cameron	13	10	-23%
Collin	8	12	50%
Dallas	171	201	18%
Denton	8	27	238%
El Paso	63	64	2%
Fort Bend	14	25	79%
Galveston	52	58	12%
Grayson	9	12	33%
Harris	240	284	18%
Hidalgo	18	27	50%
Jefferson	31	24	-23%
Kaufman	7	7	0%
Lubbock	24	28	17%
Midland	5	6	20%
Montgomery	25	29	16%
Nueces	29	77	166%
Tarrant	89	145	63%
Travis	46	65	41%
Williamson	15	17	13%
Wise	1	5	400%

During the 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, Representative James Frank (R - N. Texas) filed HB 1550, supported by Urban Counties, that would have required the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to reimburse counties for paper-ready inmates and for technical parole violators held in jails.

The current policy platform includes the following position:

**Support state payment to counties for costs of detaining in county jails technical parole violators and new-offense violators held solely for parole revocation purposes.**

**Recommended Resolution:**

None.





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January 12, 2018

To: Urban Counties Policy Committee  
From: Windy Johnson, Program Manager  
Re: **(5) Tax Abatement Expiration Date**

**Background:**

Cities, counties, and special districts can use tax abatements to help attract new businesses and retain and develop existing ones. A tax abatement is a local agreement between a taxpayer and a taxing unit that exempts all or part of the increase in the value of the real property and/or tangible personal property from taxation for a period not to exceed 10 years.

The Texas Legislature authorizes local governments to administer property tax abatements under section 312 of the Tax Code which was renewed in 1995, 2001, and 2009 to allow tax abatements through September 1, 2019.

Under current law, no abatements would be permitted after September 1, 2019, because Chapter 312 is set to expire on that date. The maximum length of an abatement is ten years.

Urban Counties is working with various stakeholders, including TAC, TML and the City of Austin to discuss options for the continuation of the tax abatement option for local governments.

In 2009 when the chapter was set to expire Urban Counties included an item of support in the Policy Platform for the extension of the Property Redevelopment Tax Abatement Act.

**Recommended Resolution:**

None.



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January 12, 2018

To: Urban Counties Policy Committee  
From: Windy Johnson, Program Manager  
Re: **(6) Children’s Health Insurance Program Update**

**Background:**

Federal funding for CHIP, which provides health coverage for almost 400,000 Texas children was extended in an amount of \$135 million through February 2018.

In November, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) had requested \$90 million from the federal government to extend the program through February.

CHIP covers prescriptions, lab tests, and doctors visits, including dental and eye care for youth ages 18 and younger, as well as prenatal care for pregnant mothers.

About 390,000 Texas children benefit from CHIP; and about 36,000 Texas women also received prenatal care and post-delivery checkups with CHIP funds.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has stated that Texas law requires termination of the CHIP program when there are no longer federal funds available.

The State is required to then provide families with a notice of termination of CHIP eligibility no later than 30 days before the date the child’s eligibility terminates.

HHSC would electronically transmit the terminated children’s information to the ACA Marketplace requiring parents to take additional steps to enroll their children in the ACA Marketplace.

**Recommended Resolution:**

None.



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To: Urban Counties Policy Committee  
From: Windy Johnson & Gabriela Villareal, Program Managers  
Re: **(7) Summary of Select Interim Charges and Policy Platform Items**

**Background:**

The following summary of select interim charges correspond with policy platform items:

**APPROPRIATIONS**

- Examine the use of federal funds by state agencies responding to the effects of Hurricane Harvey and identify opportunities to maximize the use of federal funds to reduce the impact of future natural disasters. *House Committee on Appropriations*
- Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of state agencies' use of funds appropriated during the 85th Legislative Session for border security operations. *House Committee on Appropriations*
- Review state funding, including formula funds, for adult probation departments and the juvenile justice system. *House Committee on Appropriations*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Crime and Courts**

- Support sufficient State funding for local juvenile probation departments to pay for the full costs of keeping in local programs, or in regional detention facilities, all children diverted from State facilities through a restructuring of the State Juvenile Justice Department.
- Study the state crime lab operational structure and recommend strategies to increase efficiency, including the possibility of establishing a fee for certain services to minimize duplication and encourage timely processing. *House Committee on Appropriations*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Public Safety and Emergency Management**

- Support additional funding for Department of Public Safety crime labs provided it does not negatively impact existing local crime labs.

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- Monitor Congressional action on federal healthcare reform and CHIP reauthorization. *House Committee on Appropriations*
- Review the appropriations made to the Texas Emissions Reduction Program (TERP) as well as the TERP fund balance. *House Committee on Appropriations*  
Review the Texas Emission Reduction Plan (TERP) and its economic benefits to the state. *Senate Finance Committee*
- Review the Texas Emission Reduction Plan (TERP) and its economic benefits to the state. *Senate Finance Committee*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Environment**

- Support full funding for TERP, LIRAP, and LIP programs and maintain the integrity of the TERP, LIRAP, and LIP programs.
- Monitor the agencies and programs under the Appropriations Committee's jurisdiction and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 85th Legislature. *House Committee on Appropriations*
- Monitor all funds currently being used to address Hurricane Harvey relief and recovery. *Senate Finance Committee*
- Evaluate the long-term impact of Hurricane Harvey on the Texas economy and the Gulf Coast region. *Senate Finance Committee*
- Examine the funding patterns used to fund the juvenile justice system and adult probation departments. *Senate Finance Committee*

**Policy Platform Items:**

**Crime and Courts**

- Support full state funding for all mandatory JJAEP placements in an amount adequate for year-round programs.
- Support additional state funding for juvenile probation departments if the age of criminal responsibility is raised to 18.
- Support sufficient State funding for local juvenile probation departments to pay for the full costs of keeping in local programs, or in regional detention facilities, all children diverted from State facilities through a restructuring of the State Juvenile Justice Department.
- Review revenue sources currently funding the state's trauma system and the impact of declining revenues and balances in General Revenue - Dedicated accounts. *Senate Finance Committee*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Health and Human Services**

- Not oppose the repeal of the Drivers Responsibility Program. If repealed, seek replacement funding for trauma care.

## **BUSINESS**

- Evaluate the adequacy of the workforce currently available to the industries responsible for rebuilding the state's key infrastructure as well as residential and commercial properties damaged by Hurricane Harvey. *Joint charge between the House Committee on Business & Industry and the House Committee on Licensing & Administrative Procedures*
- Review the increased use of third party data gathering, particularly individual background information and history, by Texas employers and businesses. *House Committee on Business & Industry*
- Examine Hurricane Harvey's economic and workforce impact on the state and private sector. *House Committee on Economic & Small Business Development*
- Analyze current data on the distribution of state economic development incentives across the state. *House Committee on Economic & Small Business Development*
- Review the current state of infrastructure at Texas' international shipping ports and border ports of entry in Texas. *House Committee on International Trade & Intergovernmental Affairs*

### **Policy Platform Item:**

#### **Transportation**

- Support enhanced funding for freight transportation infrastructure projects to address economic growth and an ever-increasing population.
- Study infrastructure security and energy restoration post weather events. *Senate Business and Commerce Committee*
- Examine state mortgage requirements regarding the notification of homebuyers on their need for flood insurance in flood plains and flood pool areas and make recommendations on how to better inform consumers. *Senate Business and Commerce Committee*
- Identify options to maintain our state's competitive advantage and make recommendations to remove or reduce administrative or regulatory barriers hindering economic growth, including permitting or registration requirements and fees. *Senate Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee*
- Examine the competitive nature of the Texas retail electric system and what government competitive intrusions in the free energy markets may have in distorting those markets. *Senate Business and Commerce Committee*

## **COURTS, CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE**

- Examine the use of social workers and peer support specialists in the Texas criminal justice system to assist individuals on probation, on parole, or who have been discharged, in order to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes. *House Committee on Corrections*

- Examine the current Texas criminal justice system policies and practices regarding 17- to 25-year-olds, specific to probation, parole, state jail confinement, and discharge from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice or county jail. *House Committee on Corrections*
- Examine treatment options, services, and programs available to women in institutional settings, on community supervision, on parole, and in community-based programs. *House Committee on Corrections*
- Evaluate the impact of Hurricane Harvey on the Texas criminal justice system, including its effect on the speed of criminal trials and litigation, criminal courts, district attorneys' ability to prosecute, and attorneys' ability to provide proper defense. *House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Crime and Courts**

- Oppose changes in court costs in criminal cases that are expected to have a negative fiscal impact to counties.
- Study current practices for the enforcement of criminal laws against low-level possession of marijuana. *House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence*
- Examine instances of prosecutorial misconduct and ineffective assistance of defense counsel. *House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence*
- Review the Texas state jail system, including its original intent, sentencing guidelines, effectiveness, and recidivism rates. *Joint charge between the House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence and the House Committee on Corrections*
- Monitor the work of the Office of Court Administration on pre-trial risk assessment tools for the Texas Judiciary, and study the use of risk assessment tools at various stages in the criminal justice process. *House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Crime and Courts**

- Support changes to pre-trial release to require the use of locally verified evaluation tools to determine a criminal defendant's risk of flight or danger to the community. Promote: (1) establishing pretrial risk assessments; (2) the elimination of bond schedules; (3) greater discretion for magistrates regarding pre-trial release; and (4) rebuttable presumptions in favor of personal bond.
- Evaluate the response of the Texas Department of Public Safety's (DPS) to Hurricane Harvey. Study coordination between municipalities, counties, and state agencies and how emergency response activities are organized and coordinated at the city, county, and regional level. *House Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety*

**Policy Platform Items:**

**Public Safety and Emergency Management**

- Support the current role of local emergency management authorities and the county judge in responding to potential and actual emergencies and disasters.
- Review and evaluate the impact of DPS operations near the Texas-Mexico border on organized crime. *House Committee on Homeland Security & Public Safety*
- Study the effects of Hurricane Harvey on the courts and legal system. *House Committee on Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence*
- Evaluate the statutes prescribing fees in civil and criminal matters, and examine opportunities to simplify and improve the fee structure. *House Committee on Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence.*
- Examine the structure of court fees and make recommendations to ensure statutory filing fees and court costs are appropriate and justified. *Senate State Affairs Committee*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Crime and Courts**

- Oppose changes in court costs in criminal cases that are expected to have a negative fiscal impact to counties
- Study the increased use of specialty courts across the state. *House Committee on Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence*
- Examine the jurisdictional thresholds of the justice, county, and district courts, including how these limits and other factors impact the caseload of the courts. *House Committee on Judiciary & Civil Jurisprudence*
- Study how counties identify defendants' and inmates' behavioral health needs and deferral opportunities to appropriate rehabilitative and transition services. *House Committee on County Affairs*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Crime and Courts**

- Support changes to pre-trial release to require the use of locally verified evaluation tools to determine a criminal defendant's risk of flight or danger to the community. Promote: (1) establishing pretrial risk assessments; (2) the elimination of bond schedules; (3) greater discretion for magistrates regarding pre-trial release; and (4) rebuttable presumptions in favor of personal bond.
- Evaluate the impact of Hurricane Harvey on the Texas juvenile justice system and care for youth involved with the juvenile justice systems. *House Committee on Juvenile Justice & Family Issues*

- Study the issue of adult criminal responsibility for 17-year-olds. *House Committee on Juvenile Justice & Family Issues*

**Policy Platform Items:**

**Crime and Courts**

- Support additional state funding for juvenile probation departments if the age of criminal responsibility is raised to 18.
- Support sufficient State funding for local juvenile probation departments to pay for the full costs of keeping in local programs, or in regional detention facilities, all children diverted from State facilities through a restructuring of the State Juvenile Justice Department.
- Evaluate the use of telemedicine to improve behavioral health services in the juvenile justice system. *House Committee on Juvenile Justice & Family Issues*
- Identify how opioids have impacted the normal scope of work for law enforcement, first responders, and hospital emergency department personnel. *House Select Committee on Opioids and Substance Abuse*
- Examine the impact of substance abuse and substance use disorders on Texans who are involved in the adult or juvenile criminal justice system. *House Select Committee on Opioids and Substance Abuse*
- Study and make recommendations on opportunities to create public safety partnerships. *Senate Veterans Affairs and Border Security Committee*
- Study current reentry programs and procedures across Texas' adult criminal justice system and identify which are most effective. *Senate Criminal Justice Committee*
- Review current availability and best practices in the state regarding the use of telemedicine for inmates in city or county jail, state jail, or the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. *Senate Criminal Justice Committee*

**GENERAL COUNTY AFFAIRS**

- Examine how emergency response activities are organized, funded, and coordinated. *House Committee on County Affairs*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Public Safety and Emergency Management**

- Support the current role of local emergency management authorities and the county judge in responding to potential and actual emergencies and disasters.
- Review the population limitations found in Local Government Code Section 154.041 and Local Government Code Section 113.047. *House Committee on County Affairs*
- Study the feasibility of establishing and mobilizing a volunteer contingency of private boat owners through the boat registration and license database administered by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to assist first



responders in search and rescue efforts in natural disasters like Hurricane Harvey. *House Committee on Culture, Recreation, & Tourism*

- Review conflict of interest laws governing public officers and employees to ensure that such laws are adequate to maintain the public's confidence in government decision-making. *House Committee on General Investigating & Ethics*
- Examine the role of technology in disaster preparedness and the response to Hurricane Harvey and future natural disasters. *House Committee on Government Transparency & Operation*
- Review Texas' open meeting laws and related government decision-making policies. *House Committee on Government Transparency & Operation*
- Evaluate whether, in light of recent Texas Supreme Court rulings, the provisions of the Public Information Act are adequate to support transparency and accountability in government, particularly as it relates to government contracting and procurement. *House Committee on Government Transparency & Operation*
- Evaluate the governance structures of pensions systems including the Texas County and District Retirement System. *House Committee on Pensions* Examine and assess public pension systems in Texas. *Senate State Affairs Committee*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Governance and Finance**

- Support local control over compensation and benefits paid by the county.
- Examine local government regulations, including occupational licenses, as related to Hurricane Harvey and determine if any are a detriment to rebuilding efforts. *Senate Business and Commerce Committee*
- Identify and report on existing disaster training opportunities available for local officials and make recommendations for training programs that equip them to efficiently interact with state and federal agencies during times of disaster. *Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee*
- Review the interaction between federal, state, and local agencies in charge of responding to natural disasters. *Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee*

**Policy Platform Items:**

**Public Safety and Emergency Management**

- Support the current role of local emergency management authorities and the county judge in responding to potential and actual emergencies and disasters.
- Monitor the implementation of legislation that protects citizens' religious freedoms, including Senate Bill 24 (sermon safeguard) and House Bill 555 (religious liberty of county clerks), and make recommendations for any legislation needed to ensure that citizens' religious freedoms are not eroded by local ordinances or state or federal law. *Senate State Affairs Committee*

## ELECTIONS

- Study the potential impact of disaster events on election administration and security. *House Committee on Elections*
- Study the efficiency and security of the state's existing election protocols and systems, including but not limited to registration and early voting procedures, ballot styles, and the rules regarding time and location of polls. *House Committee on Elections*

### **Policy Platform Item:**

#### **Elections**

- Support the creation of an online voter registration system.
- Study the process for establishing onsite early voting for voters who reside at a residential care facility. *House Committee on Elections*
- In light of recent election irregularities in Texas, review voting security protocols as well as the responsibilities and duties of members of the Electoral College. *Senate Select Committee on Election Security*

## NATURAL RESOURCES

- Examine the Railroad Commission of Texas' (RRC) response to Hurricane Harvey. *House Committee on Energy Resources*
- Evaluate the evolution of frac sand mining in the Permian Basin and how it may impact county infrastructure and oil and gas development. *House Committee on Energy Resources*. Evaluate the impact energy exploration and production have on state and county roads and make recommendations on how to improve road quality in areas impacted by these activities. *Joint charge between the House Committee on Energy Resources and the House Committee on Transportation*
- Examine how state policies may facilitate investment in public infrastructure and workforce development in the Permian Basin region in order to support the anticipated growth in industry activity and related population, and capture the full economic potential of the region. *House Committee on Energy Resources*
- Examine the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's (TCEQ) response and clean-up efforts related to Hurricane Harvey. *House Committee on Environmental Regulation*
- Examine how emergency alert systems related to hazardous and chemical releases are organized at the local, state, and federal level and explore ways to improve coordination and efficiencies. *House Committee on Environmental Regulation*

### **Policy Platform Item:**

#### **Public Safety and Emergency Management**

- Support the current role of local emergency management authorities and the county judge in responding to potential and actual emergencies and disasters.

- Study the permitting, siting, and regulatory processes for solid waste landfills, including municipal solid waste landfills, and whether current rules, regulations, and notice requirements adequately ensure compliance and maximize participation from the public and stakeholders. *House Committee on Environmental Regulation*
- Study the economic impact of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and determine if new technologies can be utilized to meet attainment or make an attainment demonstration for all current standards. *House Committee on Environmental Regulation*

**Policy Platform Items:**

**Environment**

- Support full funding for the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan, LIRAP, and LIP programs and maintain the integrity of the TERP, LIRAP, and LIP programs.
- Use the TERP funds only for programs that will assist nonattainment and near nonattainment areas in meeting EPA Ozone standards
- Review the TCEQ's expedited air permitting program and examine whether the program is achieving the desired results. *House Committee on Environmental Regulation*
- Study issues including the initial State Flood Plan; science and data availability related to flood risk; methods of providing state financial assistance for flood infrastructure needs; opportunities for improved collection of flood flows; and the role of voluntary land conservation efforts. *House Committee on Natural Resources.*
- Study and make recommendations on how to move forward with water infrastructure projects in the State Water Plan that will help mitigate floods through flood control, diversion, and storage projects. *Senate Agriculture, Water and Rural Affairs Committee*
- Study and identify ways to improve the capacity and maintain the structure of the Addicks and Barker Reservoirs. *Senate Agriculture, Water and Rural Affairs Committee*
- Evaluate current state data-sharing standards for rainfall and stream gauges and whether regional flood management projects and flood warnings should be hosted in a centralized location, such as a state agency web page. *Senate Agriculture, Water and Rural Affairs Committee*

**SUBDIVISION REGULATION AND LAND USE**

- Evaluate whether counties have the necessary ordinance-making and enforcement authority to deal with flood risk in unincorporated rural and suburban areas of Texas. *House Committee on County Affairs*
- Review local and state zoning and land use regulations. *House Committee on Land and Resource Management*

- Examine Texas' eminent domain statutes to ensure a balance between necessary infrastructure growth and fair compensation for landowners. *House Committee on Land and Resource Management*

**Policy Platform Items:**

**Development and Infrastructure**

- In the absence of market value transparency, oppose efforts to require local governments to pay an opposing party's attorney fees and court costs in eminent domain proceedings.
  - Oppose changes to the criteria governments must meet to show "actual progress" on projects to prevent real property acquired through eminent domain to be subject to repurchase if the changes would require significant expenditures for development labor and materials to show actual progress.
- Examine and report on ways to improve the coordination of rebuilding housing and infrastructure following a natural disaster, including evaluating additional cost effective options for FEMA to utilize in providing direct housing assistance immediately following a disaster, creation of comprehensive lists of housing opportunities or web portals to disseminate information to survivors, ways to automatically waive local government regulations to facilitate rebuilding, and additional local resources available for rebuilding efforts. *Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee*
  - Review and recommend options to expedite debris removal, including cutting unnecessary regulation and streamlining the process. *Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee*
  - Review the existing regulatory authority granted to home-rule municipalities within the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), including practices used by cities to expand ETJ boundaries, and whether proper notification is provided to property owners added to a city's ETJ following an annexation proceeding. *Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee*
  - Examine issues that impact housing affordability, including the effect of local government taxes, fees, and mandates. *Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Taxation**

- Support the significant reduction of property tax rates by measures to reduce the cost of government and by replacing property tax revenue with revenue from other sources.
- Support reforms to process for equity appeals of appraisals.
- Oppose all new property tax exemptions, expansion of existing exemptions, or any other narrowing of tax base unless approved by the Urban Counties.

- Study the state agency review of tax exempt bonds issued by special purpose districts and public improvement districts used to finance water and sewer infrastructure in new residential and commercial developments. *Senate Intergovernmental Relations Committee*

## TRANSPORTATION

- Study the efficacy of existing transportation finance mechanisms from state, regional, and local perspectives. *House Committee on Transportation*

### **Policy Platform Item:**

#### Transportation

- Support enhanced funding for freight transportation infrastructure projects to address economic growth and an ever-increasing population.
- Oppose eliminating tolling options unless state funding for highways is increased sufficiently to replace lost toll revenue.
- Review the management of the oversize/overweight permitting system. *House Committee on Transportation*
- Evaluate the impact energy exploration and production have on state and county roads and make recommendations on how to improve road quality in areas impacted by these activities. *Joint charge between House Committee on Transportation and the House Committee on Energy Resources*

### **Policy Platform Item:**

#### Transportation

- Support current weight requirements for vehicles operating on county roads, except for localized proposals supported by the local commissioners court.
- Study the impact of Hurricane Harvey on the state's transportation infrastructure and make recommendations on how best to rebuild assets efficiently and effectively. *Senate Transportation Committee*
- Review the state's appropriations for Texas' ports and the Ship Channel Improvement Revolving Fund and make recommendations for increased investment to meet future needs. *Senate Transportation Committee*

### **Policy Platform Item:**

#### Transportation

- Support enhanced funding for freight transportation infrastructure projects to address economic growth and an ever-increasing population.
- Study and make recommendations regarding segregating state and federal transportation funding to accelerate project delivery. *Senate Transportation Committee*

## TAXATION

- Study and make recommendations regarding the collection and use of hotel occupancy taxes to increase transparency in the imposition, rate, and use of such taxes. *Senate Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee*
- Review the impact of Hurricane Harvey on state and local taxes. Examine the need for and the feasibility of requiring reappraisal of all property affected by large-scale disasters such as Harvey. *House Committee on Ways & Means*
- Review the property tax system and identify improvements relating to transparency and communications with taxpayers; the tax-rate-setting process; and appraisal review board operations. *House Committee on Ways & Means*

### **Policy Platform Items:**

#### Taxation

- Support reforms to process for equity appeals of appraisals.
- Support property tax transparency and information proposals from SB 669 85(R), as passed by the House during the regular session, including:
  - ❖ Removing projected tax assessment information from the central appraisal district (CAD) notice of assessed value;
  - ❖ Requiring proposed tax rates and hearing information be provided to the CAD where they would be made available to taxpayers online; and
  - ❖ Renaming the “effective” tax rate as the “no-new-taxes” tax rate.
- Evaluate how property tax law could better advance disaster recovery after Hurricane Harvey while ensuring that taxpayers are protected from excessive taxation and wasteful spending. *Select Senate Committee on Government Reform*
- Study and recommend ways to enhance voter engagement in local government decisions around budgets and property tax rates through digital media and social media. *Senate Select Committee on Property Tax Reform*

### **Policy Platform Item:**

#### Governance and Finance

- Oppose requirements to include on bond propositions information other than the total amount of bonds to be issued if approved and the proposed uses of the bonds.
- Evaluate the effective tax rate and rollback tax rate calculations and identify modifications that would yield a rollback process that is meaningful for local governments and for citizens. *Senate Select Committee on Property Tax Reform*

### **Policy Platform Items:**

#### Governance and Finance

- Oppose arbitrary limits on local government that are more restrictive than limits on state government, so long as:

- ❖ Commissioners Courts remain limited in their ability to manage county business and control county budgets; and
- ❖ There is no constitutional protection against unfunded mandates.
- Evaluate the operations of appraisal review boards (ARBs), specifically the training and expertise of members concerning appraisal standards and law, ethics, and meeting procedures. *Senate Select Committee on Property Tax Reform*
- Evaluate whether existing libraries of property tax data and collection methods are adequate for studying local property tax outcomes and identifying drivers of growing property tax levies. *Senate Select Committee on Property Tax Reform*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Governance and Finance**

- Support financial transparency requirements that permit the use of existing reports and other documents and that minimize the need to express the same information in different manners or formats.
- Study the feasibility of replacing the property tax with sales tax or other consumption tax revenue, with emphasis on school maintenance and operations tax. *Senate Select Committee on Property Tax Reform*

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Taxation**

- Support the significant reduction of property tax rates by measures to reduce the cost of government and by replacing property tax revenue with revenue from other sources.
- Support a significant increase in the school homestead exemption and ensure adjustments are made in state funding to schools to account for the exemption.
- Evaluate the rate of interest charged on delinquent property taxes and delinquent state taxes, compared to the rate of interest paid on property tax refunds and state tax refunds. *Senate Finance Committee*

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

- Study the prevalence and impact of substance use and substance use disorders in Texas. Identify effective and efficient prevention and treatment responses and coordination across state and local governments. *House Select Committee on Opioids and Substance Abuse*. Study the effectiveness of veterans' health and mental health initiatives in Texas and recommend ways to improve access and delivery. *Senate Veterans Affairs and Border Security Committee*.

**Policy Platform Item:**

**Health and Human Services**

- Support increased funding for mental health and substance abuse services state-wide.

- Support the continuation of the 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver.
- Support state action related to state participation in the funding of indigent health care to maximize access to available federal funds.
- Review the state's response to Hurricane Harvey with a focus on public health efforts at the local and state level. *Senate Health and Human Services Committee*



### Principles of the Urban Counties Policy Platform

1. Urban Counties value responsive and accountable government.
2. Urban Counties believe that local government is more responsive and accountable to the citizens and communities and should be utilized for service delivery whenever practical.
3. Urban county citizens hold commissioners court responsible for all county business even though commissioners courts lack authority over many aspects and segments of county business. There is a disconnect between responsibility and authority. This weakens accountability.
4. Urban Counties need greater authority and tools to deal with the problems of contemporary urban society.
5. Urban Counties believe that permissive authority is always good. Restrictions, proscriptions, and mandates are almost always harmful.
6. Urban counties believe that State funds for specific programs should be allocated to counties, regions, or other local areas based upon population, number of clients, or some other appropriate measure of the need for that program or service.
7. Urban Counties believes that funds collected for a purpose should be used for that purpose and supports ending the reliance and utilization of dedicated revenues to balance the State budget.

#### 1 Taxation

1. Support the significant reduction of property tax rates by measures to reduce the cost of government and by replacing property tax revenue with revenue from other sources.
2. Require sales price disclosure on transfer of real property.
3. Oppose any expansion of the pollution control property tax exemption that would include property used to produce goods or services.
4. Oppose expansion of tax exemptions for property owned by a taxpayer to include leased property other than property leased to a charter school for one or more grades from kindergarten through grade 12.
5. Support allowing local taxing units to set a residence homestead exemption as a percentage, a flat-dollar level, or a percentage with a minimum or maximum individual value.
6. Support reforms to process for equity appeals of appraisals.
7. Oppose the repeal of the penalty when land that was previously appraised as agricultural property is converted to another use.
8. Oppose all new property tax exemptions, expansion of existing exemptions, or any other narrowing of tax base unless approved by the Urban Counties.
9. Support a significant increase in the school homestead exemption and ensure adjustments are made in state funding to schools to account for the exemption.

10. Support property tax transparency and information proposals from SB 669 85(R), as passed by the House during the regular session, including:
  - a. Removing projected tax assessment information from the central appraisal district (CAD) notice of assessed value;
  - b. Requiring proposed tax rates and hearing information be provided to the CAD where they would be made available to taxpayers online; and
  - c. Renaming the “effective” tax rate as the “no-new-taxes” tax rate.
11. Support allowing school districts to increase their tax rate to a previously approved level after a decrease rather than having to hold a second increase ratification election;
12. Support using a portion of the Economic Stabilization Fund to lower school tax rates;
13. Support protections for innocent and unwitting taxpayers that acquire property subject to governmental errors in previous tax years from having to pay back taxes due to those errors; and
14. Support mandatory price disclosure of real property sales.

## 2 Crime and Courts

1. Support full state funding for all mandatory JJAEP placements in an amount adequate for year-round programs.
2. Support an increase in state funding for indigent defense purposes.
3. Support additional state funding for juvenile probation departments if the age of criminal responsibility is raised to 18.
4. Support sufficient State funding for local juvenile probation departments to pay for the full costs of keeping in local programs, or in regional detention facilities, all children diverted from State facilities through a restructuring of the State Juvenile Justice Department.
5. Support state payment to counties for costs of detaining in county jails technical parole violators and new-offense violators held solely for parole revocation purposes.
6. Oppose changes in court costs in criminal cases that are expected to have a negative fiscal impact to counties.
7. Support changes to pre-trial release to require the use of locally verified evaluation tools to determine a criminal defendant’s risk of flight or danger to the community. Promote: (1) establishing pretrial risk assessments; (2) the elimination of bond schedules; (3) greater discretion for magistrates regarding pre-trial release; and (4) rebuttable presumptions in favor of personal bond.

## 3 Transportation

1. Oppose eliminating tolling options unless state funding for highways is increased sufficiently to replace lost toll revenue.
2. Support enhanced funding for freight transportation infrastructure projects to address economic growth and an ever-increasing population.

3. Support current weight requirements for vehicles operating on county roads, except for localized proposals supported by the local commissioners court.
4. Support changes to the administrative fees retained by counties to register vehicles only if the new fees are reasonably expected to recoup county costs for providing those services.
5. Oppose the establishment of uniform limits on the fees charged by authorized private deputies for title services.

## **4 Health and Human Services**

1. Support increased funding for mental health and substance abuse services state-wide.
2. Expand capacity of both forensic and civil beds in the state hospital system.
3. Support the continuation of the 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver.
4. Support state action related to state participation in the funding of indigent health care to maximize access to available federal funds.
5. Not oppose the repeal of the Drivers Responsibility Program. If repealed, seek replacement funding for trauma care.
6. Support continued federal funding to local communities for refugee healthcare.

## **5 Environment**

1. Support full funding for the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan, LIRAP, and LIP programs and maintain the integrity of the TERP, LIRAP, and LIP programs.
2. Support local administration of the LIRAP and LIP programs to ensure funds collected in the county are used in the county.
3. Use the TERP funds only for programs that will assist nonattainment and near nonattainment areas in meeting EPA Ozone standards.

## **6 Development and Infrastructure**

1. In the absence of market value transparency, oppose efforts to require local governments to pay an opposing party's attorney fees and court costs in eminent domain proceedings.
2. Oppose changes to the criteria governments must meet to show "actual progress" on projects to prevent real property acquired through eminent domain to be subject to repurchase if the changes would require significant expenditures for development labor and materials to show actual progress.

## **7 Public Safety and Emergency Management**

1. Support giving all counties the option to adopt a fire code and rules necessary to administer and enforce the fire code.
2. Oppose creation of a new fireworks season unless commissioners courts are granted discretion over the sale of fireworks in that county for the new season.

3. Protect county authority to restrict or ban the sale and use of fireworks during drought conditions and when included in a local disaster declaration.
4. Support the current role of local emergency management authorities and the county judge in responding to potential and actual emergencies and disasters.
5. Support efforts to maintain the long-established prohibition of guns in any portion of a building used by court participants.
6. Support additional funding for DPS crime labs provided it does not negatively impact existing local crime labs.

## **8 Elections**

1. Support the creation of an online voter registration system.

## **9 Governance and Finance**

1. Confirm commissioners court authority over the county budget and contracting.
2. No unfunded mandates.
3. Oppose arbitrary limits on local government that are more restrictive than limits on state government, so long as:
  - a. Commissioners Courts remain limited in their ability to manage county business and control county budgets; and
  - b. There is no constitutional protection against unfunded mandates.
4. Support local control over compensation and benefits paid by the county.
5. Establish that any increase in the fees to be paid to attorneys appointed to represent indigent criminal defendants may not take effect until the adoption of the next county budget and require at least 90-day notice of the proposed increase to be provided to the commissioners court.
6. Support full state funding for representation of indigent parties in child welfare cases.
7. Support financial transparency requirements that permit the use of existing reports and other documents and that minimize the need to express the same information in different manners or formats.
8. Oppose mandates to produce financial reports that are duplicative of reports already required of counties.
9. Oppose collective bargaining for peace officers unless supported by the commissioners court of the counties affected by the legislation.
10. Support legislation that permits counties to post public notices electronically in lieu of print publication.
11. Oppose requirements to include on bond propositions information other than the total amount of bonds to be issued if approved and the proposed uses of the bonds.

12. Establish that the earliest effective date for any increase in salary budgets outside the control of commissioners court shall be the first day of the next county fiscal year following 90 days notice of the proposed increase to be provided to the commissioners court.
13. Support continued federal funding for local communities to help cover operational costs for holding undocumented criminal aliens in the criminal justice system and the costs to house them.
14. Oppose restrictions on the ability of local governments to effectively and efficiently communicate with the legislature and other state and federal entities.
15. Support proposals to permit public access to public information on the personal devices of public officers and employees that include reasonable provisions to guard against frivolous and abusive lawsuits against public officers and employees.

## Other Issues

*Items in this list are legislative positions regarding initiatives of member counties or other groups or organizations.*