

Legislative Guidance Document For the 83rd Session Of the Texas Legislature

Adopted by order of Commissioners Court on December 10, 2012

Statement of Principles

This general statement of principles provides guidance to our legislative lobby team on a broad range of issues that may arise during the upcoming legislative session. The lobby team can prioritize its efforts based on the County's perspective on a range of issues.

El Paso County Commissioners Court supports legislative action that

- Enables local units of government to seek relief when existing statutory fees fail to cover the cost of a necessary public service
- Preserves effective enforcement authority to prevent the creation of substandard housing in unincorporated areas of the county
- Preserves "build-it-or bond it" authority that ensures an adequate infrastructure for water, sewer and roads in unincorporated areas of the county
- Supports legislation that provides resources to counties to expand basic services required by population growth in unincorporated areas
- Promotes opportunities for local units of government to consolidate functions to streamline and reduce the cost of services to local taxpayers
- Maintains sufficient state funding for community mental health services to provide treatment outside of hospital emergency rooms or jails
- Supports innovative measures to address overcrowding in county jails, the impact of homelessness on jail populations and the needs of inmates requiring detoxification from drugs and alcohol or treatment for a mental illness
- Promotes the opportunity for counties to receive the authority to participate in Medicaid expansion to reduce the number of uninsured adults and children and the financial burden of their uncompensated care on local taxpayers
- Maintains support for efforts to preserve the state's historical and archeological heritage through the Texas Historical Commission and its various programs and services
- Protects the ability of local units of government to issue certificates of obligation

El Paso County Commissioners Court will oppose bills that add costs to local government or constrain its ability to fund its services such as:

- Opposes legislation that shifts the cost of state funded programs or services to local government resources
- Opposes substitution of expanded sales tax base for property tax
- Opposes legislation that requires the County to perform a federal function
- Opposes bills that are "anti-immigrant" in nature
- Opposes legislation that caps the County's ability to generate revenue to fund its operations or that endangers its bond ratings
- Opposes the elimination of funds consolidation to balance the state budget if that elimination requires deeper cuts in education or health and human services
- Opposes efforts to constrain reliable retirement benefits from responsibly funded plans that are savings based and provide local flexibility and control
- Opposes reductions to funds supporting local juvenile justice functions or a shift of funding to incarceration over cost effective and outcome driven local treatment alternatives
- Opposes legislation that increases the cost of law enforcement without demonstrating improved outcomes

El Paso County Will Abstain From Positions on Legislation based on the following principles:

- Legislation with no identifiable benefit to El Paso County
- Legislation that creates a controversy between local governmental entities, agencies, or major organizations without significant benefit to the County
- Legislation the County has limited opportunity to influence unless the bill in question affects a primary interest of the County.