



El Paso Legislative Priorities for the 81st Texas Legislative Session

The Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce supports legislation that enhances the region of El Paso and improves the quality of life of its citizens and supports legislation of community partners that advance and enhance the educational, cultural and infrastructure resources of the region.

EDUCATION	HEALTH SCIENCES AND HIGHER EDUCATION	MILITARY
Promote public school finance solutions that give equitable funding to all public schools in the State of Texas and improve quality and results for each of those schools.	Advocate for \$48,000,000 to hire faculty, staff, and operational support, service debt on TRB bonds for a new \$50 million clinical faculty office building and \$45 million for a new classroom research building for the four year medical school campus in El Paso.	Promote additional resources dedicated to military installations, soldiers, dependents of soldiers, and veterans residing in the State of Texas, including programs that incentivize the purchase of homes, through tax breaks or other incentives to initial military buyers.
Promote additional resources and flexibility to be given to school districts to allow for necessary expansion of services due to rapid military base expansion.	Accelerate tier one university infrastructure at UTEP through development of UTEP's research and doctoral programs and achievement of Closing the Gaps Excellence goals.	Advocate for resources that will allow for the rapid expansion of necessary community infrastructure as a result of BRAC efforts.
IMMIGRATION & BORDER SECURITY	HEALTHCARE	TRANSPORTATION
Promote efforts to bring forth a pragmatic multi-layered approach to immigration reform and border security in cooperation with the Federal Government, but not include engagement by local law enforcement in federal and civil law matters.	Advocate for healthcare efforts to provide necessary healthcare financing that will improve coverage, eliminate disparities in rates, provide incentives for employers to insure employees, and allow appropriate mental health services.	Advocate for the transportation projects outlined in the \$1 billion 2008 Comprehensive Mobility Plan, as approved by the region's Transportation Policy Board.
Promote UTEP's Center of Excellence for Border Security & Immigration and Center for Defense Systems Research.	Advocate for policy that will aid in licensing physicians and medical personnel in this region to address healthcare professional shortages.	Promote funding for border-corridor infrastructure that supports fast and secure border crossing, including rail and mass transit.
Advocate for additional resources to be committed to mental health to avert a waiting list and potential crisis that will result in fewer people being properly treated and more people seeking care in emergency rooms and through the jail system.		

HEALTHCARE FINANCING
Maintain restored funding of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and expand Medicaid and CHIP coverage to working families
Eliminate the disparities in Medicaid rates and expenditures.
Expand recent legislation allowing governmental agencies to give bid points/preferences to employers who provide some type of health insurance to their employees.
HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE
Leverage funding resources for teaching institutions to increase flexibility in faculty salary structures that competes with industry wages.
Support direct higher education incentive funding for institutions who meet student course and degree completion targets.
Support to significantly expand regional university enrollment capacity.
Support healthcare higher education and healthcare efforts to leverage funding in order to increase faculty structures and provide community colleges with the ability to expand healthcare programming.
Assure that funding for instructional programs, which is based upon a contact hour established by the Coordinating Board, is made available to community colleges at the full recommended rate.
PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Ensure public health infrastructure to protect the public regarding natural disasters, epidemics and terrorism threats.
MENTAL HEALTH
Increase monthly service targets by 35% for adults and 65% for children in order for community MHMR centers to adequately provide care for its designated population.
Support expedited licensure requirements to decrease the shortages for psychiatrists, psychologists, professional mental health workers, licensed professional social workers, registered nurses and licensed vocational nurses.
Provide funding for the coordination of non-traditional services to include peer-to-peer counseling programs, faith-based support programs and non-traditional mentoring services which have shown evidence-based success.
Provide funding for a multi-year media campaign to reduce social stigma associated with mental illness and mental retardation.
Provide funding for pilot programs that focus on integrating primary health services with the mental health delivery system in a community health clinic setting.
Establish statewide policies to facilitate coordination among health, judicial and law enforcement agencies to develop a comprehensive jail diversion program to keep individuals with mental illness out of the jail system.



Support and Monitor List for the 81st Texas Legislative Session

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Support legislation that provides additional funding to leverage science and technology related to Future Combat Systems development and associated workforce requirements in the region.
- Support efforts to expand the supply of seed and venture capital for Texas entrepreneurs.
- Oppose changes to the manifesto program that will be detrimental to wholesale and retail sales in the border region.
- Support the strengthening of the state's research and development franchise tax credit incentive program.
- Support additional funding of the Enterprise Fund and Emerging Technology Fund.
- Support additional funding and reform of the Skills Development Fund.
- Support initiatives that ultimately decrease worker compensation costs.
- Monitor proposals to cap property tax appraisals and their impacts on local governments.
- Support the recognition and economic development effort of the Ysleta del Sur, Tigua American Indian Tribe.
- Support State mandate or local option for all inventory taxes to be exempt from ad valorem taxation.
- Eliminate penalties for school systems that offer tax incentives to induce the expansion or relocation of business and industry.
- Support a state and local effort to create an economic development fund for the El Paso region.
- Support a state supported funding mechanism that could help leverage private sector investment to construct or enhance tourism venues.
- Support changes to the margins tax that would extend the small business exemption to \$1 million in annual revenue and exempt businesses with a loss for the first three years, as well as support the reinstatement of the business tax credits that were in place under the old franchise tax and
- Support expansion of exemption of the sales and use tax.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

- Support continued funding of cities that achieve Maintenance Air Quality Status.
- Resolve the dispute between the EPA and TCEQ regarding whether or not El Paso is in compliance for PM10/PM2.5
- Support continued emissions testing of all vehicles registered in the El Paso area to assist in maintaining air quality standards.

HEALTH

- Support the expansion of slots for state community care waiver programs.
- Review mandated insurance benefits requirements and develop more affordable insurance options for small businesses to create a greater range of affordable coverage (tiered) options including broad statewide pooling mechanisms.

EDUCATION

Support strong and improved K-16 accountability with an assessment system built upon K-12 student academic achievement toward college and workplace readiness and higher education student course completion and graduation.

Support an appropriation of \$600 million in net new funding for an aligned state scholarship program.

Support legislation that provides reciprocity to transitioning military dependent students arriving in their senior year of high school.

Support legislation that mandates continuing education courses for school board members and allows communities to remove from office members who fail to comply with those requirements. Additionally, call on TEA to conduct a comprehensive statewide study of school boards to develop educational requirements for school board members.

Petition for the exception to the policy governing use of Federal Impact Aid for school so that projected funding advances can be applied to federally mandated military growth at Texas military installations, such as Ft. Bliss.

Advocate for a \$75 million tuition bond revenue bond project for construction of an addition to the existing Liberal Arts Building at UTEP.

Establish the nation's premier center of excellence in systemic inland desalination science and engineering research and education program at UTEP.

Support aggressive implementation of alternative teacher certification programs that streamline the ability of individuals to enter teaching and support the concept of pay differentials.

Support the Recommended High School program and urge that all Texas public universities phase-in the recommended program as a minimum admissions requirement and that Top Ten percent graduates who are awarded automatic admission to state universities complete the Recommended High School program or its equivalent.

Support continued funding of the Texas Grant Program.

Support financial literacy education as one of the basic required components of the curriculum for graduation.

Support funding access for any student to participate in early childhood education programs that provide the resources for students to be kindergarten ready.

Support to expand appropriate initiatives to improve teacher accountability and quality.

Support research to clarify dropout data and the funding of well-researched programs that will reduce the number of high school dropouts in the state.

Support a high school math/science initiative and the funds necessary for professional development activities for math and science teachers and the identification and development of effective instructional practices and materials, to include real world applications.

Support facilities funding for fast-growing school districts such as the funding received by EPISD in 2007.

TRANSPORTATION

Advocate for the use of all available funding mechanisms for transportation.

Advocate for the indexing of the State gas tax as an alternate funding mechanism.

Advocate to reduce the amount of funding that is siphoned from the Highway 6 fund and applied to non-transportation infrastructure needs.

Support the identification of additional revenue resources and redirect them from General Revenue to the Texas Mobility Fund.

Support enabling legislation to implement Proposition 12 approved by voters in 2007 and allows the Legislature to authorize the Texas Transportation Commission to issue state general obligation bonds up to \$5 billion for highway improvements with repayment of the bonds from the State's General Revenue Fund.

Promote improvements to Interstate 10 and advocate for alternative relief corridors to improve mobility.

Support the capitalizing of the Rail Relocation and Improvement Fund.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Support to restore funding to Texas' public workforce system.

Support career technology education to make students aware of career opportunities and the educational requirements associated with those opportunities.

Support the continuation and enhancement of the Skills Development Fund job-training program.

Support Project Arriba in securing and obtaining state funds for workforce training.