



THE GREATER  
**BOERNE**  
**CHAMBER**  
OF COMMERCE

2019

# LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Texas 86<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session

# 2019 Legislative Agenda



## Summary

- I. Transportation
  - Congestion Alleviation
    - Regional collaboration incentives
  - Infrastructure Planning for Economic Growth
    - Local direction of planning initiatives
    - Public/private partnerships
    - Incentives for transportation diversification and traffic diversion
- II. Workforce Housing
  - Property Value and Resource Conscious Residential Development
    - Public/private sector collaboration
    - Incentives for efficient use of existing resources (e.g., land, utilities, and infrastructure)
    - Value-conscious development incentives
- III. Education
  - School Security
    - Local-level decision making
  - Robin Hood Funding
    - Restructure Chapter 41 Recapture Payments
  - Unfunded Mandates
    - Funding and sufficient notice requirements
- IV. Local Autonomy
  - Retain and Restore Local Authority Concerning Municipal and County Issues
    - Increased accountability/transparency for state and local government
    - Protections for municipal and county authority
    - Increased local control over regulatory measures
- V. Water and Natural Resource Protections
  - Water Planning and Monitoring
    - Regular water supply testing and commercial usage disclosures
  - Groundwater Contamination and Depletion Protections
    - Increased regulatory and enforcement measures for contamination violations and excessive water usage
  - Conservation and Stewardship
    - Incentive-based instruments for private sector participation
- VI. Health Care
  - Private Sector Innovation
    - Improve flexibility for tax-preferred accounts like FSAs, HSAs, and HRAs
    - Repeal of taxes that increase premiums
  - Employer/Employee Cost Relief
    - Restoration of the 40-hour work week to reduce the impact of the employer mandate
    - Expansion of rights afforded to association health plans, favorable to small businesses
  - Protection for Elderly and Youth Care
    - Extension of the 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver

## Legislative Priorities

### I. Transportation

Alleviating current congestion and planning for economic growth is key to transforming our current transportation concerns into areas of future strength. Increased communication and regional collaboration between local governments, businesses, TxDOT and the Metropolitan Planning Organization will provide the most cost-effective impact, since primary regional arteries, IH 10, HWY 46, BUS 87/Haupestrasse, and FM 3351, are funded by the state. Additional progress is possible through: (i.) local control and direction of targeted planning initiatives, (ii.) public/private ventures (e.g., corporate sponsored infrastructure projects), and (iii.) incentives for diversification of transportation methods and traffic diversion options (e.g., trail system funding or bike lanes).

### II. Workforce Housing

Local jobs require local residents. Boerne's median home price of \$430,000 coupled with an elevated comparable cost of living makes this area one of the most expensive places to live in Texas. To enjoy a freestanding, viable economy, Boerne needs housing for hundreds of employees earning 60-120% of Area Median Income. Overcoming this substantial financial challenge is further complicated by (i.) the concern of adding lower-priced housing without jeopardizing surrounding local property values, and (ii.) accommodating an increased demand on resources that additional people and residences cause.

Solutions lie in public/private sector collaboration, utilization of existing resources, and value-conscious development incentives. For instance, increasing financial incentives for development and purchase of owner-occupied multifamily housing, such as townhomes or condo developments, can be an effective option to spur private sector investment. Additionally, infill incentives can aid in concentrating development patterns within city boundaries, thereby limiting needs for utility and roadway expansions, and promoting the "highest and best use" of available space.

### III. Education

A well-funded and managed public education system is vital to maintaining a skilled workforce. Our priorities are preparing our youth for workforce entry by addressing the concerns of security, "Robin Hood" Funding, and alleviation of unfunded mandates. These goals require ensuring that most decisions are made at the local level (i.e., protection to ensure that school boards have the flexibility to address issues, such as school safety, as they feel appropriate for their districts). Additionally, necessary mandates must only be enacted when funding is available and secured for all impacted districts. Mandatory expenditures, such as requirements for additional equipment, can create immense budget setbacks for districts when implemented without adequate planning or sufficient notice.

To address transparency in school funding GBCC supports the revision of Chapter 41 recapture payments from an expense line item to a Contra Revenue Account. Furthermore, a separate line item in each taxpayer's bill should be added to reflect the portion of maintenance and operations tax revenue recaptured by the state under Chapter 41.

### IV. Local Autonomy

Subject to greater accountability, local government officials are more responsive to community needs and may more effectively develop and execute meaningful oversight of local affairs. As broad-based laws continue to pre-empt local regulatory control, we assert that such legislation should be restrained according to the following principles. State legislation should favor: (i.) retention of local control over regulatory measures; (ii.) increased accountability and transparency for state and local government (i.e., greater use of the internet for broadcast of public meetings and notices, etc.), and (iii.) protect local authority from threats of erosion (e.g., increase county authority to regulate land use).

## V. Environmental Issues

Our community is blessed with beautiful but limited natural resources. Increasing growth places tremendous pressure on those resources, particularly water. A multifaceted approach through planning, protection, and stewardship is necessary to maintain long-term water security.

Informed planning and regular monitoring are necessary to develop and institute conservation and protection measures. Disclosures on water usage and regular water supply testing provide necessary information to support conservation efforts. Increased means to deter and address threats to local water supplies, including contamination and depletion of local resources, are necessary protections. Measures, such as increased enforcement options and stronger penalties for construction runoff violations, as well as water footprint regulations, should be considered. Legislation must be favorable to conservation and stewardship efforts aimed at reclamation of wastewater and accessing additional water sources. Policy options should include engaging private sector participation through incentive-based instruments, such as “green financing” for water reclamation and efficiency systems for businesses and commercial and residential developments.

## VI. Health Care

Health care remains a top 2019 legislative priority. Effective means of addressing this issue can be found in: (i.) private sector innovations that reduce costs and elevate quality; and (ii.) legislative efforts to provide relief to employers and employees, as well as protections to youth and the elderly. Key legislative action items include: (i.) restoration of the 40-hour work week; (ii.) repealing taxes that increase premiums (e.g., the 40% excise tax, medical device tax, and the health insurance tax); (iii.) improving flexibility for tax-preferred accounts like FSAs, HSAs, and HRAs; and (iv.) supporting association health plans that allow small businesses to band together enjoying the same rules that govern large businesses. We join with other TAB members supporting its ongoing efforts to protect access to health care for our seniors and our youth, including TAB’s advocacy for extension of the 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver.