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Galveston · Grayson
Harris · Hays
Hidalgo · Jefferson
Johnson · Kaufman
Lubbock · McLennan
Midland · Nueces
Potter · Randall
Rockwall · San Patricio
Smith · Tarrant
Travis · Webb
Williamson · Wise

Policy Committee Meeting

October 16, 2024 (11:00 – 1:00 P.M.)
700 Lavaca St (Travis County Building)
Austin, TX 78701
AGENDA

11:00 A.M. Convene

1. Welcome, Introductions
2. Policy Committee Attendance Record

Policy Committee Attendance Record 2024

		02/14/24	04/24/24	07/10/24	10/16/24	11/20/24
Policy Committee Members	County					
Judge David Blackburn	Bell County	V	E	P		
Commissioner Justin Rodriguez (Chair)	Bexar County	V	V	V		
Judge Matt Sebesta	Brazoria County	V	V	E		
Commissioner Steve Aldrich	Brazos County	V	V	V		
Judge Eddie Treviño	Cameron County	X	V	E		
Commissioner Susan Fletcher	Collin County	V	V	V		
Commissioner Theresa Daniel	Dallas County	V	V	V		
Judge Andy Eads	Denton County	V	V	X		
Commissioner David Stout	El Paso County	V	V	V		
Commissioner Andy Meyers	Fort Bend County	X	X	X		
Commissioner Jeff Whitmire	Grayson County	V	V	V		
Commissioner Adrian Garcia	Harris County	V	V	P		
Judge Ruben Becerra	Hays County	V	V	V		
Judge Richard Cortez	Hidalgo County	X	X	X		
Commissioner Bo Alfred	Jefferson County	V	V	V		
Commissioner Will Jones	McLennan County	V	V	V		
Commissioner Scott Ramsey	Midland County	V	V	E		
Commissioner Dennis Bailey	Rockwall County	V	V	V		
Commissioner Gary Fickes	Tarrant County	V	P	V		
Commissioner Margaret Gomez	Travis County	X	X	V		
Judge Bill Gravell	Williamson County	X	X	X		
Commissioner Kevin Burns	Wise County	V	E	V		

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

3. Consider the minutes from the meeting on July 10, 2024.
 4. Administrative Items
 - a. Next meeting: Wednesday, November 20, 2024, at 10 AM at the Travis County Building (700 Lavaca Street, Austin)
 5. Policy Director's Report [Adam Haynes]
 6. New Business
- 11:00 A.M. Adjourn

500 West 13th Street
Austin, TX 78701

CUC Policy Committee

July 10, 2024 (10 A.M. – 12 P.M.)

700 Lavaca St, Austin Tx

Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT

Bexar County Commissioner Justin Rodriguez (Chair)
Bell County Judge David Blackburn (Proxy Louie Minor)
Brazos County Commissioner Steve Aldrich
Collin County Susan Fletcher
Dallas County Commissioner Theresa Daniel
El Paso County Commissioner David Stout
Grayson County Commissioner Jeff Whitmire
Harris County Commissioner Adrian Garcia (Proxy Tammy Narvaez)
Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra
Jefferson County Bo Alfred
Rockwall County Dennis Bailey
Tarrant County Gary Fickes
Margaret Gomez Travis County
Kevin Burns Wise County

OTHERS PRESENT

Melissa Shannon, Bexar County
Charles Reed, Dallas County
Josie Garcia, Dallas County
Kathryn Rotter, Tarrant County
Russell Schaffner, Tarrant County
Julie Wheeler, Travis County
Cicely Kay, Travis County
John Dahill, Texas Conference of Urban Counties
Adam Haynes, Texas Conference of Urban Counties
Windy Johnson, Texas Conference of Urban Counties

Commissioner Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 10:05 A.M.

The Committee considered agenda **item 3**, the April 24, 2024, meeting minutes. On a motion by Commissioner Whitmire and a second by Commissioner Aldrich, the minutes were approved as presented.

The Committee discussed agenda **item 4**, Administrative Items.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:480 A.M.

Commissioner Justin Rodriguez
Vice-Chairperson of Policy

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 forces ~~increases local~~ property taxes increases on local citizens 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 efficiently participate in the deliberative process is detrimental to the benefits of our constituents.

1 Taxation

1. Advocate for fair and transparent property tax policies that reduce the burden on local taxpayers through government cost efficiency, full state funding for state-ordered programs, and alternative revenue sources.
2. Support reforms such as homestead exemptions and sales price disclosure while opposing unnecessary tax exemptions and penalties that weaken the tax base. Protect local authority over resource management and tax rate decisions to ensure fiscal responsibility.
3. Support equity appeals for homeowners similar to the system used by commercial and industrial property owners.
4. 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.~~
5. ~~Support sales price disclosure on sale or transfer of real property.~~
6. ~~Oppose any expansion of the pollution control property tax exemption that would include property used to produce goods or services.~~
7. ~~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.~~
8. ~~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.~~

- ~~9. Support reforms to the process for equity appeals of appraisals.~~
10. Oppose reducing the penalty property recapture when land that was previously appraised as agricultural or other open space property is converted to another use.
- ~~11. Oppose all new property tax exemptions, expansion of existing exemptions, or any other narrowing of tax base unless approved by the Urban Counties.~~
12. Support a significant increase in the flat-dollar, school homestead exemption and ensure adjustments are made in state funding to schools to account for the exemption and allow counties to offer a flat-dollar homestead exemption equal to that of the one offer by schools.
- ~~13. 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.~~
- ~~14. 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.~~
15. 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.
16. Oppose arbitrary limits on local governments to undermine fiscal resources that enable officials to meet their obligations and local priorities.
17. Support clarifying the calculation of the no new revenue rate to provide transparency and continue the NNRR no-new-revenue-tax rate calculation worksheet process.
18. Support limiting Housing Finance Corporation projects to their jurisdictional boundaries unless a project outside its jurisdiction is approved by the Commissioners Court in both the jurisdictional county and the target county by a supermajority vote.

2 Crime and Courts

1. Support full state funding of juvenile justice, indigent defense, child and indigent representation in child protection matters, local detention costs for parole violators, and local costs resulting from delayed placements in state systems.
2. Support reforms in pre-trial release, protective orders, and court fees, while addressing shortages in court reporters and ensuring adequate legal representation for vulnerable families while reducing financial burdens on local taxpayers.
- ~~3. Support full state funding for all mandatory Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program placements in an amount adequate for year-round programs.~~
- ~~4. 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.~~
- ~~5. Support additional state funding for juvenile probation departments if the age of criminal responsibility is raised to 18.~~
- ~~6. 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.~~

- ~~7. 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.~~
8. Oppose changes in criminal court costs in criminal cases that will are expected to have a negative fiscal impact to counties.
- ~~9. 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.~~
- ~~10. 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.~~
- ~~11. Support expanded testing opportunities for court interpreter certification.~~
12. Support authorizing the issuance of temporary restraining orders in nuisance abatement cases.
- ~~13. 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.~~
14. Support reallocating court fees between the state and counties to ensure local jurisdictions have sufficient resources to administer justice effectively without raising property taxes.

3 Transportation

1. Support local control over transportation by supporting tolling options, increased authority for the local enforcement of weights and measurements, and local option fees for road improvements.
2. Support the exemption of state-imposed fuel taxes for all county fleets.
- ~~3. Oppose eliminating local tolling options.~~
4. Support enhanced funding for freight transportation infrastructure projects to address economic growth and an ever-increasing population.
- ~~5. Support current weight requirements for vehicles operating on county roads, except for localized proposals supported by the local commissioners court.~~
- ~~6. Support local option fees for road improvements/additions/additional options if the fees are approved by the county's commissioners court.~~
- ~~7. Support the development of real-time scofflaw database maintained by DMV.~~

4 Health and Human Services

1. Support state funding for behavioral health services, increasing capacity for state hospital beds, and expanding funding for community-based healthcare, while ensuring federal funds are maximized for indigent health care.
2. Support reimbursement of local taxpayers for funds spent to house, medicate, and monitor individuals awaiting placement in state hospital facilities.
3. ~~Support increased funding for mental health and substance abuse services state-wide.~~
4. ~~Support expanding the capacity of both forensic and civil beds in the state hospital system.~~
5. ~~Support the continuation of the 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver.~~
6. ~~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 use of state funds for disaster mitigation and resilience projects, as well as the use of emissions reduction funds for clean air initiatives, while opposing measures that erode local control over environmental accountability.
2. Support the return of locally collected Local Initiatives Projects (LIP)/ Low Income Vehicle Repair Assistance, Retrofit, and Accelerated Retirement (LIRAP) funds, ~~sitting~~ held in the Clean Air Account, to the county in which they were collected to be used for clean air initiatives.
3. ~~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.~~
4. ~~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.~~
5. ~~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 restrictive eminent domain measures that penalize local governments.
2. Support limited county land use authority within municipal ETJs to protect public and private investments for life, health, safety, and compatibility grounds.
3. ~~Oppose efforts to require local governments to pay penalties, including an opposing party's attorney fees and court costs in eminent domain proceedings.~~
4. ~~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.~~
5. ~~Support efforts to increase digital access, adoption, and readiness.~~

7 Public Safety and Emergency Management

1. Support county authority in public safety, including the adoption of fire codes, discretion over fireworks sales, emergency response efforts, and firearm prohibitions in court buildings.
2. Support additional funding for Department of Public Safety crime labs while protecting local crime lab funding.
3. Reaffirm the county judge's role in directing disaster response and recovery.
4. ~~Support giving all counties the option to adopt a fire code and rules necessary to administer and enforce the fire code.~~
5. ~~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.~~
6. ~~Support county authority to restrict or ban the sale and use of fireworks during drought conditions and when included in a local disaster declaration.~~
7. ~~Support the current role of local emergency management authorities and the county judge in responding to potential and actual emergencies and disasters.~~
8. ~~Support efforts to maintain the long-established prohibition of guns in any portion of a building used by court participants.~~
9. ~~Support additional funding for DPS crime labs provided it does not negatively impact existing local crime labs.~~
10. ~~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 state reimbursement for election-related costs and advocate for expanded online voter registration, countywide polling place programs, and retaining uniform election dates.
2. Maintain local decision-making authority over administering elections including registrations, election locations, reporting, and operations.
3. ~~Support the creation of an online voter registration system.~~
4. ~~Expand the Countywide Polling Place Program for all counties.~~
5. ~~Support continued state funding to counties for the purchase of new election equipment, including reimbursement for purchases made within the last 3 years.~~
6. ~~Support retaining the current option to hold elections on uniform election dates.~~

9 Governance and Finance

1. Ensure local control over local budgeting, employment, and contracting decisions.
2. ~~Support commissioners court authority over county budgeting and contracting decisions.~~
3. Support protecting local taxpayers from state mandated property tax increases, which increase local property taxes, result in reductions in critical services, or and infringe local control.
4. ~~Support local control over compensation and benefits paid by the county.~~

- ~~5. 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.~~
- ~~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 and duplicative manner or reports that are duplicative of reports already required.
- ~~8. Support legislation that permits counties to post public notices electronically in lieu of print publication.~~
9. 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.
- ~~10. 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.~~
11. Support increased federal and state funding for local communities to help cover operational costs for holding undocumented persons in the criminal justice system and the costs to house them.
12. Oppose restrictions on the ability of local governments to effectively and efficiently communicate with the legislature and other state and federal entities.
13. 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.
- ~~14. Oppose any measure that interferes with the authority of a county to select its legal counsel and establish the terms of representation.~~
15. 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.
- ~~16. Support a commissioners court's ability to delegate the authority to select and remove a county chief public defender.~~
- ~~17. 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.~~
18. Support expanding authority for governments to hold public meetings and briefings remotely.
- ~~19. Support the clarification of the Alcoholic Beverage Code to prevent illegal after-hours bars.~~
20. 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 to foster economic growth and local prosperity.