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Dallas County

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Brazoria County

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Midland · Nueces  
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Smith · Tarrant  
Travis · Webb  
Williamson · Wise

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Austin, TX 78701

512.476.6174

**Policy Committee Meeting**

February 15, 2023 (9:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.)

Travis County Building (700 Lavaca Street, Austin)

**AGENDA**

9:00 A.M. Convene

1. Welcome, Introductions
2. Policy Committee Attendance Record

**Policy Committee Attendance Record 2023**

		01/11/23	02/15/23	03/29/23	04/19/23	05/17/23	06/21/23
	<b>Policy Committee Members</b>						
	<b>County</b>						
1	Judge David Blackburn (Chair)	Bell County	V				
2	Commissioner Justin Rodriguez	Bexar County	P				
3	Judge Matt Sebesta	Brazoria County	V				
4	Judge Eddie Treviño	Cameron County	V				
5	Commissioner Susan Fletcher	Collin County	V				
6	Commissioner Theresa Daniel	Dallas County	V				
7	Commissioner Bobbie Mitchell	Denton County	V				
8	Commissioner David Stout	El Paso County	P				
9	Commissioner Andy Meyers	Fort Bend County	V				
10	Judge Lina Hidalgo	Harris County	E				
11	Judge Richard Cortez	Hidalgo County	X				
12	Commissioner Bo Alfred	Jefferson County	V				
13	Commissioner Will Jones	McLennan County	V				
14	Commissioner Scott Ramsey	Midland County	V				
15	Commissioner Gary Fickes	Tarrant County	V				
16	Commissioner Margaret Gomez	Travis County	V				
17	Judge Bill Gravell	Williamson County	V				
18	Commissioner Kevin Burns	Wise County	V				

V - Present | P - Present by Proxy | X - Absent | E - Excused Absence

3. Consider the minutes from January 11, 2023 meeting
4. Administrative Items
  - a. Next meeting: Wednesday, March 29, 2023, 3:00 P.M. at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel, Room TBA
5. Policy Director's Report [Adam Haynes]
  - a. Bills of Interest
6. New Business

11:30 AM Adjourn

**CUC Policy Committee**

**January 11, 2023**

Travis County Building (700 Lavaca St, Austin)

**Minutes**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Bell County Judge David Blackburn, Chair

Bexar County Commissioner Justin Rodriguez (Proxy Melissa Shannon)

Brazoria County Judge Matt Sebesta

Cameron County Judge Eddie Trevino

Collin County Commissioner Susan Fletcher

Dallas County Commissioner Theresa Daniel

Denton County Commissioner Bobbie Mitchell

El Paso County Commissioner David Stout (Proxy Elisa Tamayo)

Fort Bend County Commissioner Andy Meyers

Jefferson County Commissioner Bo Alfred

McLennan County Commissioner Will Jones

Midland County Commissioner Scott Ramsey

Tarrant County Commissioner Gary Fickes

Travis County Commissioner Margaret Gomez

Williamson County Judge Bill Gravell

Wise County Kevin Burns

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Denton County Judge Andy Eads

Bell County Commissioner Bill Schumann

Travis County Commissioner Ann Howard

Rebekah Chanelle, Dallas County

Charles Reed, Dallas County

Jody Gonzalez, Denton County

April Greenhill, Denton County

Brooke Hamrick, Denton County  
Francis Nugent, Harris County  
Paul Sugg, Harris County  
August Williams, Harris County  
King Hillier, Harris Health  
G.K. Maenius, Tarrant County  
Kathryn Rotter, Tarrant County  
Gabe Ruiz, Tarrant County  
Russell Schaffner, Tarrant County  
Cicely Kay, Travis County  
Julie Wheeler, Travis County  
John Dahill, Texas Conference of Urban Counties  
Adam Haynes, Texas Conference of Urban Counties  
Windy Johnson, Texas Conference of Urban Counties  
Gabriela Villareal, Texas Conference of Urban Counties

Judge Blackburn called the meeting to order at 10:01 A.M.

The Committee considered agenda **item 3**, the minutes from the November 17, 2022 meeting. On a motion by Commissioner Theresa Daniel and a second by Commissioner Kevin Burns, the minutes were approved as presented.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 4**, Administrative Items. The Committee will meet on February 15, 2023 at 9:00 A.M. and on March 29, 2023 at 3:00 P.M.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 5**, Policy Director's Report.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 6**, New Business regarding infrastructure, economic development, and governance and finance.

The Committee considered Economic Development. On a motion by Judge Bill Gravell and a second by Commissioner Kevin Burns, the following recommended resolution was approved as presented:

RESOLVED by the Texas Conference of Urban Counties Policy Committee that the Policy Platform is amended as follows:

Support reestablishing the ability of governmental bodies to utilize economic development tools.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 A.M.

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Judge David Blackburn  
Vice-Chairperson of Policy

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Date

## **Principles of the Urban Counties Policy Platform**

1. Urban Counties believe local government is more responsive and accountable to the citizens, advocates for the best interests of our constituents and communities, and should be utilized for service delivery whenever practical.
2. Urban Counties believe permissive authority provides better policy options while state mandates, revenue restrictions, and one-size-fits-all directives undermine voter self-determination and local responsibility.
3. Urban Counties believe the State increases local property taxes when it imposes obligations on local governments without providing adequate funding.
4. Urban Counties believe State funds collected and appropriated for specific programs should be used for that purpose; allocated based upon population, number of clients, or other measurement of the need for that program or service; and utilized for the benefit of Texans rather than being held to balance the State budget. Any diversion of funds should result in counties receiving the necessary monies to cover the state's responsibilities.
5. Urban Counties believe promoting the best interests of our communities involves advocating for legislation important to our local interests and limiting our ability to participate in the deliberative process is detrimental to the benefits of our constituents.

### **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. Support sales price disclosure on sale or 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 the process for equity appeals of appraisals.
7. Oppose reducing the penalty when land that was previously appraised as agricultural or other open space 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, including but not limited to streamlining notice procedures for taxpayers, including separation of individual taxing entities' rates and respective tax amounts.
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 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.
13. Oppose arbitrary limits on local governments to undermine fiscal resources that enable officials to meet their obligations and local priorities.
14. Support clarifying the calculation of the no new revenue rate to provide transparency.

## 2 Crime and Courts

1. Support full state funding for all mandatory Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program placements in an amount adequate for year-round programs.
2. Support an increase in state funding for indigent defense purposes to cover increased costs incurred by local county taxpayers since the passage of the Fair Defense Act in 2001.
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 to end the practice of the state pushing costs associated with state prisoners onto local county taxpayers.
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.
8. Support maintaining the current fee structure for the district court records and archives fee, the county court records management and preservation fee, and the records archive fee through 2029.
9. Support expanded testing opportunities for court interpreter certification.
10. Support authorizing the issuance of temporary restraining orders in nuisance abatement cases.
11. Support the following revisions to the protective order process:
  - a. Permit any adult to file for a protective order on behalf of a minor or intellectually disabled victim of crime;

- b. Permit civil and criminal enforcement of agreed protective orders notwithstanding absence of a finding of family violence; and
- c. Permit default judgments in protective order cases upon 48 hours' notice of the application.

### 3 Transportation

1. Oppose eliminating local tolling options.
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 local option fees for road improvements/additions/additional options if the fees are approved by the county's commissioners court.
5. Support the development of real-time scofflaw database maintained by DMV.

### 4 Health and Human Services

1. Support increased funding for mental health and substance abuse services state-wide.
2. Support expanding the 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 Environment/Disaster Relief, Recovery, and Resilience

1. Support the return of locally collected Local Initiatives Projects (LIP)/ Low Income Vehicle Repair Assistance, Retrofit, and Accelerated Retirement (LIRAP) funds, sitting in the Clean Air Account, to the county in which they were collected to be used for clean air initiatives.
2. Support using Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP) funds only for programs that will assist nonattainment and near nonattainment areas in meeting Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Ozone standards.
3. Support using state funds for financing disaster mitigation, disaster prevention, disaster recovery, and resilience projects as long as local decision making is preserved to ensure local priorities are met.
4. Oppose any further erosion in the ability of local governments to hold violators of environmental laws and regulations accountable.

### 6 Development and Infrastructure

1. Oppose efforts to require local governments to pay penalties, including 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.
3. Support efforts to increase digital access, adoption, and readiness.

## 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. Support 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.
7. Support reaffirming the authority of a county judge to direct response, mitigation, and recovery efforts during potential and actual emergencies and disasters.

## 8 Elections

1. Support the creation of an online voter registration system.
2. Expand the Countywide Polling Place Program for all counties.
3. Support continued state funding to counties for the purchase of new election equipment, including reimbursement for purchases made within the last 3 years.
4. Support retaining the current option to hold elections on uniform election dates.

## 9 Governance and Finance

1. Support commissioners court authority over county budgeting and contracting decisions.
2. Support protecting local taxpayers from state-mandated property tax increases, which drive local property tax increases, result in reductions in critical services, and infringe local control.
3. Support local control over compensation and benefits paid by the county.
4. Support 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.
5. Support full state funding for representation of indigent parties in child welfare cases.



6. 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 manner or reports that are duplicative of reports already required.
7. Support legislation that permits counties to post public notices electronically in lieu of print publication.
8. 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.
9. Support 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.
10. 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.
11. Oppose restrictions on the ability of local governments to effectively and efficiently communicate with the legislature and other state and federal entities.
12. 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.
13. Oppose any measure that interferes with the authority of a county to select its legal counsel and establish the terms of representation.
14. Support using federal and state funds for financing disaster and emergency mitigation, prevention, recovery, and resilience projects provided local decision makers direct funds to meet community priorities.
15. Support a commissioners court's ability to delegate the authority to select and remove a county chief public defender.
16. Support authorizing the county clerk to generate a randomized list of public names, compiled of people who served on a grand jury in the last year, to serve on a salary grievance committee.
17. Support expanding authority for governments to hold public meetings and briefings remotely.
18. Support the clarification of the Alcoholic Beverage Code to prevent illegal after-hours bars.
19. Oppose granting whistleblower status to employees unless they report illegal conduct to a person designated by the employing governmental entity to receive such reports, the attorney general, or an appropriate law enforcement authority.

## **10 Economic Development**

1. Support retaining the ability of governmental bodies to utilize economic development tools.