

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 good-sized 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.

Therefore, with that said, we need 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; small and large cities) who are willing to provide testimony during the 2011 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.

Possible subject matters include:

- Telecommunications
- Electric Utilities
- Gas Utilities
- Open Meetings/Open Records
- Annexation/ETJ
- Land Use (eminent domain, permit vesting, and so on)
- Transportation
- Code Enforcement
- Billboards
- GFOAT
- Parks and Recreation
- Personnel

- 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

If you would like to participate in this E-List project, simply go to <http://www.tml.org/genform/E-List.asp> and fill out the online form. If you have any questions, please contact J.J. Rocha at jj@tml.org or 512-231-7400.

A friendly word of warning to the smallest cities about this project: If you're an official from a small city who lets us know that you have an interest in a particular 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 get to know your 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.asp. ★