

December 15, 2020

To the Honorable Members of the Texas Congressional Delegation:

As the 116th Congress draws to a close, we are increasingly concerned about the possibility that you will adjourn without enacting a broad pandemic relief bill. Earlier this year, Congress took swift and bold action commensurate with the scope of the public health, economic, and fiscal crisis our nation is facing. The development of a vaccine has given our nation a light at the end of the tunnel. If Congress can once again take bold action, it will allow Americans to weather the remainder of this storm and lay the groundwork for a strong economic recovery. We fear that failure to reach an agreement will not only lead to a great deal of unnecessary pain and suffering, it will needlessly cause economic damage that stymies a full, post-pandemic recovery.

Strong and fiscally fit local governments will be a key part of a strong economic recovery. However, absent a pandemic relief bill that includes assistance to state and local governments, Texas local governments will soon face a fiscal crisis. Our balanced budget requirements mean that we will have no choice but to reduce services levels necessary to provide the essential public services our citizens depend on, which may include salary freezes and even layoffs. Time and again, history has shown that state and local government layoffs and spending reductions are a drag on economic recovery, countering monetary and fiscal stimulus efforts at the federal level. Indeed, most economists estimate that pro-cyclical policies by state and local governments delayed full recovery from the last recession by several years.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that state and local governments have already cut 1.3 million jobs since the pandemic began, including 49,000 in Texas. Since Texas local governments largely rely on property tax revenue, which has always been a lagging economic indicator, we anticipate that those numbers will only get worse in the coming year, especially given the uncertainty related to post-pandemic commercial property values. To be clear, those numbers are real people: they are the police officers, firefighters, teachers, health care workers and other providers of core services who have been in the forefront of pandemic response efforts in Texas.

There is broad support for direct fiscal assistance to local governments. Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell has endorsed it in testimony to Congress and in other public remarks. Closer to home, Dallas Federal Reserve Bank President Robert Kaplan has also voiced support for fiscal assistance to state and local governments. In addition, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and many other national organizations have called for fiscal assistance to state and local governments to maintain core services and lay the groundwork for a robust, post-pandemic economic recovery.

Recent negotiations on a pandemic relief bill based on a bipartisan proposal from 9 senators have given us and the people we serve a glimmer of hope. We are especially pleased that the 9-senator proposal includes \$160 billion for “state, local, and tribal governments.” We urge Congress to reach an agreement on a pandemic relief bill that includes assistance to state, local, and tribal governments and we especially urge you to remember the “local” part of that trio.

Even as COVID-19 hits our nation harder than ever, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. However, all of the economic data clearly indicates that a lot of people and businesses are going to need a hand to get there. We are confident that if you can reach an agreement to help people out for the next few months, you will allow Americans to reach the end of the proverbial tunnel and lay the groundwork for a robust and speedy economic recovery.

Sincerely,



Mayor Sylvester Turner
City of Houston, Texas



Mayor Jeff Williams
City of Arlington, Texas



Mayor Steve Adler
City of Austin, Texas



Mayor Betsy Price
City of Fort Worth, Texas



Mayor Eric Johnson
City of Dallas, Texas



Mayor Ron Nirenberg
City of San Antonio, Texas



Mayor Dee Margo
City of El Paso, Texas



Mayor Dan Pope
City of Lubbock, Texas



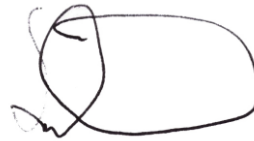
Mayor Joe McComb
City of Corpus Christi, Texas



Mayor Ron Jensen
City of Grand Prairie, Texas



Mayor Ginger Nelson
City of Amarillo, Texas



Mayor Joe Zimmerman
City of Sugar Land, Texas

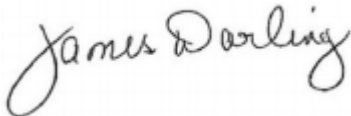


Jesse Davis,
Interim Mayor Pro Tem
City of Denton

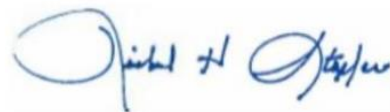
Interim Mayor Pro Tem Jesse Davis
City of Denton, Texas



Mayor Patrick McNulty
City of South Padre Island, Texas



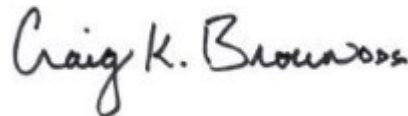
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City of McAllen, Texas



Mayor Rick Stopfer
City of Irving, Texas



Mayor Becky Ames
City of Beaumont, Texas



Mayor Pro Tem Craig Brown
City of Galveston, Texas



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City of Rowlett, Texas



Mayor Terrill Bartlett
City of Canadian, Texas

Mayor Stephen Santellana
City of Wichita Falls, Texas

Mayor David Hillock
City of Little Elm, Texas

Mayor Wayne Carpenter
City of Belton, Texas

Mayor Connie B. Schroeder
City of Bastrop, Texas

David Suarez

Mayor David Suarez
City of Weslaco, Texas

Mayor John Williams
Universal City, Texas

Mayor Patrick McNulty
City of South Padre Island, Texas

City of Sudan

BY
Sam Miller, Mayor

Mayor Sam Miller
City of Sudan, Texas

Robert Gregory
Mayor, City of La Vernia

Mayor Robert Gregory
City of La Vernia, Texas

Dorothy Welch

Mayor Dorothy Welch
City of Splendora, Texas

Geary Smith

Mayor Geary Smith
City of Mexia, Texas

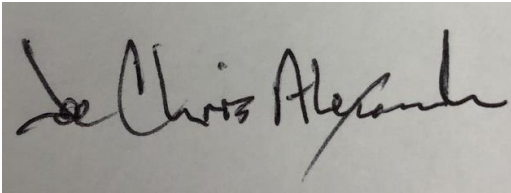
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Cory Thompson

Mayor Cory Thompson
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Mayor Terri W. Brown
City of Marshall, Texas



Mayor Chris Alexander
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Willie Leal Jr.

Mayor Willie Leal Jr.
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Laura Bianco
Laura Bianco, Mayor

Mayor Laura Bianco
City of Dalworthington Gardens



Mayor Barry L. Gordon
City of Duncanville, Texas

Gina V. Fulkerson

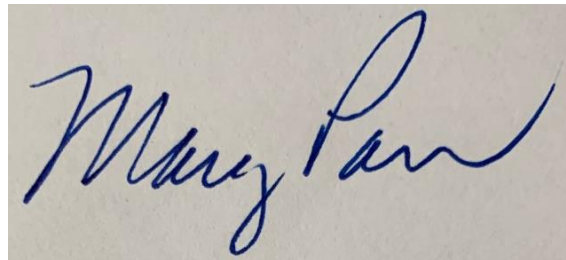
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City of Wimberley, Texas



Mayor Andres "Andy" Ramos
City of Alpine, Texas



Mayor Ron Humphrey
City of New Boston, Texas



Mayor Mary Parr,
City of Eagle Lake, Texas



Mayor Antonio Araujo

Todd Flippo
Todd Flippo
Mayor, City of Saginaw



Mayor Todd Flippo
City of Saginaw, Texas

City of San Elizario, Texas

*R. Shugart, Mayor
City of Brazoria, TX. 77422*

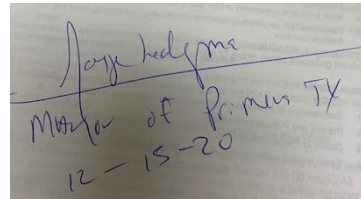
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City of Brazoria, Texas



Mayor Brandon Capetillo
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*Mike Hendricks, Mayor
City of Luling, Texas*

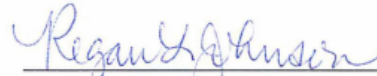
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City of Luling



Mayor Jorge Ledezma
City of Primera, Texas

W.D. Scisnoe


Mayor William Scisnoe
Town of Dish, Texas



Regan Johnson, Mayor City of Mineral Wells
Mayor Regan Johnson
City of Mineral Wells

*Manuel V Baeza
MANUEL V BAEZA
MAYOR, CITY OF MARFA*

Mayor Manuel V. Baeza
City of Marfa, Texas

Sincerely,

Roy Tovar
Mayor-City of Waelder

Mayor Roy Tovar
City of Waelder

Eddie Treviño

Judge Trevino
Cameron County, Texas