

## What Can Small Cities Do Legislatively?

The goings-on at the Texas Capitol every two years sometime seem like a big-city process. The legislature meets in a large city, after all—Austin. And many of the lobbyists and their firms are based in the big cities. So it might be natural to presume that small cities have little chance of getting noticed during a legislative session. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

TML routinely calls on mayors, councilmembers, and city managers from small cities to testify, make phone calls, or just get out the word about all the issues Texas cities face, regardless of their complexity. With all due respect to the larger cities, often nothing shouts credibility more than a small city mayor engaged on an important issue like telecommunications law or water policy. Texans like to think of themselves as small town and rural at heart, and our legislature is no exception. Small cities get heard—there's no doubt about it.

This means that we could use your help. If you have special expertise in any area the legislature might be considering, your assistance is needed. The TML staff is gathering e-mail addresses from city officials (elected and appointed from small and large cities) who are willing to provide testimony during the 2007 legislative session, want to be kept “in the loop” on certain subject matters, or are willing to simply provide their perspective on a particular legislative matter. If you would like to participate in this “E-List” project, simply send an e-mail to Rachael Pitts at [rpitts@tml.org](mailto:rpitts@tml.org) with your name, e-mail address,



and the subject matter(s) below that interest you.

- Telecommunications
- Electric Utilities
- Gas Utilities
- Open Meetings/Open Records
- Annexation/ETJ
- Land Use (eminent domain, permit vesting, and so on)
- Transportation
- Revenue/Appraisal Caps
- Property Tax
- Sales Tax
- Economic Development
- Elections
- Civil Service
- Collective Bargaining/Meet and Confer
- Water
- Purchasing
- Ethics
- Municipal Court
- Public Safety/Police
- Public Safety/Fire
- Emergency Services Districts/EMS
- Disease Presumption
- Disaster Response
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

A friendly word of warning to the smallest cities about this project: If you're an official from a small city who shows an interest in permit vesting, economic development, or other such issue, you may well be the first to be called on! We mean what we say—small cities matter to TML and to the legislature, and we want you to be a partner in our efforts.

The best thing a small city can do in the meantime is what Rockport Mayor Todd Pearson suggested in last month's magazine—“we should strive to truly get to know our state legislators, not just during legislative sessions but year-round.” Give them a call, invite them to city hall, and share your town's concerns and successes. Ask how you might assist them. Many of our legislators started out as mayors, councilmembers, commissioners, or school board members. They love to “talk shop” anytime.

For a complete list of contact information regarding your legislator, go to the TML Web site at [http://www.tml.org/links\\_texas.html](http://www.tml.org/links_texas.html). ★