

# Legislative Update

May 15, 2026

Rick Ramirez

Director of State and Federal Relations



# TML Legislative Team

## State & Federal Relations

- Legislative Strategy
- Lawmaker Engagement
- Capitol Coordination

## Public Policy & Engagement

- Member Communications
- Data & Research
- Coalitions & Working Groups

## General Counsel

- Legal Interpretation
- Risk Management
- Institutional Consistency



# TML Legislative Team

- **Public Policy & Engagement**
  - JJ Rocha, Director
  - Mike Martin, Legislative Counsel
- **State & Federal Relations**
  - Rick Ramirez, Director



<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Bills Introduced</b>	<b>Total Bills Passed</b>	<b>City-Related Bills Introduced</b>	<b>City-Related Bills Passed</b>
<b>2013</b>	6061	1437	1700+	220+
<b>2015</b>	6476	1329	1600+	220+
<b>2017</b>	6800	1220	2000+	290+
<b>2019</b>	7541	1437	2000+	330+
<b>2021</b>	6927	1073	2000+	240+
<b>2023</b>	8344	1258	1800+	230
<b>2025</b>	9014	1231	2000+	262

**TML tracked 2,189 bills (24% of all bills introduced) in 2025**



# 90th Texas Legislature



# Senate Interim Charges

- **Business and Commerce:** grid reliability, transmission policy, data center growth, insurance affordability, financial technology, and broadband deployment
- **Finance:** review fraud, waste, and abuse, the growing fiscal cost of data center tax exemptions, transportation funding, rural fire protection, and higher education transparency
- **Local Government:** property tax relief, including “Operation Double Nickel”
- **Economic Development:** local hotel taxes, project finance zones, and the workforce effects of artificial intelligence.
- **Health and Human Services:** mental health and homelessness services
- **State Affairs:** election security, poll watcher access, ballot administration
- **Transportation:** rail crossing safety, autonomous vehicles, and commercial driver licensing
- **Natural Resources:** wildfire readiness and renewable energy decommissioning
- **Water, Agriculture, and Rural Affairs:** data centers & general fund transfers



# House Interim Charges

- **Ways & Means:** examine local government spending, debt, fees
- **Government Oversight:** local ordinances, 3-rd party consultants, nonprofits, PIA
- **Land & Resource Management:** zoning, density, new laws (HB24, SB15, SB840); 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Review
- **Natural Resources:** groundwater, water supply
- **Intergovernmental Affairs:** homelessness, housing, mental health, criminal justice
- **State Affairs:** disaster preparedness, response, recovery; pole attachments, data centers



# Interim Charges Overall Themes

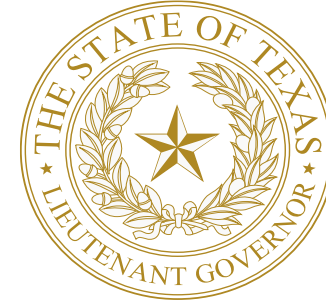
Charges show Speaker and Lt. Governor trying to **balance economic growth with state oversight, taxpayer protection, and infrastructure strain**, especially as fast-growing industries raise new questions about water, electricity, and tax policy.



# Governor & Lt. Governor Tax Plans



- Governor's Tax Plan
  - Eliminate school property taxes (homeowners)
  - Appraisal Caps
  - Expenditure Caps
  - Supermajority Voter Approval



- Lt. Governor's Tax Plan
  - "Operation Double Nickle"
  - Increase homestead exemptions
  - Freeze senior homestead values (earlier age)



# 90<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature: Key Issues

- Property Taxes
- Expenditure Caps and Debt Limitations
- General Fund Transfers
- Preemption
  - Land Use & Permitting
  - Elections
  - Super Preemption 2.0
- Community Censorship



# 119th Congressional Update



# 119<sup>th</sup> Congress: FEMA



## FEMA

- ***Fixing Emergency Management for Americans Act*** ([H.R. 4669](#))
  - Focus on timely federal reimbursements after disasters
  - **What to Watch:**
    - “Shot clock” concept (120 days after 90% of estimated costs are deemed eligible)
  - **Status:**
    - Passed U.S. House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
    - House Floor consideration pending



# 119<sup>th</sup> Congress: Housing

- **21<sup>st</sup> Century Road to Housing Act** ([H.R. 6644](#))
  - Would increase housing supply and streamline residential development
  - Combined House and Senate housing bills
  - **What to Watch:**
    - HOME and HUD CDBG funding
    - Reduced administrative requirements for certain housing projects
    - Grants for housing-focused pilot programs
  - **Status:**
    - Passed House (390-9) / Senate Passed Amended Version (89-10)
    - Returned to House with Senate amendments



# 119<sup>th</sup> Congress: Transportation



**We own most of roads and bridges**, but **only 14%** of all formula funding made available trickles down to local governments.

**Locally-owned bridges** are **2X** more likely to be in “**poor**” condition than state-owned bridges

Nearly **half** of locally owned principal arterials are in “**poor**” condition

- ***Bridges and Safety Infrastructure for Community Success Act (BASICS Act) ([H.R. 7437](#))***
  - Strengthen formula-based funding for local governments in next surface transportation reauthorization (IIJA expires Sept. 30)
  - **What to Watch:**
    - Increased funding to Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program
    - Ensure funding for locally owned bridges is proportional in each state
  - **Status:**
    - Introduced in the U.S. House; marker future negotiations
    - Support from 75 state associations (including TML)
    - House hasn’t marked up
    - Timing is an issue (extension)



# Supporting the BASICS Act (H.R. 7437)

BASICS Act Toolkit has  
briefing materials,  
outreach templates,  
talking points, and more!

Contact:

Brittney Kohler

National League of Cities

[kohler@nlc.org](mailto:kohler@nlc.org)



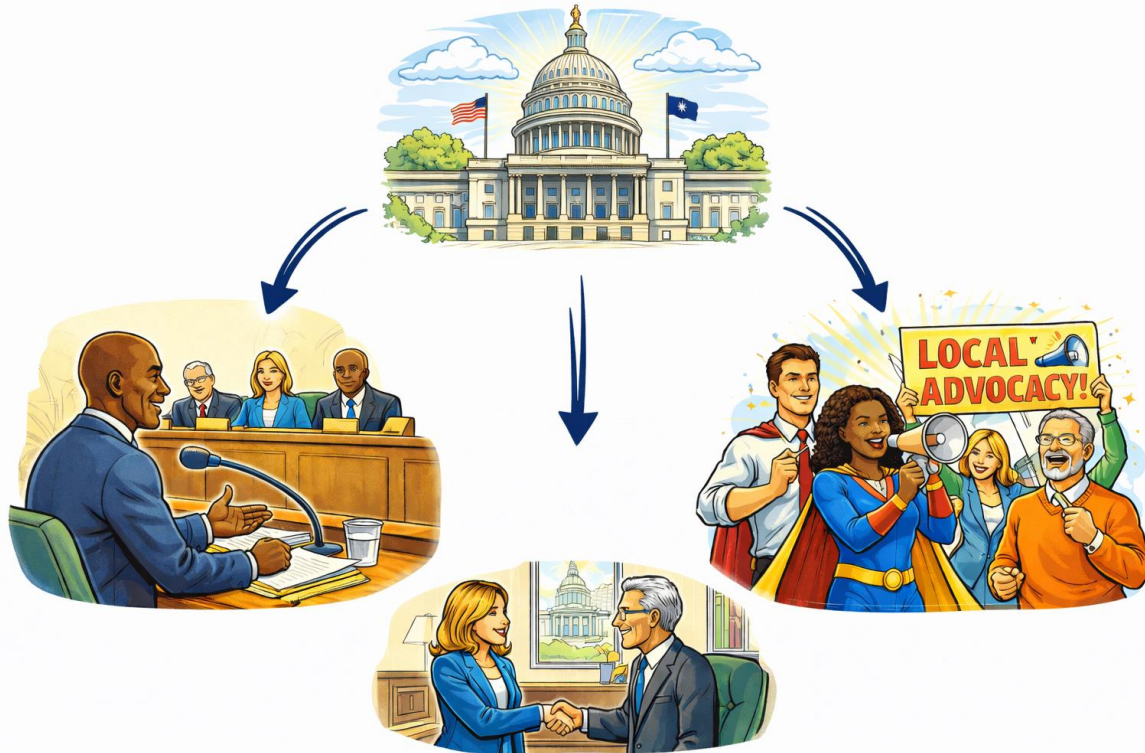
**Learn More:**  
[shorturl.at/rDsvU](https://shorturl.at/rDsvU)



# Public Policy & Engagement



# Advocacy Efforts



- Get to know your legislators, contact them often
- Stay informed on issues
- Understand the legislative process
- Become a resource for your legislator and TML
- Respond to TML alert emails
- Be able to act quickly during session
  - Phone calls, emails, and/or testifying

# TML Advocacy Boot Camp

**Thursday, July 16, 2026**

**10:00 AM – 2:30 PM**

**Texas Municipal Center, Austin**



- Texas Legislative Process
- Communicating effectively and cultivating relationships with legislators and key staff
- Creating advocacy pieces
- The do's and don'ts of testifying in-person and in writing



# City Issue Materials



- One-Pagers
  - *Spring: Land Use, Permitting Issues, Water, Elections, Open Government/Public Information Act, Debt*
  - *Summer: Data Centers, ETJ, Property Tax, Expenditure Caps, Impact Fees*
  - *Fall: Super Preemption, Audits, Community Censorship*

# TML General Fund Survey



- General Fund Revenues and Expenditures
- Most recently completed fiscal year, whether audited or un-audited
- Finger on the Pulse of:
  - Property Taxes
  - Sales Taxes
  - Fees



# Texas Trailblazer Program

- Recognize city officials who go above and beyond in advocacy efforts
- Set criteria to qualify
- Awarded at Annual Conference in 2027



# Stay Engaged

- *Legislative Update*
- Legislative Webinars
- TML alert emails
- TML Midyear Conference  
2027: Legislative Action Day



# Questions?

- Rick Ramirez [rick@tml.org](mailto:rick@tml.org)
- JJ Rocha [jj@tml.org](mailto:jj@tml.org)

