

TML Legislative Update

Small Cities Clinic
April 9, 2026

Rick Ramirez



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



Year	Total Bills Introduced	Total Bills Passed	City-Related Bills Introduced	City-Related Bills Passed
2013	6061	1437	1700+	220+
2015	6476	1329	1600+	220+
2017	6800	1220	2000+	290+
2019	7541	1437	2000+	330+
2021	6927	1073	2000+	240+
2023	8344	1258	1800+	230
2025	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:** water demands from data centers



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); 3rd 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)



90th Texas Legislature: Key Issues

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



119th Congressional Update



119th Congress: Federal Shutdown



- Feb. 14, 2026:
 - Partial shutdown primarily affecting Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agencies (TSA, Coast Guard, FEMA, Secret Service)
 - Local Issue Areas
 - Disaster recovery and preparedness
 - Shift more operational, financial, and coordination responsibilities to local governments

119th 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



119th Congress: Housing

- **21st 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 (390-0) / Passed Senate Banking Cmte (24-0)
 - Awaiting consideration in the Senate



119th Congress: Transportation



- ***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)



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

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Learn More:
shorturl.at/rDsvU



119th Congress: Other Hot Topics

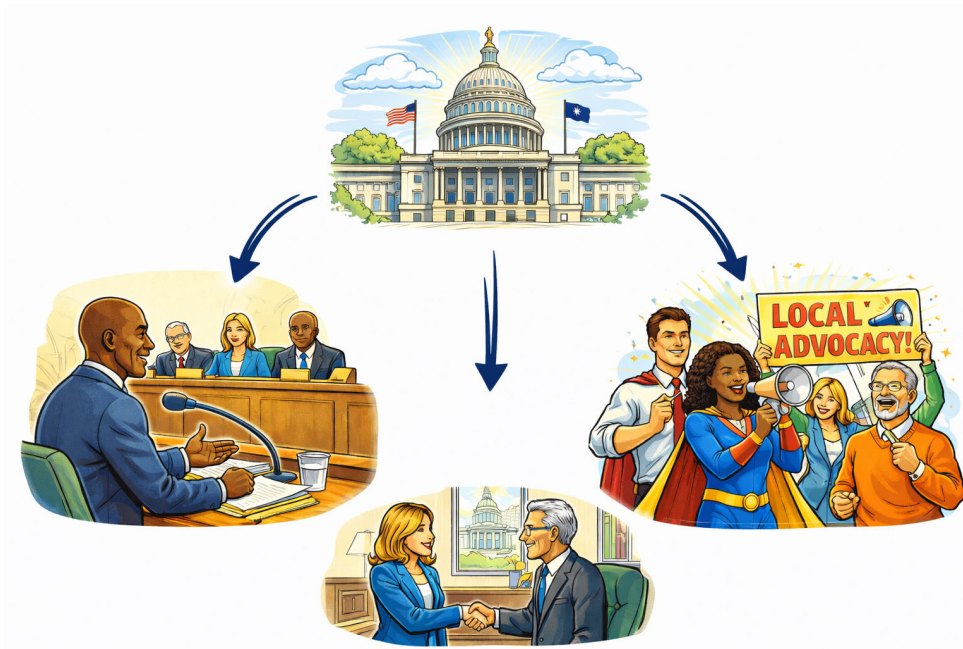


- FCC Preemption of Local Wireless/Wireline R-O-W Rules Grid
- Federal Grant Funding
- Municipal Bonds Tax Exemption

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

- 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*



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
- JJ Rocha jj@tml.org

