



TEXAS MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
Empowering Texas cities to serve their citizens

President **David Rutledge**, Mayor, Bridge City
Executive Director **Bennett Sandlin**

April 5, 2023

The Honorable Giovanni Capriglione
Chairman, House Pensions, Investments and Financial Services Committee
Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768-2910

Dear Chairman Capriglione:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the Texas Municipal League's opposition to **House Bill 187** by **Representative Landgraf**. H.B. 187 would require debt elections to be held on the November uniform election date. While we understand the author's motivation to move debt elections to higher-turnout election dates, like in November of even-numbered years, doing so would limit city flexibility at a time the state can ill-afford to do so.

Prior to 2005, most city elections had to be held on one of four uniform election dates. Those four dates were taken down to two in 2005, which is where we still stand today. Currently a city can hold an election, including a debt or tax election, on either the first Saturday in May or the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. H.B. 187 would cut the number of available uniform election dates for a special election on debt to one.

As Texas cities continue to lead the nation in population growth, now is the wrong time to eliminate the use of the May uniform election date for bond elections. Texas cities must be able to finance the transportation infrastructure costs and other capital improvement expenditures necessary to adequately accommodate such fast growth. Limiting cities' flexibility to pay for necessary infrastructure would prove harmful to Texas businesses and families alike, both of whom rely on local governments to provide the quality-of-life amenities that make Texas so attractive in the first place.

Data from the Texas Bond Review Board shows that over the past ten years the passage rate for city bond propositions in May as compared to November is nearly identical, and cities have actually held significantly more bond elections in November than on the May election date over the same time period. There is no evidence that Texas cities are deliberately stacking bond elections in May to avoid higher turnout elections in November of even-numbered years. The data actually indicates the opposite is true.

Further, it should be pointed out that not all November elections are created equal in terms of voter turnout. Elections in November of odd numbered years in Texas are held specifically for constitutional amendments. In many cases, turnout for these elections is less than turnout for May elections. For instance, in the November 2021 constitutional amendment election in Travis County, 21.6 percent of registered voters turned out. During the May 2021 election, 22.6 percent of registered voters in Travis County turned out for local elections.

The availability of both uniform election dates is imperative to give cities and voters more opportunities to consider how to best address the needs of the community. For this reason, we are opposed to H.B. 187.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Monty Wynn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Monty Wynn
Director, Grassroots and Legislative Services
Texas Municipal League