



## ***City of Houston Legislative Principles For the 88th Session of the Texas Legislature***

### **City of Houston Mission Statement**

The City of Houston will focus its proactive legislative efforts on the enhancement of life in Houston through emphasis on public safety and criminal justice initiatives; economic development and increasing jobs; protecting the quality of life; improving mobility; creating complete communities; working towards creating a healthier environment; providing affordable housing opportunities; and making the government more responsive, transparent, and fiscally responsible.

All of this must be pursued with a focus on preserving local decision making and ending unfunded state mandates.

### **General Government**

Oppose all unfunded state mandates that negatively affect the operations of the City of Houston fiscally. Oppose laws requiring state micro-management of city programs without the knowledge of local conditions or flexibility for maximum efficiency. Oppose regulations that limit the City's local authority, public safety, revenue collection, city operations or other local programs.

Oppose diminishing the City of Houston's regulatory authority, water rights, and representation on the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) Board of Directors, Port of Houston Authority, or other entities. Support and protect the City's authority in its rights of way and on municipal premises.

Support direct funding to assist Houston in meeting the needs of the community, such as air quality, health care, public safety, housing, transportation, disaster recovery, and infrastructure development.

## **Public Safety/Criminal Justice**

Support improvements in the training of public safety personnel. Support legislative and administrative efforts to assist the City of Houston in preparation for and prevention of acts of terrorism and emergencies, including the equitable, threat-based distribution of Homeland Security and Cybersecurity funds.

Oppose efforts to weaken authority to respond to emergency powers where city first responders and health departments serve as leads in directing the response.

Support improvements to the Criminal Justice Codes, Juvenile Justice Codes and Transportation Code along with funding to make the state programs functional.

Support legislation to address the growing problem of substance use, with a particular focus on the opioid epidemic, and the ramifications of these drugs in society. Support efforts to treat addiction and substance use disorder as a public health issue instead of a criminal justice issue.

Support legislation to expand mental health system accessibility and best practices through increased investment that recognize the need for systemwide improvements.

Support legislation that expands specialty courts and jail diversion programs.

Support legislative efforts to prevent and to combat violent crimes and reduce violence.

Support common sense gun regulations such as universal background checks, red flag laws, and raising the age to purchase semi-automatic rifles.

Support legislation and funding in coordination with Houston Forensic Science Center to better address evidence processing.

## **Neighborhood Improvement and Quality of Life**

Support technical legislation that assists the City's homeowners and strengthens neighborhoods, environment and quality of life, as well as neighborhood and park programs.

Support legislation and promote funding that reduces unnecessary regulatory burdens for removing dangerous buildings, addresses illegal dumping, and urban blight.

Support legislation that enhances consumer protections for citizens and empowers low to middle income residents and tenants.

Protect state historic preservation tax credits for both nonprofit and for-profit corporations owning historic properties. Protect historic districts throughout City of Houston.

### **Economic Development**

Support legislation enhancing economic development and fostering job creation in regional growth areas. Support legislative efforts to promote inner city redevelopment including the creation and maintenance of quality affordable workforce housing. Support legislative and administrative initiatives to improve the economic viability of the Houston Airport System, including funding for the Spaceport Trust Fund. Support job creation efforts as part of Texas Central high speed rail project.

Support efforts that allow for continued cooperation between municipal management districts and other jurisdictions to enhance community development in Texas cities.

Support job creation through cultural tourism efforts including funding for the Texas Commission on the Arts, the State Cultural District Grant Program, as well as full funding for Texas Tourism.

### **Environment & Public Utilities**

Support legislative and administrative efforts to assist the Houston region in improving air quality and addressing flooding/drainage challenges. Support initiatives for additional green space, urban forestation, and park enhancements.

Support legislation strengthening local governments' regulatory authority over industry participants to protect local interests on direct impacts and make delivery systems more reliable and resilient. Support legislation expanding the meaningful input of local governments to state agencies with oversight of energy industries.

Support legislation that protects adequate compensation for the use of City of Houston property and public rights-of-way.

Support legislation to give local residents more influence in environmental permitting in their neighborhoods, specifically with particulate matter.

Support energy efficiency programs that can reduce demand on the grid while providing better electric security for residential and commercial purchasers.

## **Education**

Support state contribution to the cost of public education returning to 60%, allowing ISDs to lower local property taxes.

Support legislation to enhance after school programs and summer programs for youth.

Support legislation to improve education, health and safety, literacy, arts and library programs. Support legislation to emphasize opportunities for youth to ensure our workforce remains competitive.

Support additional funding for the TexShare and TexQuest shared online resources.

Support reforms to the State's education finance system that halt the practice of requiring recapture of funds for urban school districts that are deemed "property wealthy" but have a high proportion of economically disadvantaged students.

Support the community schools model that promotes city-wide collaboration to support local schools with wrap around services and resources.

Support increased state funding and investment in research and development at institutions of higher learning. Support incentives to institutions of higher learning to collaborate with local government entities to assist in collaboratively solving public issues.

Support arts education and access initiatives, increasing the scope of the Texas Commission on the Arts to include arts education and expanding the Arts Department at the Texas Education Agency.

Support expanding options by which local school districts can retain control of their school system to avoid sanctions due to poor performance records.

## **Health**

Support legislation and funding for expanded health care coverage and access for Texans, including continued progress on behavioral health and the expansion of Medicaid.

Support expanded capacity for substance use treatment in the Houston area, as well as fully funding Graduate Medical Education positions to increase our healthcare workforce.

Support funding for research into health care related initiatives to grow Houston's economy. Support trauma funding to improve Houston's ability to respond to emergencies.

Support legislation that expands services to victims of human trafficking, including appropriate services for housing, medical care, behavioral health care, and assistance with job placement and job training. Support strengthening ability of law enforcement to prosecute human trafficking where necessary.

Support legislation and regulations that do not burden local law enforcement with state mandates on women's health restrictions.

### **Mobility**

Prioritize public safety in transportation projects with a focus on Vision Zero principles.

Support legislation to expand transportation funding for regional connectivity, project implementation, congestion relief, and enhanced mobility to enable economic opportunity for Houstonians.

Support infrastructure projects creating transportation options for Houstonians.

Support legislation that provides resources to the Port of Houston, the Houston Airport System, and the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO).

### **Recovery Initiatives**

Support new state initiatives that allow for local governments to access resources to more quickly provide financial recovery services, such zero interest loans from the Water Development Board.

Advocate for expanded public health resources for impacted communities. Support expanded state programs for trauma informed care, especially for Houston students in school-based clinics.

### **Other**

Support, where possible, other local governments, school districts, local colleges, universities and medical institutions, health care providers, non-profits, film, arts and tourism.