



May 2, 2017

Legislative Update to City Council Members

Dear Council Members,

House Bill 43, the Houston Pension Solution, has been scheduled for a vote on Saturday, May 6. City Council has been enormously helpful in getting our pension reform plan this far, but there is more you can do. Please reach out to your constituents in the next few days and ask them to reach out to their state legislature. It only takes one call!

Each Council Member has certain groups and constituencies where they have a particularly strong voice. That may be the district you represent or one of the many citywide communities that exist in Houston. You understand these constituencies and what they are most concerned about better than anyone could.

Below are some messages you can send, depending on what you know your constituents' interests and priorities to be.

Taxes and Fiscal Responsibility

- The Houston Pension Solution requires no tax increase.
- The Houston Pension Solution lowers and contains pension costs. Without the Solution, more of your tax dollars will be used to pay the growing costs of pensions.

Public Safety

- If the Legislature fails to pass the Houston Pension Solution, there will be an additional \$130 million deficit in the next fiscal year. That will mean layoffs, and police and fire will not be exempt.
- There will be fewer police officers patrolling streets.
- There will be fewer first responders. Response to 911 calls will be slower. People awaiting medical attention, people whose houses are burning down and crime victims will be waiting longer after calling emergency services.

Drainage and Flooding

- Credit rating agencies have made it clear that the City's credit will be downgraded if the pension deal fails to pass. The City will have to borrow at a higher interest rate, making borrowing more expensive.
- Many drainage projects are debt-financed. If the pension deal fails, we will be less able to build crucial infrastructure that mitigates flooding.
- Layoffs are likely to affect employees who are responsible for ensuring our drainage system is clear and functional, making flooding more likely and, in the event of a flood, making floods last longer.
- In the event of a flood, we rely on city employees to respond to people experiencing emergencies. Due to layoffs, we will have fewer employees to respond, meaning people will remain stranded in dangerous situations longer.

How We Can Help Your Office

For every bill on the Legislative Priorities list, the Government Relations Team can provide background from city departments and where the bill is in the legislative process. If your office would like to write a letter of support, visit with offices of members in Austin, or testify for a measure, please contact Kris Banks to help coordinate. We are happy to help with anything from scheduling to submitting testimony. In fact, our office has worked to produce a list of overlap for every District Council Member and your member of the State House and State Senate. For a full list of those representing your Council District to the State Legislature, contact Ande Mattei.



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Transportation

- Credit rating agencies have made it clear that the City's credit will be downgraded if the pension deal fails to pass. The City will have to borrow at a higher interest rate, making borrowing more expensive.
- Most road construction and transit projects are debt-financed. If the pension deal fails, we will be building and rebuilding fewer roads and other transportation infrastructure.

Quality of Life

- Credit rating agencies have made it clear that the City's credit will be downgraded if the pension deal fails to pass. The City will have to borrow at a higher interest rate, making borrowing more expensive.
- Parks and other quality of life items are debt-financed. If the pension deal fails, we will be less able to build new parks or improve existing ones.
- There will be less staff to maintain parks and other amenities, making it likely they will fall into disrepair and become dilapidated.

Education

- Nothing will be safe from budget cuts. Though the Mayor has sought to avoid reducing library services, the sheer scope of the deficit means nothing is safe.
- Libraries may reduce hours and some libraries may close entirely.
- We may lose staff responsible for after school programs.

Please reach out to your constituents and have them follow the instructions [at this link](#). Thank you for being part of the final push for a sustainable fiscal future for Houston!