

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 749

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE AFFAIRS

Hearing Date: March 25, 2021 8:00 AM

Gary Latham
American Citizen
Lufkin, TX

We need election correctness

Teresa Killebrew, Mrs
Self
Grapevine, TX

I am here to support this bill.

Kathy Hutchinson, Director of Special Education
South Plains Educational SSA
Levelland, TX

Please DO NOT limit public school organizations from utilizing lobbyist on the behalf of specific groups of educators. We cannot (individually) get to Austin on a regular basis to advocate for the various bills. We can send emails and call of the phone - which we will continue to do - but we need the individuals from our organizations to help us keep up with what is happening on a timely basis. Please DO NOT eliminate lobbying for public education.

Thank You!!

David Turner, Mayor City of Southmayd Texas
Self as Elected Mayor City of Southmayd Texas
Southmayd, TX

I am a volunteer Mayor and have a full time job. I do not have the time or inclination to spend on reviewing everything Austin does. I need a nonprofit like TML to help me sort through all the bills and laws. They help with new elected officials and keep my town safer and more informed. With our then you would ultimately silence my town of just over 1000 people. We can not afford a city manager or a full time staff to do all things that a larger entity could do.

I would also point out that the local tax payers can vote in a new group if their dollars are being spent erroneously. A bill that stifles me from doing good is not the way to go. I request you let local leaders decide how to spend their local dollars.

Mayor David Turner
City of Southmayd

Richard T. Garrett, Mr
Self

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

El Paso, TX

Agreed

Susan Browning

County Line Special Utility District

Uhland, TX

HB 749 has the potential of creating an unfair disadvantage to water districts. A bill should never intentionally silence a water district, which includes the districts customer base - the people that could be harmed, from presenting needed legislation to the Texas Legislature. I strongly oppose HB 749.

Margie Frasier, Temple

COS

Temple, TX

Seems like we are way past due on passing effective Bill's to address lobbyists and their use of taxpayer funds. If I want something passed I believe I should be telling you so, not someone who can manipulate things in any direction they want. Too many are being paid by special interests who do not have the American people in mind to help. So time to end taxpayer funded lobbyists.

Anthony Perry

Self

Kaufman, TX

As a citizen of the Greatest State of Texas, I stand against the public funding of lobbyists. I do not see where it is fair and or just, for me or anyone for that matter to financially support a cause that he or she may not agree with.

Eddie Elliott

Self

Royse City, TX

Sirs, I can not think of any reason why my tax dollars would be used to fund lobbyist activities. I would like to see that you would be in favor of this bill to prevent any further funding for lobbyists.

Eric Varnado

Self

Pearland, TX

I fully support Mr. Middleton in his efforts to rain in the use of public funds for lobbyist. They should never be used in any public positions to have lobbyist who are paid by public funds. This is got to stop and stop now. It's also an offense to my better judgment to allow other organizations and individuals who are not residents of the state of Texas to lobby for these political positions with their billions and billions of dollars this also should not be allowed as in The case of George Soros and Michael Bloomfield lobbying against our Second Amendment rights I am trying to place liberals socialist liberal candidates who are in for favor of abolishing our second amendment fourth amendment and first amendment rights

DONNA EYLES

Self

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

Vote yes. Public funds (taxpayer dollars) must not be used by political subdivisions and recompense should be made if it occurs. The person/organization should also be held criminally responsible.

Susan Evans

Self

Weatherford, TX

Stop using public's money for lobbyists, taxpayers are getting weary of some of the state's practices.

Frank Cadena, Mr.

Self

Helotes, TX

I support HB749, I am against using public funds for lobbying activities.

Athena Campbell, Ms.

Self Senior Accountant

Richland Hills, TX

By banning community advocates, you participate in community censorship. Restricting community advocates from meeting with legislators. means communities can not be adequately represented at the Capitol. This is restriction of speech for communities and those who are democratically elected to represent them. Banning this type of advocacy is a silencing of the voices of legislators' constituents. Threatening the spirit of public service Texans are encouraged to run for office to further the interest of their community. Elected officials are volunteers for the public good. Removing tools for their advocacy efforts is undemocratic and against the public good. Cost ineffective and inefficient Censorship raises costs for communities. Communities, just like businesses, engage professional experts because they bring a specific skill set to the table and create a more streamlined system.

Renda Schuelke

Self

Purdon, TX

Please pass this bill.

Jeanne Gabel

COS

Canyon, TX

Please stop the misuse of public funds and pass HB 749

Paula Weber

Ables Springs Special Utility District

Heartland, TX

As a rural water system that is a political subdivision, we rely on the efforts of our Texas Rural Water Association, a non-profit organization, to help understand the intent of bills that could impact the operation of our water system. Rural water systems have

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

limited staff and cannot spare an employee to navigate through hundreds of legislative bills that could negatively impact our ability to provide service. It is crucial to our system that we continue to use the services of the Texas Rural Water Association to avoid unintentional consequences that could arise from new legislation. Therefore, I oppose HB 749.

Denise Winckler
Convention of States
Anderson, TX

I am opposed to tax payer funded lobbying. I am requesting that you vote to ban tax payer funded lobbying. The Lobbying industry is destroying our country. The congressmen should be listening to the constituents based on what they say, not how much money they give. We need to keep the State of Texas clean tax payer funded lobbying. Public funds should never be able to be used for lobbying activities. It invites corruption and dishonesty at best. Thank-you.

Gayland Taylor, Owner
25X's H.O.P.E
Mansfield, TX

Interested for more information about this Bill.

Daniel Stockton, Executive Director of Government & Legal Affairs
Frisco Independent School District
Frisco, TX

HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Public Testimony on HB 749

FRISCO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Daniel Stockton, Executive Director of Government & Legal Affairs

The stated purpose of HB 749 is to prevent taxpayer funds from being spent to lobby against the interests of taxpayers. However, HB 749 does not prohibit taxpayer funds from being spent on lobbying, but instead prevent specific local governments, such as school districts from spending money on lobbying. Other taxpayer-funded entities, such as charter schools, which are 100% taxpayer-funded, and government contractors who receive taxpayer dollars, would continue to be able to spend money on lobbying activities. Additionally, school districts are governed by an elected board of representatives of taxpayers who can exercise oversight over expenditures on lobbying activities to ensure those activities coincide with taxpayers' interests, unlike charter schools which have no direct oversight by elected officials.

Frisco ISD is committed to working with legislators to advance the interests of the millions of public school students in the state of Texas. To that end, the District created a Legislative Leadership Committee, which is made up of 90 stakeholders from across the District, including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members to recommend legislative priorities for adoption by the Board. That committee recommended the Board adopt a legislative priority to maintain the right of school districts to interact with legislators in the ways deemed most effective by local communities. Yet HB 749 would take that decision away from local communities.

That said, Frisco ISD, and most school districts, do not spend money to contract with lobbyists. Frisco ISD employs government affairs staff who are not registered lobbyists, and as a matter of practice, the District does not take positions on pending legislation. However, FISSD, like virtually every school district in the state of Texas, is a member of the Texas Association of School Boards. TASB provides crucial services for school districts including support on policy development, human resources issues, legal support, required training, and government affairs work. HB 749 would prevent school districts from paying dues to TASB in an effort to prevent taxpayer funds from being spent on lobbying activities. Yet, Frisco ISD spends less than \$5,000 per year on dues to TASB and other similar organizations, and the vast majority of those dues go toward services that have nothing to do with lobbying.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

HB 749 would limit the District's ability to utilize the services provided by TASB and likely increase costs as the District would be required to spend resources beyond current dues levels to accomplish the services provided by TASB.

Stephen OPry

None

Porter, TX

Lobbying should be outlawed! Seems to me that it is legal bribery, which is an oxymoron, cause bribery isn't legal! No more lobbyists!

Jonathan King, Rev.

Self/Retired

Cibolo, TX

No taxpayer dollars should be used to fund any lobbyists regardless, but especially since they are undoubtedly opposing what some taxpayers support or supporting what some taxpayers oppose. No one should have their tax dollars used contrary to what they believe.

Betty Crooks

Self

Kerrville, TX

I am an 80 year old woman who is still paying taxes. It is not fair for my money to be squandered by lobbyists for pet projects and/or personal gain to a select few. Where is MY representation in this?

Robert Shine, Captain

Self. Retired

Wimberley, TX

Please support this bill

Lucy Hebron, County Judge

Wood County

Quitman, TX

I am vehemently opposed to any legislation which will result in counties having to spend more money in budgets which in turn result in either higher budgets/higher taxes or reduced services if we cannot raise the funds to support a budget. The non profit association memberships which most every group has in the United States and which are supported by nominal dues/tax dollars saves our county thousands of dollars in services for which we would otherwise have to pay for in order to obtain services or benefits which are provided to us through membership dues. We in county government do not have the time nor the inclination to travel to Austin to make our voices heard through any "lobbying" activities. It's ironic that state agencies can lobby, but through this bill the very people who govern us locally will not be able to pay dues to our associations to argue on our behalf. If the bill is passed I don't even know if county judges or commissioners or any others in county government will "voluntarily subscribe" to associations and pay dues out of our own pockets. I don't know of any county judges or commissioners who would chip in monies in order to pay for an association that provides us with benefits which result in savings to our taxpayers.

Jill Clewis

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Self

Rockwall, TX

I support bill HB 749. I would like for there to be a ban on what is known as taxpayer funded lobbying. My state representative is Justin Holland.

Richard Randle

DeWitt County

Cuero, TX

I strongly oppose HB 749 because it is a direct attack on counties and cities and limit their ability to stay informed on bills, both good and bad. Small and rural counties and cities do not have resources or time to have elected officials spend days or weeks in Austin to make sure our Representatives are passing bills that are favorable to the people that are our elected officials are in contact with everyday. Local officials are the closest to the people and expect them to represent them to the State in matters that affect them and to keep them informed on bills that would be good for local citizen as well as bills that would not be good for them.

I am speaking in opposition to HB 749.

Jessie Carlson

Self

Corpus Chrsiti, TX

Vote yes please! taxpayer money should never be used for private interest groups.

Jennifer Maxwell

Atascosa-McMullen Cooperative as part of Pleasanton ISD

Pleasanton, TX

Please considered voting against HB 749 as it will take part of our voice out of political decisions. We need those willing to lobby and speak on behalf of school districts and the communities they serve.
Thank you for your time.

Anita Jiles

self - education

Lago Vista, TX

I am respectfully asking the committee to oppose HB 749. This bill is designed to stop educators and communities from having input in crafting laws. We rely on our professional organizations to represent us at the state level while we do the important work of our people. By restricting these groups from representing their members and helping lawmakers understand the unintended consequences of proposed legislation, you will effectively give corporate lobbyists control of our state. I am curious as to why you wouldn't want to hear from your constituents about bills that affect your community and your voters, especially since you answer to those voters?

Jon Williams, Mr

Self, Retired HVAC Tech.

Harlingen, TX

Texan's should never allow public funds to be spent on lobbyists! Our Elected officials should have the ear of their constituents and cast their votes according to the wishes of the people that elected the official!

amber teamann

self- educator

Athens, TX

Principals are busy running schools. Teachers are busy teaching. We do not have time to follow the thousands of bills filed each session. That is why I join organizations like TEPSA. As well, committee hearings are often postponed or rescheduled. I do not have time to run back and forth to Austin every other spring to monitor potential laws affecting public education.

William Linn

Self--City Manager

Nixon, TX

Distinguished Legislators:

Thank you for taking time to read this comment.

Having reviewed the proposed HB 749 and pondering upon its implications I am greatly disheartened. Texans have historically prided themselves on their independence and their ability to overcome challenges regardless of the odds against them. Texans are proud of their heritage and that heritage is deeply rooted in the deaths of those Texians who stood so valiantly against Santa Ana and perished fighting for the freedom of Texas and all Texans. The cry of "Remember the Alamo!" was so moving and motivating that Sam Houston's army was able to defeat Santa Ana's much larger army. As we look back on those events in Texas history we see individuals uniting for a common goal of freedom from Mexican rule and governance.

Freedom is in our DNA and the very foundation of which the Great State of Texas is built upon. Freedom to avert ourselves of our Second Amendment right, freedom to choose, freedom to make our own way, freedom from oppression, and freedom from government control. Freedom--ingrained into every Texan and every Texas Municipality. Freedom requires a voice and oftentimes requires a challenging voice. The adoption of HB 749 effectively removes that challenging voice from Municipalities.

Take the Texas Municipal League (TML) for example. TML provides a plethora of services to each member Municipality at a fraction of the cost that each Municipality would incur should they have to procure those services on their own. Call it economies of scale or cost diversification if you will, whatever you call it the end result is vast knowledge and resources at a price any Municipal budget can afford. TML's lobbying for Municipalities levels the playing field between the Local Government and the State Government. They (TML) seek to ensure that each Municipality is intelligently informed regarding House Bills and Senate Bills that directly impact how Municipalities conduct business. TML is kind of like a "State watchdog" for the Local Governments.

HB 749 seeks to handicap Local Governments and their ability to collectively protect the way they operate and conduct business--and this is a tragedy. This is not the Texas those Texians envisioned as they gave their life for Texas. HB 749, if adopted, will effectively take away the Municipalities' right to collectively lobby and simultaneously create a situation where the State Government will have undue influence and excessive control over local Municipalities--I am not saying anything you all should not already know.

I believe that HB 749 should be withdrawn and that Municipalities should have the right to use public funds to collectively lobby. Enabling Municipalities the ability to collectively lobby ensures checks and balances between the local and state level government which ultimately results in more efficient local Municipal operations and better use of public funds for the greater public good.

Stacy Kimbriel

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Plano ISD

Plano, TX

As a campus principal, my time is spent working with children, teachers, parents and community members. I need an outlet that will watch bills and advocate for my needs which is why I am a member of organizations such as TEPSA and TASA who have advocates working on my behalf. It is hard enough for our voice to be heard and our input to be included as it is, but eliminating our ability to have memberships assist us with lobbying will completely snuff out our voice. Anti-public education lobbying groups would not be extinguished with this bill only pro-public education. Legislators can say no to ANY lobbyist as it is, so let's ensure the playing field stays level by saying no to this bill.

Cooper Hilton

Self

Denton, TX

I am submitting comments against HB 749. As a public school educator, I rely on my state associations to be my voice at the Capitol. My associations advocate on behalf of educators, students, and communities and provide a valuable perspective and representation to our state lawmakers. I ask you to reject HB 749 and its attempt to silence constituents and communities. Instead, please welcome additional feedback and voices to the legislative process.

Ann Rushing, Mayor

City of Clarksville

Red River County, TX

Good afternoon. I am the Mayor of Clarksville, Texas. I oppose H.B. 749 by Rep. Mayes Middleton. I feel this this bill is designed to silence the voices of local officials and the residents they represent in the state policy making process. I am opposed to the as-filed version of H.B. 749. This bill would prohibit cities from engaging professional advocates or joining TML and other professional associations.

Jason Southerland

Self- Citizen of Texas

Waxahachie, TX

I wish I had eloquent words with which to make my point, but I don't. However, I can say that I am a Texan with conservative values. I hate the thought of lobbyists pressing their views (which are often contrary to my own) upon my Representatives in my state government while I am away at work. What is even more despicable is the thought that I AM PAYING for this activity to occur. It is wrong to ask any Texan to pay for activities that are contrary to their conscience - and in the current state of the Texas budget, we need to look for ways to cut funding for anything we can find. Taxpayer funded lobbying is wrong. It is theft. It needs to not be allowed in my state. I support this bill in the interest of eliminating taxpayer-funded lobbying in my home state. Thank you.

Tara Awezec

Self

Lucas, TX

Many cities, counties, school districts, and special districts spend public money to hire professional lobbyists to engage in the legislative process. It represents no small amount either - in 2017, local governments spent as much as \$41 million on lobbyists. Local government should not spend public money on private lobbyists for many reasons:

First, one part of a representative government should not petition another part of government for a "redress of grievances." A political subdivision may not lay claim to that right.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Second, lobbyists employed with taxpayer money usually advocate for greater spending, more taxing authority, and increased regulatory power. It is unreasonable to force taxpayers to fund lobbying campaigns that go against their interests.

Third, the practice puts individuals at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to getting their representatives' attention. Lobbyists know how to work the system, while the average Texan does not. Additionally, local elected officials have other avenues to elevate their needs and concerns to state lawmakers, like making personal contact or showing up at the Texas Capitol in person.

Two other lesser-known ways used to pay for lobbying:

First is through public agency associations. These associations are not accountable to voters. Their very nature allows them to insulate the elected officials in their membership from the consequences of promoting higher taxes and bigger government. Public agency associations sell advertising to government contractors with the income from this advertising going to pay for lobbyists.

The other form of off-the-record lobbying is to assign government employees the task of lobbying state government. This is a common practice in Austin during session when hordes of intergovernmental relations employees can be found on any given day lobbying lawmakers for more power and more taxpayer money.

For the reasons stated above, taxpayer-funded lobbying is not in taxpayer's best interest so I urge the following:

- Ban the ability of local government to hire outside lobbyists.
- Prohibit any political subdivision of the state from using public funds to hire someone whose main job was to lobby any governmental entity.
- Prohibit any public funds from going to public agency associations.

Barbara Johnston

self. 30 year educator

Kerrville, TX

HB749. Please stop this from moving forward.

TERRY TODD, MS.

SELF- PRECINCT CHAIR 109.

OVILLA, TX

TAXPAYERS SHOULD NOT BE IN THE LOBBYING BUSINESS, NOR SHOULD WE BE FORCED TO PAY FOR LOBBYISTS. IF TAXES ARE USED FOR LOBBYING, WE HAVE NO IDEA, OR SAY, FOR WHAT INTERESTS ARE BEING PROMOTED. OUR DIRECT CONCERNS CAN BE SENT TO OUR REPRESENTATIVES, OR VOTED ON, IF PUT ON THE BALLOT. NO ONE SHOULD BE USING FINANCES TO SWAY THE VOTING BY A REPRESENTATIVE. I VOTE TO NOT USE TAXPAYER FUNDS ON LOBBYING!

Linda Rice

Convention of States

Denison, TX

Taxpayer funded lobbying is egregious in that it uses our money without our consent and hires people to encourage spending in areas we never have the chance to approve or disapprove of.

Charles Walton

Self

N. Richland Hills, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

As a tax paying citizen of the State of Texas I am not certain how long this practice which allows municipalities, counties or taxing subdivisions within the state to hire lobbyists at taxpayer expense for the purposes of lobbying the state legislature to increase their taxing authority on the taxpayers within their jurisdictions, but I believe that this is without a doubt one of the most unethical practices by any governing body that I've ever heard of.

This practice fundamentally violates the fiduciary responsibility of these subordinate taxing entities to work in the best interests of the constituents within their jurisdiction to utilize the taxed funds to highest and best use for their constituents' interests as efficiently and as economically as possible.

In addition, the time that the lobbyists, hired for this type of purpose, spends occupying the time of our elected state legislative representatives effectively competes for the time that our representatives have available for their constituents and drowns out the voices of the constituents to speak to their representatives. This fundamentally undermines the democratic representative process of our state republic.

Rebecca Rodgers

Self /True Texas Project

ARLINGTON, TX

Thomas Jefferson once quoted ... "The end of democracy...will occur when government falls into the hands of lending institutions and moneyed incorporations." That is what is happening to the United States and in our great state of Texas. Lobbyists are paying state and federal legislatures to do their bidding and corruption is running rampant. These organizations are only out for one agenda, their agenda. They are not looking out for hardworking Texans. These lobbyists are wanting to use our hard-earned money to fund their nefarious agendas that will not help Texans but ultimately hurt them. We the people are tired of the corruption. I am asking you to pass HB749 banning Taxpayer-Funded Lobbyists.

Helene Berger

Self

Fort worth, TX

I want this bill to pass

Danny Ward

Self

Nacogdoches, TX

I support HB 749. Using public funds for lobbying is unethical and downright immoral. Taking someone's hard earned money and using that money to take more of their money is egregious. Also using public funds for lobbying is unfair. My community of Nacogdoches can't compete with larger metropolitan areas. Those areas can raise more money to pay lobbyists than Nacogdoches can. Also we elect Travis Clardy and Robert Nichols to go to Austin and be our voice. We don't need a lobbyist. Mayors, county commissioners, city councilmen and women don't have the access that lobbyists do much less a citizen. This practice has to stop. That's why I support HB 749.

Jonathan Cook, Mr

Self, Inventor, energy managment.

McKinney, TX

In no way should public funds be distributed to lobbying as lobbying is a business adventure and there by it must be self sustaining. It is at the core of our nation's soul that if you desire something to be addressed it is an individual's freedom to pursue that. Giving no undesired responsibility to others to pay for said desire. I consider it misappropriating of funds to oblige others to

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

pay for my advertising! What corrupt philosophy makes chick filet pay for Wendy's advertisements? Only a simpleton would consider making the Texas Taxpayer pay for others desires.

Donna Basham

self

ARLINGTON, TX

"Public Funds" no doubt means taxes, something we all must pay. I will give to causes I believe in but I don't want to contribute other people's causes. If he lobbyists cannot exist on money given by those who want something done they should not exist.

Jayme Burkhart

Self

Katy, TX

No more taxpayer funded lobbying! Totally illogical- entities need to garner support from constituents and lobby the same way the general public does!

Alexandra Stallings, RN

Self

Converse, TX

Please support HB 749 to prevent political parties from using public funds for lobbying activities. This will prevent corruption and self-interest of the political parties. This is a common-sense bill and needs to pass so that corruption can be eliminated in our local, state, and eventually federal governments! Thank you, Alexandra Stallings

Bob Richardson, Just Me

Self. Retired

Castell, TX

I am now 67 y. o. and I have never agreed with lobbying since I learned about it since civics class in high school. I especially disagree lobbying with MY TAX DOLLARS. I will fight hard to prevent this.

Erika Lenk-Hatfield, Mrs

Self

Heath, TX

My county commissioner approached me and asked why I am for banning tax payer funded lobbying. I told him that lobbying needs to be in the hands of WE THE PEOPLE. If paid lobbyists are really needed, then elected officials are not doing a good enough job of informing the people of their concerns and need for lobbyists. WE THE PEOPLE need to be the lobbyists that reflect and protect OUR interests. Our taxes pay elected officials to represent US, the individual tax payer. They are not doing their job if they need lobbyists. They are the elected lobbyists and we are their constituents. BAN tax payer funded lobbying!!

Venus Wilder

Self Retired

Dripping Springs, TX

As a retiree and taxpayer, I don't feel that any of my tax dollars should fund lobbying of any kind. It's unethical and amounts to legalized bribery.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Susan Valliant
Convention of States
Arlington, TX

I am in favor of HB 749 to Ban Tax Payer Funded Lobbying. Hard working Texans should not have to pay for Lobbyist who may not support legislation that benefits the citizens of Texas. The tax dollars that are designated for Lobbyist could be better spent on much needed infrastructure instead of Corporate Special Interest. Thank you for your time and service. I ask that you vote yes on HB 749.

Lyle Nelson, Mayor Pro Tem
City of Bastrop
Bastrop, TX

Oppose

Jennifer Henderson
Schleicher County
Eldorado, TX

As County Treasurer for Schleicher County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Andrew Neal
Self - Plant Superintendent
Watauga, TX

Please do not pass HB 749. Our Cities and Towns work closely within the communities they represent and know their needs best. By silencing their voices, the needs of the citizens of those communities are extinguished. Forbidding Cities from addressing the very policy makers that affect all Texans is a form of censorship.

Steve Starnes, Hon
Cooke County Texas
Gainesville, TX

I am the County Judge in Cooke County. We oppose this Bill! Rural counties do not have the resources to monitor legislation. We rely on the Texas Association of Counties to represent us. I would be there in person tomorrow opposing this bill but I have a Doctor's appointment.

Sammi Hammers
self
LaPorte, TX

To ELECTIONS Committee - HB6 (It was not listed in this link) Please route to proper place.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

I have already submitted testimony on HB749 - Was not given opportunity to select HB6 in the request

Free and fair elections are the foundation of every healthy democracy, ensuring that government authority derives from the will of the people

A free election is one in which all citizens are able to vote for the candidate of their choice, and a fair election is one in which all votes have equal power and are counted accurately

Our vote is the main way most citizens can contribute to the decisions about how their country is governed, and if not free and fair, we are unable to influence how our country is run..

Elections have been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century. It is only recently that some want change the time-honored rules— only to be able to manipulate the results in their favor.

I am obviously not an attorney, so reading the text of any of these bills won't do me much good. I think most of us are that way. We have elected our Legislators, and trust them to take care of all these details for us.

So, just to affirm what my concerns are , I list them here— and hope that your will address them in the passage of HB6 (and other related legislation this session). Please vote in favor of this legislation

Proof of Citizenship to vote

`Voter ID when Voting

Limiting Vote-by-mail to only those who need it

A paper trail for electronic ballots

NO BALLOT HARVESTING

State Maintenance of Voter Registration rolls

No counting of votes without the presences and direct observation of poll watchers from all parties

NO INTERNET CONNECTED VOTING MACHINES

No foreign made voting machines

No vote counting outside of the United States

And other measures as you deem necessary to protect our fragile republic.

Scott Sheaffer

Self, Engineer

Denison, TX

I am strongly against use of public funds for lobbying. It is a clear conflict of interest.

Judi Schultz, Ms.

Self

Alba, TX

I submit to you as a private citizen that I am totally against the use of public funds for the support of any lobbying efforts. If a family or individual strongly supports certain efforts then they should apportion their own personal funds to that effort. As my Representative to the TX Legislation you have at times totally misrepresented us in matters of basic moral humanity.

In the last few elections I have begun to pay attention to the individual votes of my Legislators and campaign against such individuals who vote against a moral stance.

PLEASE VOTE ACCORDINGLY. WE ARE WATCHING!

Dawn Bolton

Self

Richardson, TX

To whom it may concern.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

I am respectfully requesting that taxpayer funded lobbying in Texas be banned. As a 61 year old native of Texas , I absolutely do not want my tax payer dollars used for this purpose. I believe the majority of Texans also agree that their taxpayer money can be better spend. Thank you for your time .

Kindest Regards.

Dawn Bolton

Edie McGee

Self

Henderson, TX

We don't want public funds used for lobbying

David Woodson, County Treasurer

David E. Woodson- County Treasurer

Trenton, TX

As Treasurer of Fannin County I am opposed to HB 749. In our small County I am the only person in my department so spending money to run to Austin to have any input in matters there is out of the question. First I do not have the time to make those trips and second we have limited travel budget. Money well spent for our small budget is thru our County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties. Those funds are well spent and a great deal less expensive than to run to Austin to have input into matters that affect myself. I ask that you oppose this bill. Thank you for your time and your service to our great State. David E. Woodson - Fannin County Treasurer

Jill Atkinson

McMullen County

Tilden, TX

I am the county Treasurer for McMullen County and I oppose HB 749. I depend on information that our representatives bring to us through conferences and email correspondence. Without their assistance, I don't believe our (County Treasurer's Association of Texas) voice will be heard and that we would even be given the information. We rely on these representatives to attend and share information that affect local and county government. My duties for the county and budgetary restraints will not allow me to attend these sessions so I am grateful for the resources provided by Texas Association of Counties in the form of Legislative Consultants. This is a legitimate use of public funds in my opinion. Thank you!

Tammy Brown, Shackelford County Treasurer

Shackelford County

Albany, TX

As the County Treasurer for Shackelford County, I feel that I need to be able to represent my constituents and still be fiscally responsible to them. If HB 749 passes, it will make my job tracking legislation that affects county government hard to do. I do not have the time or resources to go to Austin every time a bill comes up that I need to be able to voice my opinion on. Being a part of the County Treasurers' Association and Texas Association of Counties helps me keep up with all the legislation that may affect my county. County government is where the people can make their wishes known. It needs to continue to be accessible to the taxpayers, a true government for the people and by the people. State and Federal government is powerful, but County government is personal. Please vote no on HB 749. For the people.

Jenny Barnwell

Jenny Barnwell Parker County Treasurer

Weatherford, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

I am in opposition to HB749. Being able to utilize the resources provided to me through Texas Association of Counties and the County Treasurers Association of Texas is a very good use of local tax dollars. I, like many other Treasurers and elected officials do not have the time to travel back and forth to Austin every legislative session to discuss the pros and cons of bills that affect the way we do business. Our time is as valuable as yours when it comes to the use of lobbying. This bill inhibits us to do our jobs in the best interest of our taxpayers. If you look at the full scope of this bill, your local elected officials use less than 10% for lobbying. The rest goes to your big corporations! I would respectfully ask for you to reconsider your approach to this bill and stop limiting how local government works.

Respectfully,
Jenny Barnwell
Parker County Treasurer

Robert Donnelly, Commissioner
Midland County
Midland, TX

I should be in Austin testifying in person. However, my duties here in Midland preclude me from participating in your hearing. If not for the county associations that keep track of the bills and numerous hearings, I would not be commenting today. This is the crux of the problem. There have been around 7000 bills filed this session of the legislature. I am now caught between doing what I was elected to do at a local level or spending almost full time testifying in Austin on the State level to make Midland County's position heard. The County is obligated to make sure our duties are carried out on the local level and this bill would obligate us to be present in Austin to shepard the legislation that effects the county operations. The limitations that the State puts on counties and the additional duties that the State obligates us with and are paid by local taxpayers should get a fair hearing.

"Lobbying" is a part of the system and the voice of the counties should be heard. Midland County's size does not warrant hiring an outside firm to meet with legislators. However, our associations that represent the DA's, sheriff's, County Clerk's, District Clerks, JPs and others should not be counted as "lobbyists" being paid by tax payers. These organizations represent a broad spectrum of each group of office holders and bring a concerted opinion to the legislators so that 254 County Clerks are not making the rounds and asking to testify at each hearing.

Additionally, we would be on-board if all lobbying were outlawed including the education system, business, banking, construction trades and the State of Texas on the Federal Level. That would sound like a level playing field to me. It would give clarity as to the actual desire of the legislators rather than what happens to silence the right wing commenters at California universities.

Finally, the requirements by the legislators to effect the education by requirements of statute of its elected officials would be negatively impacted. These training sessions might be considered training sessions for county official to be lobbyists and therefor be outlawed; discussion of proposed legislation might be considered lobbying; assembly to discuss legislation might be considered lobbying or training therefore. Federal Government overreach would not match what regulations could follow passage of this bill.

Kevin Rogers, Superintendent
Lewisville Independent School District
Lewisville, TX

As the Superintendent of Lewisville ISD, I am opposed to HB 749. Public school leaders are focused on the daily operations of our school districts, as we should be. We do not have the time or resources to travel to Austin, attend committee hearings in-person, and track all 6,699 bills as they progress through each chamber. We are not experts in legislation, we are experts in education.

Instead, I rely on membership organizations like the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) and the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) that have expertise with education policy and can keep me updated. Just as we hire architects, engineers, contractors, and finance experts when we build new school campuses, we should have that same access to experts when it comes to advocacy.

HB 749 would drastically limit school leaders' ability to advocate for our schools and communities. I find it hypocritical that our own state elected officials have access to membership organizations that lobby the federal government on their behalf but that right for public school educators would be limited.

We have no issue with transparency and are constantly held accountable by the public constituents we serve. School districts are led by locally-elected school board members and regular school board meetings provide opportunities for community members to express their desires for the governance of the district.

Less than a fraction of a percent of our district's budget goes to what is considered "taxpayer-funded lobbying". For example, in 2019-20, Lewisville ISD expended \$1,650 through TASB for advocacy efforts. Our district's operating budget is more than \$500 million each year. Travel to and from Austin from Dallas alone would cost our local taxpayers much more than \$1,650. I don't think anyone can reasonably argue our district is not better served by TASB than it would be if I or another district leader stepped away from our already full plates to spend time in Austin.

This school year was historically challenging for educators. We have continued to serve students and their families during a pandemic and a historic winter storm. It's unfortunate that a bill like HB 749 is how educators might be rewarded for their remarkable work this year. I hope I can count on your support to not censor or limit our voice in Austin.

Lesa Crosswhite, Honorable

Taylor County

Abilene, TX

I am the County Treasurer in Taylor County and have held this position for 22 years. I'm opposed to HB 749!! This bill will limit counties capability to serve the citizens of their counties and uphold the oath that elected officials made to the citizens. I have spent several years working with legislators defending and opposing bills that are in the best interest of Taylor County. Interacting with each of you takes many hours and face to face interactions is the beneficial to you and the county representatives. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use our of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Carolyn Huelster, Honorable

Irion County Treasurer

MERTZON, TX

As County Treasurer for Irion County, I am opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of our local tax dollars and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Huelster

Irion County Treasurer

Robert Seward, Honorable

Self; Mesquite ISD; Board of Trustees

Mesquite, TX

A ban on so-called "taxpayer-funded lobbying" is bad for local taxpayers like me. This ban boils down to community censorship. It would limit those looking out for what's best for our neighborhood schools and communities from advocating with state lawmakers.

Texas school board members and other government officials live, work, and are deeply involved in their local communities and

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

represent the interests of the local taxpayers who elected them.

All industries, issues, and causes have people at the Capitol dedicated to making sure their voices are heard. Shouldn't public schools have the same right?

This bill represents a major shift in the way a school board trustee or our designees could advocate the Legislature on behalf of our school district. It eliminates the ability of a trustee to communicate with a legislator through nonprofit associations that often serve as our "eyes and ears" at the State Capitol.

It is the most efficient, fiscally responsible, and effective process for you and us to have an organization to facilitate the flow of the best information to assist in lawmaking.

It is also important for you to understand that TASB's (board members association) advocacy agenda is developed through an exhausting grassroots process that starts in 21 regional meetings across the state open to all local trustees and is moved forward through the hard work and volunteered time of local trustees until it is finally approved by a delegate assembly of which all districts are invited to send a representative. When I say that TASB speaks on our behalf, I mean it.

Notification about this bill and intended consequences were provided to me by my state association. I can't imagine having to sift through 6,000 bills and determining which ones negatively impact public education.

TASB collects dues on a sliding scale based on each districts operating budget and ranges from \$800 per year to \$11,000 per year. Total member dues equal about \$3.7 million per year which is 6 percent of TASB's total budget. As you can see, dues are only one source of revenue for TASB and a relatively small portion at that. TASB's Government Relations group is about one percent of TASB's budget or about 20.2% of total member dues

I don't advocate for issues that go against my community's taxpayers. In fact, I like to think that I've been elected because I represent my constituents on a whole range of issues related to public education, including taxation, curriculum, building programs, student safety and health, et cetera. My taxpayers want a certain level of educational services provided as cost-effectively as possible. When I advocate for more tax revenue for my community it is because feedback from my community tells me that they want additional services or programs and are willing to pay for them.

As a constituent, I am asking you to oppose a ban on "taxpayer-funded lobbying" because it would censor community voices and be detrimental to Texas public school students.

Kim Pittman, Treasurer

CAMP COUNTY

PITTSBURG, TX

As County Treasurer of Camp County, I would like to register my opposition to HB 749. I feel it is disingenuous and misleading to the public in the way it is presented. Specifically, concerning Texas Association of Counties as a "lobby". It would be extremely difficult for me to do my job without the help of the Human Resource representatives of Texas Association of Counties. Elected Officials do not always have the specialized knowledge required for their elected position. TAC is so helpful in this and many other areas, keeping me informed and explaining difficult laws involving employees, not to mention all the insurance group rates that we have access to by choosing TAC as our insurance provider. As a small county, the money we save by being part of TAC and having their resources is invaluable. The impact of one misstep in navigating workers comp, unemployment and other complex employee issues could blow our small county budget. Please take this into account when considering this bill, and save small counties big money.

I appreciate your consideration on this issue.

DeeAnn Foley, Mrs.

Self

Kerrville, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Dear Senator Buckingham,
Please consider passing this HB 749 to stop lobbying in our state legislature.
Thanks, DeeAnn Foley

DeeAnn Foley, Mrs.

Self

Kerrville, TX

Dear Representative Murr,
Please vote to pass HB 749 to stop lobbying in the state legislature.
Thanks, DeeAnn Foley

Bobby Howell, Judge

Bowie County

New Boston, TX

The description is misleading. The Bill does not target our county hiring lobbyist. It targets our membership in the Texas Association of Counties (TAC). Only a small part of what TAC does for our county involves interaction with the legislature. WE rely on TAC for continuing education for all departments, health insurance, as we;; as keeping up with new laws that affect the county. WE strongly oppose this bill!

Meredith Wiley, Assistant Principal

Canton Elementary School

Canton, TX

As an Assistant Principal, my time is devoted to my students. I'm not available to follow the thousands of bills filed each session, or run back and forth to Austin every other spring to monitor potential laws affecting public education. One of the reasons I joined TEPSA was for them to represent me and my students at the State Capitol.

Kim Halfmann

Glasscock County

Garden City, TX

I am admitting my comments for the record, regarding HB 749. I am in opposition of the bill. Glasscock County does not spend taxpayer dollars on "hired lobbyist". We pay dues to associations that provide a variety of services to all elected officials in the county, including required education, providing a collective voice and providing resources and information for each elected and/or appointed officials. The constituency at the local level wouldn't re-elect me, if they felt the county was not stewarding their money properly. I would hate to think what could happen if counties weren't kept in the loop about bills as they are worked through the system and to have a liaison in Austin as a resource for counties. Please don't silence the voice of local officials. Thank you for your consideration.

Kimberly Long

Lipscomb County

Darouzett, TX

As County Treasurer for Lipscomb County, I'm opposed to HB 749. This bill will severely limit the capacity in which I engage

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars and resources, and helps me to keep track of pending legislation and activities that may affect Lipscomb County and the way we do business. Thank you for your consideration.

Woodrow Gossom, County Judge

Wichita County

Wichita Falls, TX

While I can appreciate the concern for the proper expenditure of tax funds for lobbyists by local government, I would hope that the same concern is being followed at state. The freedom of speech should not be limited at any level, especially at the local government level closest to the people.

The regional and state organizations provide invaluable services to local elected officials such as education and administrative services. In addition, they more efficiently gather information about proposed legislation and changes in law to assist local officials.

Please consider removing HB 749 from consideration.

Jay Elliott, County Judge

Falls County

Marlin, TX

Hypocrite is a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings. The state of Texas spends MILLIONS of dollars a year lobbying in Washington DC. You have a lot of nerve telling public entities they can't do what you do everyday. This is just another attempt to silence public entities from pointing out the bad points of your bills that will cost the public extra money from your unfunded mandates. This bill is also a way to silence TAC and other associations from speaking the truth about the bills.

This is a horrible bill for a place full of hypocrites.

Becky Wilbanks, Cass County Judge

Cass County

Linden, TX

Due to my duties as County Judge, I am unable to attend today's hearing in person however, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to share my concerns with you regarding H.B. 749. If this bill should unfortunately become law, it would require all county officials to monitor county-related legislation. Small counties, such as Cass County, cannot afford the necessary staff that endeavor would require nor the funds to cover the expense. Neither does Cass County have the funds necessary to send someone to Austin every week to represent our constituents before the legislature. The result of this bill would be that special interest groups would be the only voices to be heard at the Capitol. The Texas Association of Counties provides so many other needed services for small counties besides being a collective voice for our counties. Through those services such as education, insurance, (including health insurance) and many, many more, our counties and citizens benefit greatly. Ultimately, this bill does not benefit anyone but the legislature.

Marlow Newton

Self - retired

The Woodlands, TX

Dear Committee Members,

I support this bill, as I do not believe taxpayer monies should be spent on lobbying activities. Lobbying firms and organizations

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

should rely completely on private donations of those citizens who support those causes. The state should do everything in their power to ensure that tax dollars are spent in unbiased areas. Lobbying firms are purely biased organizations and do not represent all taxpayers of this state. Thank you, in advance, for your support of this bill

Thank you for your service to our state and in this committee.

Sincerely,

Marlow Newton

Scott Hahn
GRAY COUNTY
Pampa, TX

As the County Treasurer of Gray County, I am opposed to HB 749. My home county is a fur piece from Austin, so I am unable to attend your meetings and hearings and depend on resources of the County Treasurers' Association of Texas, as well as the Texas Association of Counties to represent my feelings about your discussions that affect my county. Therefore this a good use of local tax dollars. I appreciate your consideration.

Ann Blackwell
Shelby County Texas
Center, TX

I am in strong opposition to this bill. It is basically taking away the voice of the front line who are the county officials! If we don't have the right to collectively send our voice to Austin, you should not have that right to continue to lobby and send your to Washington. We are the ones who see the effects of the bills that you sit up in Austin and pass. The small amount that we spend from our budget for dues is pennies compared to the work that it does for our taxpaying citizens. This bill should not even be considered much less passed.

Summer Campbell
Mills County Treasurer
Goldthwaite, TX

As newly appointed County Treasurer for Mills County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the CTAT and the TAC is a good use of local tax dollars. I appreciate your consideration.

Jenifer Gierisch, County Treasurer
Concho County
Paint Rock, TX

As County Treasurer for Concho County, I am opposed to HB 749. My duties for my County do not allow time for limitless travel during the session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. The County Treasurers' Association and Texas Association of Counties are excellent resources for elected officials to be able to follow what is pending, and not having them to represent all counties, would be a great loss. Thank you for your consideration when voting.

Erin Curtis, County Treasurer
Cherokee County

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Jacksonville, TX

As County Treasurer of Cherokee County, I'm opposed to HB 749. As much as I would love to be able to come to Austin in person, my job as Treasurer and the taxpayers of Cherokee County are my top priority. This is why it is so important to have the resources available to me through the County Treasurer's Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties to help keep up with the legislation. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Christina Dodrill, Eastland County Treasurer

Eastland County

Eastland, TX

As County Treasurer for Eastland County, I am opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I would love to be in Austin in person. However, my full-time job as County Treasurer and the taxpayers in my County are my priority. I appreciate your consideration.

Rick Bacon, Commissioner

Tom Green County

San Angelo, TX

I am opposed to HB 749 by Rep. Middleton. This will have a negative impact on the ability of local citizens to have an effective voice in the legislature when it come to bills affecting them on the local level. How can one person be expected to review and comment on over 6000 bills. You are unable to and you should not limit access to information notifying you of unintended consequences of legislation. This bill only limits local government and does nothing to stop lobbying activities from other organizations. If you want to stop lobbying stop all and not be selective. Many bills look good on the surface but end up having to be amended as a result of quick uninformed decisions. Please let us keep our collective voice for our constituents and continue to provide you accurate information in a timely manner.

Cleopatra Callaway, County Treasurer

self/ County Treasurer Association of Texas

Odessa, TX

As County Treasurer for Ector County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Shonda L Black, County Treasurer

Bailey County

Muleshoe, TX

As County Treasurer for Bailey County, I am opposed to HB 749. As a small, rural county, we need to be able to combine the resources given through our associations to monitor the thousands of bills filed each legislative session and effectively present our unique issues to the state and federal government. That IS looking after the interests of the taxpayers. County Government's "lobbying" efforts is focused on ending state and federal practices of passing unfunded mandates, which in turn imposes billions of dollars in increased taxes upon our local property taxpayers annually. It would cost our local taxpayers more to send someone to Austin during the Legislative Session, for every meeting, to have conversations for and/or against bills that affect local

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

government, which in turn affects our taxpayers. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and Texas Association of Counties is a great use of our local tax dollars and helps me to be able to stay in my office and take care of business and other issues our County is up against. THAT is important to our local taxpayers. I greatly appreciate your vote against HB 749. Thank you for your time, God Bless and Stay Safe.

Melissa Karcher, Lampasas County Treasurer

Lampasas county

Lampasas, TX

As County Treasurer for Lampasas County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect the county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of our local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Ron Cunningham

Llano County Government and Self

Llano, TX

I oppose HB 749 and SB 234.

If SB 234 and HB 749 are to be considered, I respectfully request that the State of Texas, the Texas Legislature, and state agencies be incorporated into the bills and held to these same standards they seek to impose on rural counties and small governments. At this time, they consistently and actively employ large numbers of state taxpayer funded lobbyists to analyze and monitor the thousands of bills filed each legislative session and further utilize these same lobbyists to advocate for its interests in Washington D.C., yet S.B. 234/ H.B. 749 denies local communities this same ability while continuing public support of state agency lobbying. The 85 & 86 Legislative sessions had over 10,000 bills filed, 87 legislative session had over 7,000 bills filed. Rural Counties are greatly hindered in maintaining business continuity of our counties and at the same time monitoring, evaluating impact of each bill and then travelling and testifying before committees in support or opposition of bills that adversely impact the citizens of our county.

"Taxpayer funded" lobbying by small and rural governments accounts for less than 10% of total lobbying activity in each legislative session, while corporate and special interest lobbying interests make up 90% of total lobbying activity to our Texas legislators; and

It is a false claim that taxpayer funded lobbying works against the interest of taxpayers. A priority of county government and its "lobbying" effort with our Texas legislator is focused on ending the state and federal practice of passing unfunded mandates, which impose billions of dollars in increased taxes upon local property taxpayers annually.

Prohibiting Texas counties from retaining experienced representation before federal and state legislative bodies and agencies places our communities and citizens at a disadvantage in efforts to obtain and retain federal and state projects.

County officials and our citizens require the ability to express our positions and information through associations, thereby establishing a stronger unified voice on the issues important to our communities, and share the associated costs among all counties

The prohibitions on county governments in S.B. 234/H.B.749 would violate the basic principle of open and robust discussion and would further the transformation of the halls and offices of our Texas capitol into even more of special interest group dominated legislation each session.

If SB 234 and HB 749 are to be considered, I respectfully request that the State of Texas, the Texas Legislature, and state agencies be incorporated into the bills and held to these same standards they seek to impose on rural counties and small governments. At this time, they consistently and actively employ large numbers of state taxpayer funded lobbyists to analyze and monitor the thousands of bills filed each legislative session and further utilize these same lobbyists to advocate for its interests in Washington

Cheryl Chambers, Honorable

Ellis County Treasurer

Waxahachie, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

It is my understanding that the hearing for HB 749 is set for Thursday, March 25, 2021. I am unable to attend the hearing in person. It is my fulltime job to tend to my duties of Ellis County Treasurer and the taxpayers in my county are my priority. I have very limited staff and the office requires my attendance on a daily basis to keep things running smoothly. For the record, I am opposed to HB 749. If this bill passes, my ability to engage with my state legislators will be greatly limited. The cost to each county would be significantly increased if each Treasurer were expected to travel to Austin on a regular basis to meet with legislators regarding pending legislation that affect Ellis County, county government and County Treasurers. The cost of one trip to Austin would be greater than my annual expense to the County Treasurers' Association of Texas. I urge you to not support this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Melissa Shores, Cass County Treasurer

Cass County Treasurer's Office

Linden, TX

As County Treasurer for Cass County, I am opposed to HB 749 as it will keep me from engaging with my state legislators. My duties as Treasurer do not allow me to travel much during the legislative session to voice my opinion for or against bills that affect county government. It is nice to have organizations such as the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties to voice my opinion as well as help me keep track of pending legislation. Not only will this bill hurt me but in the end will hurt the Tax Payers in our small counties. I appreciate your consider in this matter and please do not pass this bill.

Laura Klein Plunkett

Self - I am a retired operations manager and serve on two committees in my city of Georgetown

Georgetown, TX

I want taxpayer funded lobbying banned in Texas. My city of Georgetown currently pays a lobbying firm to advocate with the legislature for policies that are not in the best interest of the taxpayers of our city. This past year I served on the Legislative Task Force for the city for this session, and members were urged to support city efforts to allow taxpayer lobbying. I disagreed then and I disagree now. A city has no business using taxpayer funds to pay lobbyists. Taxpayer funds should be used for improving education, lowering property taxes, improving public safety, among other things. Any city lobbying attempt should be handled by city officials and employees in the same way that regular citizens make their wishes and needs known to government officials: they should show up at the legislature, write emails and letters, and meet with their representatives. That's what we pay our city officials to do. Taxpayer funded lobbying needs to end in Texas.

Pam Shinogle

Self

ARLINGTON, TX

Honorable House Members,

As a former municipal employee for nearly 40 years, I saw first hand the amount of funds that were allocated to lobbyists for a variety of "Municipal related issues". Although some of those issues would have positively impacted the communities of that local jurisdiction, others were actually a negative impact. I am opposed to a taxing authority utilizing taxpayer funds for lobbying activities. I support the approval HB 749.

Jerri Ann Wilson, County Treasurer

County of Coleman

Coleman, TX

Please allow me to address you today concerning HB 749. As County Treasurer of of a small county, I depend on the resources available to me through membership in County Treasurers Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties. These

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

associations represent counties by following pending legislation that we as county employees do not have the time or funds to attend to voice our concerns for or against bills that affect us. I oppose HB 749 as it will severely limit the voices of local county government. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Annette Vandewerken

Self

Austin, TX

I am FOR this bill. It is NOT appropriate use of public funds to support lobbying activities. Public funds should not be used to push an agenda that some citizens may not support. The political subdivision should remain neutral.

Bobby Whitson, Commissioner

Bell County

Belton, TX

I am deeply saddened that Representatives of the great State of Texas would even propose such legislation. It appears to be designed to cripple communications between our State leadership and local governments. Our State government was designed to be transparent and accessible to every citizen by providing for local governments close to the people to work on local issues, daily, while State leadership only meets to pass laws once every two years for a few months. Our forefathers purposefully determined to limit big government powers.

I can not believe that "Conservative" leadership would work to expand State control while limiting local control. It is just as wrong as State government forcing the local taxpayer to pay for State programs that oftentimes are not wanted or needed in local jurisdictions. Now, State leadership appears to be tired of hearing from an educated pool of local officials, acting in the best interests of their constituents (whom they are acutely beholden to) to communicate with State government. This legislation seems to be an attempt to silence the very voices the State should listen to. Why doesn't the State focus on limiting the onslaught of private lobbyists who have agendas often contrary to the needs of the people? The seemingly obvious conclusion is that our State leadership wants to limit the voices closest to the people while opening the gates wide for special interests to determine what the people need and pay for. What other conclusion is there!?

Our monetary contribution to our associations that benefit us with education, legal support, networking channels, and full time correspondence with our State and Federal officials is miniscule in comparison to the time and monetary contributions required for Judges, Commissioners, Sherriffs, Tax Assessors, etc. to leave their jurisdictions, travel to Austin, and stay overnight or longer, in order to speak to hundreds of legislators on just one single issue, much less multiple issues. This legislation will cost taxpayers exponentially more than the penence that is spent now to more effectively and efficiently communicate our local needs to our State officials through our associations and the economies of scale they provide. Even worse, many rural Counties and cities may not have resources or proximity to the Capital to allow any of their elected officials the opportunity to ever go to Austin to discuss these issues. How is it right to alienate the vast majority of our municipalities in Texas? Larger municipalities will simply hire full time employees as liaisons to State officials, costing taxpayers even more and giving urban areas a greater voice than rural Texas. The whole process will be skewed to benefit big money interests and big government rather than the will of the people. This is wrong.

Please rethink this legislation. I hope this legislation has just not been properly thought through and will be dismissed when logic and truth win out.

Mitzi Baker, Co. Treasurer

Midland County

Midland, TX

I appreciate the opportunity to voice my opposition to HB 749. Tax payer funded lobbying accounts for a very minute portion of lobbying efforts. Corporate and private interest groups make up the majority by far. The State of Texas, its Legislature, and several State Agencies employ tax payer funded lobbyist to monitor the legislative actions in Washington yet this bill does not

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

deny that voice. Local communities need the ability to express our positions and provide information on issues important to our communities. Working daily and full time for our counties on behalf of its citizens makes it extremely hard to monitor the thousands of bills that will impact us. It places us at a huge advantage. We should not spend that kind of time away from our counties. Our dues to our Associations are extremely low, and small counties especially need to be able to combine their resources thru our Associations to have a voice. Without the basic right and need to have open discussions and varied opinions presented, the Texas Capitol becomes a very one-sided place with only special interest groups with the most dollars having a voice. We desire only to be able to provide you with the most information, from the folks with boots on the ground, so that you can make the best decisions for the State of Texas as possible.

Thank you again for this opportunity, and again, I implore you to end this discussion in this esteemed Committee aimed at silencing County Officials.

Mitzi Baker, Midland County Treasurer, President, County Treasurers' Association of Texas

Sheila Pahl, Treasurer

Crane County

Crane, TX

As County Treasurer for Crane County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Pauline Medrano, County Treasurer

Self

Dallas, TX

Good afternoon- It is vital for all constituents to communicate and engage with their state elected officials regarding legislative bills during legislative session. As a county elected official, it is important for me to utilize my resources efficiently; the County Treasurer' Association and the Texas Association of Counties are a good use of our local tax dollars and assist me in tracking of pending legislation. I am oppose to HB749, this will gravely limit the ability in which I engage with state legislators locally and statewide. I appreciate your attention. Thank you

Patricia Vieth

Archer County

Archer City, TX

As County Treasurer of Archer County, I am opposed to HB 749 as it will limit our ability to engage with our state legislators. I feel that the Texas Association of Counties and the County Treasurers Association of Texas is the best way we can communicate with our state legislators. Being from a small county limits my ability to travel to our state capital , I feel that our taxpayers our our first priority and that CTAT and TAC are our voice. I appreciate your consideration with with HB 749

RHONDA KOKENA, CALHOUN CO TREASURER

CALHOUN COUNTY

PORT LAVACA, TX

I'm hereby officially opposed to HB 749. As a County Treasurer, I was elected to have a voice and protect tax payers money. By doing just that, I do not have the funds nor the time to go to Austin for legislative sessions for which to engage in conversations that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is not only my lifeline but all elected officials as well. I do not understand why these types of frivolous bills continue to be brought to the legislative sessions. A total waste of time. There are a lot more important

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

situations in the State of Texas to be concerned about other than taking away the voice of elected officials that are just trying to the job they were elected to do.

Thank you for your time and consideration of letting our voices be heard.

Rhonda S. Kokena
Calhoun County Treasurer

Dylan Osborne, County Treasurer
Harris County Treasurer's Office
Houston, TX

I am opposed to HB 749, because it will increase the costs associated with running my office during legislative sessions. If we are no longer able to depend on our state-wide organizations, such as the County Treasurers Association of Texas, to represent us in Austin, I will be forced to spend staff time on legislative matters and potentially travel to Austin to meet with my representatives. It will be tough to find the extra resources needed to do so, but it will be much harder on smaller, more rural counties that may not have access to even the limited funding my office has. Many elected offices in rural areas are one-person shops, and they simply do not have the resources to track relevant legislation and respond in a timely manner. I believe that will lead to a heavy burden for smaller offices, but it will also lead to an uneven playing field as larger, urban areas are able to hire in-house staff to work on legislative matters.

There are other issues with this bill. If enacted, it would allow well-funded special interest groups to effectively shout over the voices of local governments and put our residents' best interests at risk. It would not only impact state issues, but could prevent local governments from having adequate representation at the federal level as well. While I can appreciate the legislature's desire to save tax-payer money, this bill would potentially do a lot of harm, while saving a relatively small amount of money. It may even end up costing more money in the long run, as staff time gets factored into the equation and lost federal funds pile up.

I ask that you oppose this legislation due to the unintended consequences it will have and I thank you for your consideration.

Stephanie Ashworth
Families for Property Rights and Neighborhood Safety
Austin, TX

My name is Stephanie Ashworth and I am writing on behalf of Families for Property Rights and Neighborhood Safety. We are a statewide group committed to protecting local control of short-term rentals. We are very opposed to this bill. Our concern for this bill is that it will tip the scales in favor of special interests. If HB 749 should pass then Airbnb and the like will be free to send their deep pocketed well funded lobbyists to the capitol while cities won't be able to hire lobbyists or even have an Intergovernmental Relations office to advocate for our ordinances designed to protect us. That is unfair and unacceptable. Rep. Middleton is attempting to take away the voices of ordinary Texans. We deserve to be heard on public policy and rely on our local governments to do so while defending our interests in the public arena particularly the legislative arena. Please vote NO on HB749.

Renee Warren, Wheeler County Treasurer
Wheeler County
Wheeler, TX

HB749 will severely limit my ability to communicate with state legislators regarding any legislation effecting local government. The resources available through Texas Association of Counties and the County Treasurers Association of Texas have been of upmost value to me, especially in 2014 when I unexpectedly was appointed county treasurer when my predecessor resigned. If I had not had the resources from TAC and CTAT, my ability to orientate to my new position would have been severely hampered. It is imperative, especially living up in the Panhandle area and feeling isolated from state legislature, that I have a liaison organization through which I can have input and receive feedback on the areas of government that specifically affect my office

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

and type of government and citizens I serve. Thank you for your time in reviewing my comments.

Francis Tyminski, CW3

Self, Retired

Rockwall, TX

No public funds should be used for lobbying activities. If "consultants" are providing a service to the public through a contract with The State or other public subdivision, or agency, it should be competitively bid and visible. I've been told that legislatively created Special Districts (Municipal Management Districts, Special District Local Laws Code, Title 4) are typically prepared by private lawyers on behalf of or, in cooperation with private developers, who then find a local elected official to submit bills for creation of those districts. This is lobbying as well, and no public funds should be reimbursed to private entities. Records of these reimbursements are difficult for the public to find as they are usually deep within expense reports. I support this House Bill.

Judi Delesandri, Treasurer

Madison County

Madisonville, TX

As Madison County Treasurer, I am strongly opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which we engage with our state legislators. Personally, my job duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Jolene Williams, County Treasurer

Kimble County

Junction, TX

No!

Carbett "Trey" Duhon, County Judge

Waller County

Hempstead, TX

As a local official and County Judge of Waller County, Texas, I am writing to you to express my opposition to HB 749, and the negative impact it will have on myself and local officials to do the jobs we were elected to do – represents the citizens of our county.

In order for me to be effective at my job, it is imperative that associations like Texas Association of Counties, be allowed to continue to communicate with members of the Legislature on issues that are important to counties as a whole. Although I remain very involved in each legislative session (as evidenced by these comments), I cannot track each and every bill and communicate with each legislator regarding the same. Groups like TAC are able to do that for me and I rely on them to do so. Waller County cannot afford to send someone to Austin every week. Passing this Bill effectively SILENCES local officials and prevents them from doing what they were elected to do. It goes against the very premise upon which Texas was founded – local control.

What is most troubling about this Bill is the implicit assumption contained therein – that if a local government entity uses taxpayer dollars to fund a nonprofit association, or even hire a lobbyist, that doing so, in and of itself, goes against the best interests of the taxpayers and the citizens. THAT IS FLAT OUT FALSE... But mistakenly taking this premise as true is the only way that this Bill can be justified (especially in Texas).

Waller County has never hired a private lobbyist to represent the County on any legislation of local interest, but if we ever did, I

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

can promise you it would be an issue that would be of the greatest importance to our Citizens... and it would be important enough that I know Waller County citizens would support our effort to fight for that issue. As a local official, I can say without equivocation, that I am much better positioned to know what our citizens' concerns are on a day to day basis than elected officials in Austin or Washington DC., and what issues matter the most. I interact with our citizens every day of every week. I see them at the grocery store, at the gas station, at the local restaurants, and everywhere else that anyone would be on a daily basis.

If a local entity hires a lobbyist to push for legislation that is not in the best interests of the citizens, then those citizens have every right to vote those elected officials out of office, which by the way, happens far more often on the local level than any other level of government... But this legislation goes far beyond that. Under the guise of "protecting taxpayers" – it silences local officials, and by doing so, silences our citizens, who would be left with no viable input into legislation or projects that impact our local communities.

For this reason, HB 749 should not be passed out of committee. Please stand for local control in Texas by voting AGAINST HB 749.

Brian Libbey

self

Westworth Village, TX

I am a city council member in the small city of Westworth Village. We need advocates such as Texas Municipal League to help get us answers and representation for our city council and residents. I understand some may abuse the courts, that should not take away our opportunity for good council and support. Thank you for this avenue to have my voice heard

Brian C Libbey

Sherri Johnson

Oldham County Treasurer

Vega, TX

As Oldham County Treasurer, I am opposed to HB 749 because of the impact it will have on my ability to engage with my state legislators. Because I am the only one in my office, it is difficult for me to spend the time needed to travel to Austin during the legislative session to be personally involved in meeting with and discussing bills that affect county government. The County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties have been a great source of help for me in regards to legislative issues. Utilizing these organizations is a good way for my office and my county to be fiscally responsible with our taxpayers' dollars. Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns.

Frank Pomeroy

myself as a concerned citizen

Seguin, TX

Millions of Texas taxpayer dollars are spent every year to hire contract lobbyists who represent local governments in state legislatures, often to advocate against taxpayer interests. I believe that as long as we continue to use endless dollars to present the same entities over and over to the same politicians, and they continue to work for each other we will never get the change and open minds that is needed for today's constituency. We need to be able to allow low budget grass roots candidates to have a chance at being elected, however as long as lobbyists are funded by tax dollars it behooves them to put money into the coffers of the politicians they know they have a relationship with already rather than take a chance on a new individual in the office. So I humbly ask you to please vote for this House Bill.

George Clement

self

Austin, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Hello my name is George Clement and I am asking for you to support HB 749 to limit tax payer funded lobbying. As our governor has explained lobbyists have found ways to use taxpayer funding to “influence lawmakers to take more ... money”, which obviously been very successful considering its increased to over 1500 lobbyists registered at the Texas Ethics Commission in 2021.

This bill will help us stop that, by prohibiting the use of public funds to hire an individual or group to lobby a member of legislature. We need to spend our tax dollars effectively and efficiently and we should encourage political subdivisions & Texas citizens to lobby directly so that we can drive the most useful action with the least amount of waist.

Please vote to move HB749 forward quickly.

Thanks
George Clement

Bonnie Giddens
Self, Architect
San Antonio, TX

Please do not limit the ability of our free and public schools to organize specialists to educate our fellow trustees and administrators on proposed legislation and communicate the impacts of that proposed legislation to our representatives at the state level. This is the most basic form of democracy. HB 749 would further suppress the most disenfranchised of your constituents. Ask yourself who benefits from this bill? Why is it being proposed? I am in my 9th year as a trustee, and I am appalled by the constant and myriad efforts by some of our legislators to dismantle and avoid funding our public school system. Yes, some of them are doing poorly and all can be improved, but the same can be said for you, our representatives. The people that will be taking care of you in your retirement are in our school system now. It is in your best interest to make sure they are educated to the highest level and that can only be done if you understand the impact of proposed legislation both on districts that can afford to have staff that follows the legislative process and those that either can not or will not engage with their representatives. Please keep democracy alive and healthy in the state of Texas!

Amy Klawinsky, Mrs
Walker County
Huntsville, TX

As County Treasurer for Walker County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it limits the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use our of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Don Allred, County judge
Oldham county and myself
Vega, TX

I live and work in a small rural county mor than 500 miles from Austin. I have one staff in my office. I do not have the ability to read and understand the more than 5000 bills that are filed in each session, nor do I have the ability to be in Austin to testify on all the bills that affect my county citizens. We must have the ability to our organizations to inform us of the affect. Our ability to serve our citizens depend on representing my resident of Oldham County by being able to participate in legislative process. This is fundamental to process of government. How many lobbyists does the state have in Washington working for you? Counties deserve the same ability.

Mary Horton, County Treasurer

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Jackson County

Edna, TX

As the Jackson County Treasurer, I am opposed to S.B. 234/H.B. 749. The combined voices of the county officials and local communities of this state should not be silenced with this attempt. I rely on associations, such as the Texas Association of Counties and the County Treasurers' Association of Texas, to engage with legislators on my behalf.

Lois VanBeck, Treasurer

San Saba County

San Saba, TX

As County Treasurer for San Saba County, I depend on the County Treasurer's Association (CTAT) and Texas Association of Counties (TAC) to keep me "in the loop" on all pending legislation that might effect the operation of our local government. Because of the size (pop. 6000) of my county and the fiduciary duties I perform regularly for my county, I do not have the necessary time for the daily vigil needed to review proposed legislation the could effect my county. Travel away from my office to lobby for/or against legislation just means my office is closed. Which in my opinion is poor public service. I believe both of these organizations provide a useful resource and a great value to the residents of our County. I am strongly OPPOSED to HB 749. LET OUR VOICES BE HEARD.

Linda Douglass, County Treasurer

Guadalupe County

Seguin, TX

As the Guadalupe County Treasurer, I oppose HB 749 as I believe it is unconstitutional to try to silence County Officials by taking away our means of communication with legislators through our lobbyists. It is imperative that Elected Officials keep track of pending legislation and there is no way as a full-time Treasurer I would be able to keep abreast of all the bills that affect county government without the support of our lobbyists.

Laura Conner

Crockett County Treasurer

Ozona, TX

I serve as our County Treasurer for Crockett County. I am opposed to HB 749 for several reasons. My full-time duties as a Treasurer do now allow for me to be in Austin to argue for/against legislation. Our taxpayers need me here to serve them. We need organizations such as CTAT and TAC for their outside representation. Our local taxpayers need these resources to represent county needs in Austin. Thank you for your consideration.

Ann Strube, County Treasurer

Runnels County Treasurer

Ballinger, TX

As County Treasurer for Runnels County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use our of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Betty Allen, Treasurer

Franklin County

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Mount Vernon, TX

As the County Treasurer for Franklin County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I am able to engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of our local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Joan Sargent
Waller County
Hempstead, TX

As Treasurer for Waller County my top priority is to the taxpayers and for that reason I oppose HB 749. While I am very interested in all pending legislation impacting counties, neither my budget nor my duties allow me to physically be in Austin during the hearings. The resources available through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties maximizes the use of tax dollars and is an invaluable tool for treasurers. Thank you for your consideration.

Kimberly Barrier, County Treasurer
Erath County
Stephenville, TX

As the Erath County Treasurer, I am opposed to HB 749. Being able to use public funds for lobbying activities is crucial for elected officials at the local level. With responsibility of our elected positions, we do not have the time to travel continually during legislation sessions, let alone stay abreast of all the house and senate bills that pass through each legislative session. These lobbyists are experienced at what they do and provide us all with a voice that we cannot accomplish individually. Many elected officials rely on Texas Association of Counties and other unique elected official organizations to provide a vast amount of resources to elected officials that we would not be able to accomplish without them. Being able to utilize public funds for lobbying activities is a good use of local tax dollars as it allows local officials to focus on their daily duties and responsibilities to the citizens in which they are held accountable. I greatly appreciate your consideration.

DAVID BETANCOURT
COUNTY TREASURERS ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS
Brownsville, TX

As County Treasurer for Cameron County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of our local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Sandy Taber, Jones County Treasurer
Jones County
Anson, TX

As County Treasurer for Jones County, I'm asking you to consider the adverse effect that HB 749 will have on my office. Although it is important to me to be able to engage with state legislators, time and distance does not allow me to do this personally. My duties for my county do not allow me to travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. The resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is invaluable to me and is a good use of our local tax dollars and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. Let it be known, I am opposed to this bill!

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Bill Rickert, Mr.
Fort Bend County Treasurer
Sugar Land, TX

I believe the bill in its current form is too restrictive by not allowing counties to fund associations as their consolidated voice, thus causing county officials to be consumed by the legislative process.

I do believe it is a bad situation when you have multiple geographically overlapping governmental entities (e.g. County, City, School District) spending taxpayer dollars on lobbyists to fight each other on an issue in Austin.

It is also bad to have a governmental entity spending taxpayer dollars on lobbyists for topics not directly related to their remit.

I do believe governmental entities must be able to utilize lobbyist resources to represent the interest of their constituents in Austin and it would be extremely bad to eliminate.

If the state bans local entities from utilizing lobbyists, the state should ban itself from utilizing lobbyists in DC.

Sharon Adams, Treasurer
Howard County
BIG SPRING, TX

I am the Treasurer for Howard County. I wish to let you know that I am extremely opposed to HB 749. As Treasurer, I have many duties and limited funds that would keep me from attending legislative sessions to voice my opinions on bills that concern county government. Having resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and Texas Association of Counties is a better use of local tax dollars and keeps me informed of all pending Legislation. I would greatly appreciate your consideration in this matter.
Sincerely, Sharon Adams

Renee Couch, County Treasurer
Comal County
New Braunfels, TX

I regret I am unable to attend in person, but appreciate the opportunity to oppose HB749 in writing. As Comal County Treasurer, my fiduciary duties for the county, the county employees, county vendors as well as citizens do not allow me time to advocate for or against legislation that affect county government. I believe that the very minimal amounts spent for my association to have outside representation makes the most sense. Being able to utilize resources through the County Treasurer's Association of Texas as well as the Texas Association of Counties is the best use of local tax dollars. There is no way I, or my fellow Comal County officials, could track pending legislation that directly affect our county. Please oppose HB749, thank you for your consideration.

Jeannie Keeney, County Treasurer
Self
Fairfield, TX

I am the Freestone County Treasurer and a member of the County Treasurer's Association of Texas and I am in opposition of HB 749. I would love to be able to sit in Austin during the legislative sessions to be able to let my voice be heard, but having a two person office my job duties and the Freestone county tax payers come first. As a representative to the great State of Texas, you should welcome the fact that your constituents want there voices to be heard, so that you are able to represent them to the best of your abilities. This bill will cause undue hardship for the rural and smaller counties and municipalities from having a voice, whereas they do not have the funds or the manpower to be able to travel and represent their constituents. I am asking you to not

support this bill.

Denise Salzbrenner, Carson County Treasurer

Self Carson County Treasurer

Panhandle, TX

I strongly opposed to HB 749. AS Carson County Treasurer I utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and Texas Association of Counties. Carson County is a very small county and my fiduciary duties do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session. Without these two organization I'd have a hard time keeping up with the bills that affect county government. They also keep me updated with the latest pending bills, and it's a good use of our local tax dollars. I would greatly appreciate your consideration.

Ianthia Fisher, Mayor

City of Crockett

CROCKETT, TX, TX

Dear members of the State Affairs Committee, we are finding ourselves with ever-increasing amounts of bills being filed each legislative session (over 7,500 bills in our last session) along with thousands of amendments and budget items that are affecting our towns and counties. Many of them seem directly focused on undermining local officials, as a number of these bills are increasingly against local governance and representation. With the increasing strain on small town and county budgets, how could we ever afford a full-time lobbyist with the expertise and up-to-date knowledge to represent us and spend tax-payer dollars on the road and in Austin? It only makes sense that that burden is distributed in small portions across small towns, such as ours, by using the services and representation of associations such as TML, TFCA, TMPA, and TCMA.

We consistently hear our state government officials and governor arguing how Washington should stay out of Austin; now we are asking that Austin leave more decisions to the local level. While we appreciate the fight against “big government,” what is more “big government” than silencing the voices of small communities and letting local officials make the best decisions for their constituents? Banning community advocates is a prime example of government overreach that should be argued against and I believe all local governments can support that, conservative or liberal.

We are continuing to see the increasing strain of unfunded mandates and the negative impacts of Austin’s decisions through a one-size-fits-all approach. H.B. 749 is specifically designed to silence the voices of local officials and the residents they represent in the state policymaking process. This Community Advocacy bill amounts to none other than Community Censorship. We are asking for an “AGAINST” vote from our state representatives whenever this bill or any amended version of it is brought to you!

Sincerely,
Dr. Ianthia Fisher
Mayor City of Crockett

Jimmy Sylvia, Judge
Chambers county
Cove, TX

Against

Jan Hartl, County Treasurer
County Treasurer's Association of Texas
Floresville, TX

As County Treasurer for Wilson County, I’m opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Jessica Black

Texas Neighborhood Coalition and Moms Against Short Term Rentals

Arlington, TX

I am writing to urge you to vote "NO" on HB 749. During the past three sessions of the Texas Legislature, lobbyists from Airbnb and Vrbo have pushed corporate special interest bills that would have preempted local control of land use, zoning and short term rental regulations. As a resident who worked hard to get my local short term rental (STR) ordinance enacted in order to protect my neighborhood from commercialization and a member of Texas Neighborhood Coalition (www.txneighborhoodcoalition.com) who fought against those preemption efforts by the STR platforms, I want my city to be able to defend our ordinance and local municipal police and zoning powers against billion dollar companies that only care about their own financial interests, not what is best for local residents. I rely on the advocacy and expertise of the lobbyists who represent my city to protect me. As a busy mom of two, I do my best to advocate for my own interests when STR preemption bills that would negatively impact my community are filed, but I do not have the time or expertise to track and analyze the 1000's of bills that are filed each session, nor do I have the money or ability to travel to Austin frequently to meet with legislators and their staff or testify against bills. Likewise, my city council representative has a full time day job in addition to all of his council duties. He does not have the time or expertise to keep up with the 1000's of bills that are filed each session or take time off from work to drive to Austin to give 3 minutes of testimony against multiple bills each session. I don't need the Texas legislature to tell my local government how to spend my tax dollars. If I am unhappy with how my local government is allocating taxpayer dollars, I have the ability to attend local meetings to advocate for changes or vote out elected leaders who won't listen. HB 749 gives corporate lobbyists free reign at the TX Legislature while silencing the voices of local governments and their constituents. Please protect the ability of local governments to effectively advocate for their constituents. Vote NO on HB 749.

Joe Fauth, County Judge

Grimes County Commissioners Court

Plantersville, TX

We oppose this bill. Please vote NO.
Thank you.

Ronald Ingram, County judge

Hardeman County

Quanah, TX

Opposition to bill

Greg Tyra, County Judge Wilbarger County

Wilbarger County

Vernon, TX

Oppose this Bill

Larry Smith, CISD Board President

Self

Canadian, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Committee Members,

RE: HB 749

I am testifying "AGAINST" this bill.

My name is Larry Smith. I am the Board President of Canadian ISD. Austin is 477 miles, or a 7-hour and 43-minute drive, from Canadian. I am aware of this bill because of the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). As an unpaid volunteer, there is no way that I personally have the time or resources to track bills such as this. Without TASB or other similar groups, locally elected officials would not be able to perform their fiduciary responsibilities. The amount of resources and time required for each elected official in the state to individually monitor and advocate in Austin for their constituents would be unreasonable. As locally elected officials, we ask our local tax payer funded entities to pay minimal dues to assist us in our responsibilities to our local tax payers.

If you remove local ISD voices with this bill, educators will look to other means to influence legislation. Right now you have elected officials advocating for all stakeholders (students, teachers, taxpayers, etc.) with the assistance of representative lobbyists, but if you remove our ability to efficiently advocate, then unelected entities, like teacher unions, would fill the void. We are elected officials just like you. We are in many ways held more accountable than you. Allow us to efficiently and effectively do our job.

Best regards,

Sean Kennedy, Treasurer

Victoria County Treasurers' Office

Victoria, TX

Thank you for allowing me a chance to voice my comments. I am in my fourth term as treasurer of Victoria County. Recently at a commissioners' court meeting during citizens communication a former county commissioner spoke. His opinion is this matter should be in the hands of local taxpayers. Local taxpayers are the ones affected by paying higher taxes or fees if there is no local voice in Austin for them. I agree our citizens need to know how much is being spent for lobbying by local governments and state government. Perhaps rather than banning the use of these funds have legislation for counties/state to disclose the amount of monies spent up front in the budget. Put in in the hands of the local taxpayer. Please remember the local folks that elected me, elected you. I am opposed to HB 749.

Jim c White, County judge

Kent counyy

Jsyton, TX

I do not support this bill and encourage no one else should either

Ronnie Gordon, Hartley Co Judge

Hartley County

Channing, TX

Hartley Co residents depend on their elected officials to speak for them

Stan Wojcik, Knox county judge

Knox county

Benjamin, TX

Lobby Bill vote NO . For the sake of fairness.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Robert Johnston
Anderson County
Palestine, TX

Please vote against this bill.

Clint Hardeman, City Manager
City of Pittsburg
Pittsburg, TX

?Local government and community leaders advocate for policies that bolster local efforts to provide services, meet the needs of our communities, and protect our unique local and regional economy and quality of life. It is imperative that local Texas leaders have an effective voice in discussions on the merits of legislation and state policies that affect their communities. Our voices should be allowed to be amplified through the actions of associations and professional advocates as it is an essential part of producing good public policy. This is especially applicable for smaller communities like ours.

As Governor Abbott has often said during the pandemic, Texas is not a “one size fits all” state, and the unique attributes of each locality and region inform sound public policy that sustains job growth, enhances educational opportunity, and provides a better quality of life for local communities. Some state elected officials have proposed legislation like SB 234 and HB 749 which would eliminate the right to hire professional lobbyists, stifling the ability of local government and school leaders to be represented and heard when lawmakers in Austin debate public policies that impact local communities.

Local community leaders are often unable to spend endless days and nights at the Capitol when the Legislature meets because they have important daily obligations to their constituents and taxpayers back home. If enacted, this legislation would set a dangerous precedent by allowing every other stakeholder in the legislative process to hire professional lobbyists while denying the same right to local elected officials and community leaders. Experienced lobbyists are able to monitor policy proposals for local government leaders and make sure that our voices are heard in a timely manner. Lobbyists can help produce better public policy outcomes for local community interests, thereby leveling the playing field for community priorities, including job creation and unique quality of life.

Accountability for the expenditure of local public funds for such efforts is properly provided by local taxpayers and voters, not by legislation designed to restrict and silence the voices of local elected and community leaders. If local taxpayers believe local leadership makes the wrong decisions in paying dues to an association or hiring a lobbyist, those citizens can voice their concerns in public forums or with their vote.

The City of Pittsburg opposes any legislative attempt to limit or prohibit the authority of city, county, river authority, public hospital board, community college, emergency service district, special district, economic development coalition, or school district officials to use public funds to communicate with legislators and state agencies, including any restrictions that would prohibit the use of public funds to pay membership dues to organizations that hire lobbyists.

David Abernathy, Mayor

Patty Brennan
Cooke County Treasurer
Gainesville, TX

As County Treasurer for Cooke County, I’m opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers’ Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Doyle Robinson, Mayor
City of Panhandle
Panhandle, TX

Please leave cities with the ability to listen and respond without state interference. Small towns can not afford hiring attorneys or traveling to Austin every time the legislature decides they want to speak on our behalf without our input. Collectively small towns share common interest and face common problems. When we band together to have someone report to us about ongoing legislation and that information is shared among our communities as well as how that legislation will affect our communities, that is how democracy works. Any attempt to stifle our flow of information is an assault on our freedom. We kindly request that state interference by HB749 be recognized for what it is, an attempt to take away our local control and decision making process. HB 749 is a direct assault on small towns in Texas and an attempt to take away our voice and our liberty.

Byron Ryder, Leon County Judge
Leon County Government
Centerville, TX

Myself and Leon County is Against this bill number HB749.

Allison Harbison, Judge
Shelby County
Center, TX

I want to offer my opposition to this overreaching bill. I feel this is an attempt to silence local authority and control, to put us in the corner and shut us up. This is unacceptable to the local officials who are the closest to the citizens of Texas and we have their best interests at heart.

Ken Holt, Fisher county judge
Self
Rotan, TX

Opposition

Rusty Stafford
County Judge
Seymour, TX

Against, I believe you are shutting out the voices you represent but listen to the special interest groups that fund your campaign. Austin is looking a lot like Washington DC.

Loretta Griffin, Treasurer
Matagorda County
Bay, TX

As Matagorda County Treasurer I oppose HB 749. My duties here in the office and to the citizens of Matagorda County does not allow me time to travel to Austin during legislative session to let my voice be heard. I depend on the Texas Association of Counties to be my voice on issues affecting county government. I am able to utilize Texas Association of Counties resources and

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

the County Treasurer's Association to stay up to date on pending litigation. Thank you for your consideration.

Cindy Irwin, County Judge
Hutchinson County
Stinnett, TX

I would like to register my opposition to HB 749. This bill will not be good for rural counties!

Kathryn Wiseman, Judge
Howard County
Big Spring, TX

I am against this measure. Counties need the help from our associations to highlight and advocate for or against pending legislation!

James DeLoach, County Judge
Lamb County
Littlefield, TX

I am opposed to HB 749. This is an effort to silence public officials. If my citizens dont think i am spending money wisely, and representing them appropriately they will tell me. Or remove me from office.

Darren York
Self
Wolfe City, TX

Since 2015 over \$324 million has been spent of taxpayer money to lobby for legislative agendas that can and many times are directly opposed to the local taxpayer interest, desires or views from whom the money was taken. As an individual it is incumbent upon me to lobby my legislators and governing officials individually and the average citizen cannot afford to "hire out" this activity to let there voice be heard or to peddle a specific point of view. As such taxpayer funded lobbyist put the individual Texan at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to getting state legislators attention. It is completely unacceptable, not to mention almost unethical, to consider that as a taxpayer I should have to pay to fund my local school board and local government legislative engagement when they should be held to the same standard as I am as a citizen. If they are interested and passionate enough about an legislative item or agenda they should have to be personally invested in making their voices heard rather than using my money to hire it out to a lobbyist. You will hear officials at this level make the case that they don't have the time to get involved at this level so it is required that these lobbyist be used to keep them informed and keep them engaged, but I will submit that they should be held to no less of a standard than I as a single citizen who is no less busy earning a living that not only pays them to conduct the "peoples" business much less to be forced to subsidize their lack of involvement. The standard should be the same and the weight of involvement and the power of the voices heard should be from the people not from "for hire" voices at the taxpayers expense. The dollars spent on lobbying by local governments and any political subdivision of the state is tax dollars that can be better utilized to meet the basic and fundamental services and requirements of the government for the taxpayer rather than cutting programs that directly benefit the taxpayer and eventually lead to increases in tax burden to meet the requirements while feeding a "money machine" with direct ties to specific special interests and no doubt conflicts of interest since lobbyist get the lion's share of their revenue from big business and special interest advocacy groups. It is time that the State of Texas protect its citizens from being forced to use their tax dollars to advocate for things that they fundamentally oppose as the government should represent the whole just a special part. Respectfully, please pass this bill that bans the ability of local governments and any political subdivision of the state from using public funds to hire someone whose main job is to lobby any government entity.

Bob Cunningham, Dr.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Self

Llano, TX

Either the definition of lobbying should be redefined as a for profit corporation OR non-profits providing information to local elected entities regarding legislation or to legislators on behalf of local officials should be excluded. Legislators need information regarding needs of local entities and vice versa. Thank you!

Judge D.J. Wagner, County Judge

Deaf Smith County Judge

Hereford, TX

I believe this to be a BAD bill. This will limit my ability as an elected official to communicate with our legislators. Please do not vote for HB 749.

Hoppy Haden, County Judge

Caldwell County Commissioners Court

Lockhart, TX

I am writing in opposition to HB 749. A bill that prohibiting counties from using it funds to join and support nonprofit county associations is unacceptable for the following reasons.

"tax payer funded lobbying" accounts for less than 10% of the total lobbying in each legislative session.

The vast majority of Texas Counties do not hire lobbyist and instead only provide a minimal portion of membership dues to non-profit county associations for the purposes of legislative research, communication, and prevent new tax mandates on the citizens of our county.

In the current sessions there are over 7000 bills filed and rural and smaller counties especially need to be able to combine their resources through their associations to monitor these bills filed each session and effectively present their unique issues to the state and federal government.

It is a false claim that taxpayer funded lobbying works against the interest of taxpayers. Indeed, a priority of county government and its "lobbying" effort with our Texas Legislature is focused on ending the state and federal practice of issuing unfunded mandates which impose billions of dollars in taxes on local property taxpayers.

The State of Texas, the Texas Legislature and state agencies consistently and actively employ large numbers of state taxpayer funded lobbyist to analyze and monitor the thousands of bills filed each session and further utilize these lobbyists to advocate for state interests in Washington D.C., yet SB 749 would deny local communities this same ability while continuing public support of state agencies lobbying and prohibiting Texas counties from retaining experienced representation before state and federal legislative bodies to retain federal and state projects.

The prohibition on county government in SB 749 would violate the basic principles of open and robust discussion and would further the transformation of the halls and offices of our Texas capitol into even more of special interest group dominated legislation each session.

In short i am against any legislation that seeks to silence the combined voices of the county officials and local communities of this state.

David Blackburn, Judge

Bell County

Belton, TX

I am unable to attend the hearing as I am currently attending state-mandated judge's training...otherwise I would be there in

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

person. I believe this bill is simply attempting to silence local officials in their efforts to represent their constituents before the Legislature. That is simply wrong and bad public policy. In addition, the bill would not allow representatives of our nonprofit associations to present and provide information to the Legislature. The preservation of our collective voice through the associations is essential to balanced input on the many bills, amendments, and substitutes that affect local government. That is simply wrong and bad public policy. Please accept these comments as in opposition to HB749.

Josh Bristol
Graduate Student
Corsicana, TX

This Bill is a horrible intrusion into local politics and local control. I noticed that you want to silence cities and counties, but excluded school districts. Also, you are not limiting private paid lobbyists from lobby your August body, which I find horribly hypocritical. It is a bad Bill, and should not be enacted. I would suggest that you differentiate between nonprofit and not for profit associations vs. for profit lobbyists, and clean your own house prior to attacking local government!

Mark Christopher, Foard county judge
Foard County
Crowell, TX

Foard County opposes this Bill,we need to all work together and remember to always serve God's will not mans will,Mans will is what got us in this mess,Best Regards,jJudge Christopher

Karl Holloway, Cottle County Judge
Cottle County
Paducah, TX

I am voicing my opposition to HB 749. Cottle county relies on our Associations to monitor and inform us of changes. We do not and can not afford a lobbyist and these associations are the only way we have to track, bills in the legislature. Also due to distance and last minute committee hearings I can not personally travel to Austin for in person meetings

Tom Keyes, County Judge
Gaines County
Seminole, TX

I wish to state my objection to this bill as written. Gaines County pays membership dues to the Texas Association of Counties (TAC). TAC provides critical support to its member counties; insurance, risk management, retirement services, etc. TAC also assists my County to track bills which might have an impact on us, and this is a bill which will have negative impact on Gaines County.

I do not object to transparency, but I do object to the loss of local control. I would be glad to report to my constituents each year what we are spending on organizations such as TAC, NACo, and even lobbyist if we chose to use one. But, please don't tie my hands to keep me from representing my constituents. I know for a fact that my constituents will put me out of office if I do something they don't approve. They've done it once already.

Kevin Cannon
self educator
Denison, TX

Please vote against this bill. Educators need voices in the capitol to advocate for public education. Additionally, this bill seems

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

unfair as it appears to limit only pro-public education and not anti-public education groups.

Teresa Kassell, Llano County Treasurer

self

LLano, TX

I am Teresa Kassell, Llano County Treasurer and would like to voice my opposition to HB749. Being a treasurer of a small county and with only one staff member, it is impossible to travel to Austin for each Legislative Session. Without the resources of time and legal expertise provided by the County Treasurers Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties, I could not possibly know what bills were being introduced and how they would affect the citizens of my county. I believe having these resources available to counties make them better informed to help their citizens, therefore, I am asking you to vote "NO" to HB749.

Sara Bonser

Plano Independent School District

Plano, TX

The Honorable Chris Paddie
State Affairs Committee
Texas House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Paddie and Committee Members:

As Superintendent of Plano ISD, it is my primary goal and objective to provide the leadership necessary to ensure our 50,000 students receive an excellent public education each day they are in our care. My ability to focus on the day-to-day operations of our district and school is the result of the team of professionals around me that each have a specific set of skills and experiences that contribute to Plano ISD. That includes our ability to hire someone in a public policy role to help navigate the enormous amount of work happening at the legislature. The funding and governance of public education is a complex subject. Every two years, the Texas Legislature meets to consider thousands of bills that may impact our school district in very small to incredibly large ways. Without a dedicated person to monitor the activities in Austin, it would be impossible for me to weigh in on the bills we support and provide input on legislation that we anticipate issues with.

The perception of a "lobbyist" and the reality of what that public policy role provides to our district are two very different things. The Plano ISD Board of Trustees, in conjunction with myself and my leadership team, develop our legislative priorities. We have relationships with our legislators. We know our issues and what we do and do not support. Our public policy team member does not leverage relationships or determine our position on issues, but simply ensures that we are plugged in and actively participating in the conversations and settings where decisions are being made that impact our school district. We believe it is more fiscally responsible to hire a policy consultant for the legislative session rather than employ a full-time person for this role.

Furthermore, we are members of many non-profits and associations that provide invaluable services to our school districts beyond advocacy. Our Chamber of Commerce, public education groups and other organizations ensure we are connected to our communities, they market and promote our district to new residents and prospective families, and they provide us with information on new and changing rules and regulations with regard to state policy. To prevent us from joining these groups would be a detriment to our ability to effectively represent our constituents and stay abreast of issues impacting Plano ISD beyond simply legislative items.

We urge you not to support HB 749 and silence our school districts on the many important pieces of legislation that come out of each Legislative Session. Please allow me to continue to build a team of professionals that can support me and our Board of Trustees as we implement our vision and priorities for Plano ISD.

Sincerely,

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Sara M. Bonser, Superintendent

Duane Daniel, County Judge

King County

Guthrie, TX

I am submitting my opposition of HB 749. TAC is the only way we can keep up with what is going on in the State Legislature. I am asking for you to vote against this bill.

Wynette Griffin, Dr.

self

Bedford, TX

This bill would limit organizations like TEPSA from participating in the legislative process, but TEPSA is able to attend, synthesize and inform members about important legislation. I have 450 children and 50 staff members on my campus and need to be visiting classrooms, not watching legislative debates. Having TEPSA or TASBO or other similar organizations represent my position allows me to focus on what I do best...managing a school so that children can learn.

Chris Porter, Judge

Gray County

Pampa, TX

State Representatives,

I cannot appear in person due to Judicial Training that a majority of the County Judges of the State of Texas are attending, in Lubbock. Please consider this communication as opposition to this House Bill. This Bill would be detrimental to each County by discouraging non profit Associations that provide efficient and factual information, while also preserving our collective voices that affect County Government concerning the many Bills, Amendments and Substitutes that affect our Counties. Passage of this Bill should not be limited to County or Municipal Governments. It should also encompass every facet of State Government if this Bill is truly trying to accomplish total transparency.

Regards,

Chris Porter

Gray County Judge

Wanda Smith, County Treasurer

CTAT

Clarendon, TX

I'm the County Treasurer in Donley County and we are a very small and poor county. I'm opposed to HB 749 because I am the only person that works in my office and I do not have time or money to travel during the legislative session to have conversation for/or against a bill that effects our county government. It is so convenient to be a member of the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties that are very willing to help each County Treasurer in the State of Texas and to keep us updated on all pending legislation. We would appreciate you consideration. Thank you for what you do for the State of Texas.

Terrie Neuville, Marion County Treasurer

Marion County Treasurer

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Jefferson, TX

As County Treasurer for Marion County, I'm opposed to HB 749. My duties as Treasurer for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use our of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track , have a good understanding and updated of all pending legislation.

Trey Ellis, Hon. Parmer County Judge

Parmer County, Texas

Farwell, TX

Representative Middleton, please do not do to the rural counties of Texas what the Federal Government is doing to the State of Texas such as how the border situation is being handled. Those in Washington have no idea what's going on in Texas as they are not here to experience it first hand. I live approximately 475 miles NNW of Austin. Impossible for me to argue for or against legislation by going to Austin on my own dime. I depend on CJACAT & WTCJaC association for information on legislation that affects my county and constituents. Without that information I would be totally ineffective in representing my county. Please don't let a this legislation take away my voice for my county and my constituents. As I'm sure you're aware that counties, especially rural counties are responsible for the main increases in higher property taxes. Schools and special service districts are main culprits. Please consider my plea for rural counties and God Bless You and Texas.

Respectfully,

Trey Ellis

Parmer County Judge.

Dianna Spieker, Treasurer

Tom Green County

San Angelo, TX

Elected County Officials should be able to hire lobbyist to speak on our behalf on legislation that relates to County Government. We are the experts in our area. Not all voices are negative and we should not be silenced. If you silence County Officials from speaking to the State or to the Federal Government you are actually doing a disservice to our shared constituents. What would your response be if the Federal Government stated you, the State of Texas can no longer voice your insights via a paid lobbyist?

Leann Monk

Tyler County Treasurer's Office

Woodville, TX

I appreciate the opportunity to voice my opposition to HB 749. The State of Texas, its Legislature, and several State Agencies employ tax payer funded lobbyist to monitor the legislative actions in Washington yet this bill does not deny that voice. Local communities need the ability to express our positions and provide information on issues important to our communities. Working daily and full time for our counties on behalf of its citizens makes it extremely hard to monitor the thousands of bills that will impact us. Due to my duties, obligations and responsibilities as the Tyler County Treasurer, I feel we should not and cannot spend that kind of time away from our counties. Our dues to our Associations are extremely low, and small counties especially need to able to combine their resources thru our Associations to have a voice. Without the basic right and need to have open discussions and varied opinions presented, the Texas Capitol becomes a very one-sided place with only special interest groups with the most dollars having a voice. We desire only to be able to provide you with the most information, from the folks with boots on the ground, so that you can make the best decisions for the State of Texas as possible.

Thank you again for this opportunity, and again, I implore you to end this discussion in this esteemed Committee aimed at silencing County Officials.

Leann Monk,

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Tyler County Treasurer

Raul Reyes, County Treasurer

Webb County

Laredo, TX

As County Treasurer for Webb County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration. Thank you again for this opportunity, and again, I implore you to end this discussion in this esteemed Committee aimed at silencing County Officials.

Alan Dierschke

Self Glasscock County Treasurer

Garden City, TX

I would like to express my opposition to HB 749.

Thank you

Alan J. Dierschke

Glasscock County Treasurer

Darla Welch

County Treasurer's Association of Texas

Plains, TX

As the County Treasurer for Yoakum County, I am opposed to HB 749 as it will greatly limit my ability to engage with my state legislators. I would like to be in Austin in person but my full time job as County Treasurer, the 410 miles to Austin and the travel cost, and the taxpayers in my county being my priority it makes it impossible for me to attend the legislative session and voice for or against bills that affect our county government. Having the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties allows me to stay informed of all pending legislation and I believe it should remain this way. Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

Carol Ann Martin, DeWitt Co Treasurer

DeWitt County

Cuero, TX

I must voice my opposition to HB 749, I would love to be in Austin in person but my full time job as Treasurer and the taxpayers in DeWitt County are my priority. This bill would create such a hardship on all county officials who devote their full time to the citizens of the county. This is why CTAT has liaisons who help with the legislative processes on our behalf. Also the aid of TAC takes the weight off of our shoulders so that we, the county officials, can be here to serve our constituents.

Denise Janak

San Patricio County

Sinton, TX

As County Treasurer for San Patricio County, I'm opposed to HB 749. As a small to average county, we do not have the time to travel during legislative sessions to engage in bills that would affect county government. The resources available through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties are very good resource to use local tax dollars. I

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

appreciate your consideration to hear my opposition to this proposed bill.

Kevin Brendle, County Judge

Dickens, Texas

Dickens, TX

I register opposition to this bill. It is totally unreasonable to expect each local and county jurisdiction to monitor the voluminous bills for the purpose of safeguarding rural communities from legislation that impacts local governments, in both positive and negative ways. The amount of money earmarked for association dues and expenses related to legislative involvement is miniscule in most rural county budgets. This is an unnecessary attack on local government.

Melissa Jeter, President

Texas Association of County Auditors

Crockett, TX

On behalf of the Texas Association of County Auditors, I would like to respectfully offer our opposition to HB 749 which would prohibit the use of public funds by political subdivisions for lobbying activities. This bill would prohibit our members and Association from effectively communicating with state legislators of potential ramifications over taxpayer funds that would immediately impact county budgets.

All local government officials possess a wealth of information. They can and should be a valuable resource to legislators. An organization representing local officials, whether through the individual members or a representative, presenting a unified voice not only saves local officials valuable time but saves time and potential confusion for legislators and their staff. The public is better served by open communication between the legislature and local officials, which continues regardless of whether the Legislature is in session.

Thank you for your service to our great state. Should you wish to discuss our perspective or have questions with which we may assist, please do not hesitate to call on us at any time.

Kathy Blackwell, Johnson County Treasurer

Johnson County, Texas

Cleburne, TX

As County Treasurer for Johnson County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Daiquiri Beebe, City Councilwoman

Self

Huntsville, TX

As a member of the Texas Republican Party. I believe in freedom, personal responsibility and limited government. House Bill 749 goes against all three of these Republican ideals.

Freedom

As taxpaying citizens we should have the freedom to lobby the legislature the same way that corporations and special interest groups do, the same way that the state government lobbies the federal government. HB 749 prohibits local governments from

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

having the ability to pay for advocacy in the State Capitol but it allows any private entity to continue to spend as much money as allowed to lobby state government officials. We cannot send a staff member, their time is taken by their daily duties. You are saying we cannot hire a lobbyist, which would cost upwards of \$50,000, a cost that our city budgets cannot and should not have to incur. Volunteers? As city council members who already dedicate much of our time for little to no pay, are we supposed to spend our own time and money away from work and family to drive to Austin and speak directly with members of the legislature? This is a ridiculous and prohibitive notion.

House Bill 749 is proposing that cities should just stay quiet and not be concerned with what the state legislature is doing. We should just let you continue making laws unchecked by our local governments. At the same time, you want to have a say in what goes on in Washington D.C. How can we be certain that you are representing our best interests as a state in Washington D.C when you are unwilling to listen to what our local communities are concerned about? That shows a disconnect between you and the citizens of the state of Texas. This shows that you don't have a handle on the truly independent spirit that runs through our great state and its people. That thread is Freedom.

Personal Responsibility

As cities we should be able to speak on behalf of our citizens, if we are unable to do that because of our inability to hire someone on our behalf, we cannot represent the citizens of our communities and therefore we are shirking our responsibility. This bill claims to want to limit local government spending. The Republican Party of Texas has its own views on this. According to their Permanent Platform, Section 166, "Government spending is out of control at the federal level and state level and action is needed." The Republican Party of Texas states that your spending is out of control.

Limited Government

This bill gives more power to the state government to be able to create mandates without the input of cities, counties and school districts, thus eliminating local control and expanding the reach of state government. While the legislature may not always agree with what the cities are lobbying for. The one consistency is that Republicans believe in local control. Cities, counties and school boards know better about what their communities need than the state government. This proposed bill goes against republican ideals.

Cont.

SUSANNE GRAVES

Somervell County

BLUFF DALE, TX

As County Treasurer for Somervell County, I'm opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties Somervell County do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use our of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Daiquiri Beebe, City Councilwoman

Self

Huntsville, TX

Continued from 1st comment.

Saving the Taxpayers Money

Organizations like TML and TASB allow the local governments to save money for their citizens. Their membership in these organizations is minimal, our community pays \$5,000 per year to be a member and have lobbyists who are protecting the rights of

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

our local communities to govern ourselves. How else could we get someone to the State Capitol of Austin to represent our interests?

The Texas Constitution

It could be argued that Article 1, Section 27 of the Texas Constitution does not allow for the state government to prohibit the rights of cities to address the legislature. It states “RIGHT OF ASSEMBLY; PETITION FOR REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES. The citizens shall have the right, in a peaceable manner, to assemble together for their common good; and apply to those invested with the powers of government for redress of grievances or other purposes, by petition, address or remonstrance.” Essentially this bill would make it virtually impossible for municipalities to petition, address or protest against issues that are detrimental to our communities and our citizens.

HB 749 Sponsor-Representative Middleton

Rep. Mayes Middleton is quoted as saying in a Texas Tribune article dated December 23, 2020 “I’m going to be against anything that is going to restrict peoples’ ability to go in [the Capitol] and make their voice heard in person,” Middleton said. “We’re not some special class of people — and I just don’t agree that we should have some special set of rules that’s protecting us as politicians.”

This quote and idea could be applied to cities, counties and school districts and the citizens that live within those districts having their voices heard at the state capitol. This bill does just that, limits the abilities to have the voices of local citizens heard at the state capitol.

In Conclusion

From a practical standpoint, our city council is all volunteers. I have a full-time career, a family and volunteer responsibilities. You not allowing cities to have lobbyists makes it really difficult for a city to have a say in what is happening on the state level. We need to have access to lobbying organizations like TML and TASB to protect our citizens. Why would you want to hinder every community in Texas and make it more difficult for them to have a say? As a council member I reach out to my citizens to hear their opinions. I want to know how a future decision may affect their lives. You are our representatives. Don’t you want every way possible to hear what we have to say? You certainly are not limiting organizations and businesses from sharing their thoughts with you. Why do you want to silence the voices of the citizens in your districts and all of Texas?

Cities represent the level of government closest to the people. Please do not support this bill.

Ruben Cavazos

Willacy County

Raymondville, TX

As County Treasurer for Willacy County, I’m opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers’ Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Amber Bearden, Assistant Principal

Wylie Independent School District

Tuscola, TX

I oppose this bill that would prohibit education associations from advocating for educators at our State Capitol.

Tim Woliver, Councilman

Cibolo City Council (District 6, City of Cibolo, Texas)

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Cibolo, TX

Chairman Paddie and members of the State Affairs Committee,

I am member of City Council in the city of Cibolo, Texas. I am writing in strong opposition to H.B. 749, its companion, S.B. 234 and any legislation that would limit my ability to advocate in the interest of and for the benefit of the citizens of the City of Cibolo. The ability of municipal leaders to be represented and heard at the Capitol provides a critical voice in deliberations on policies that will impact every Cibolo resident.

Bills of this nature continues a concentrated effort in recent years to thwart municipal authorities. The message that legislation such as that proposed in this bill -- and its Texas Senate companion bill -- is that taxpayers would be protected from those (municipal authorities) who us lobbyists and trade association to advocate against their interests. This is not at all true. Municipalities, especially small municipalities such as Cibolo, cannot afford to retain individual lobbyist and are able to leverage their memberships to organizations such as the Texas Municipal League to advocate for and against legislation in the best interests of the citizens they represent.

Cibolo is community that serves, and is served by, the installations under the purview of Joint Base San Antonio. This legislation would silence organizations such as the Texas Mayors of Military Communities (TMMC) and the voice of millions of Texas residents whose economic well-being depends on the military. TMMC is a 501c(4) nonprofit that educates the Texas Legislature and public about the needs and benefits of communities that host military installations. Without the TMMC there is no organization empowered to advocate on critical issues like protecting military bases and operations from urban encroachment, enhancing licensing standards and employment opportunities for military spouses, and funding for essential programs like the Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant (DEAAG) to upgrade and improve infrastructure. According to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Texas military installations produce more than \$123.7 billion in economic output and more than \$73.3 billion in Gross Domestic Product annually. Eliminating the voice of invaluable organizations such as TMMC puts that economic impact at significant risk to future Congressionally-mandate Base Realignment and Closure actions.

H.B. 749 would eliminate communities from supporting those organizations which would cripple to advocate on behalf of its citizens, as well as the ability to protect jobs, families, economies, and tax bases. I respectfully ask that you defeat this bill and oppose any other attempts to limit or prohibit the authority of a political subdivision to use public funds to communicate with legislators and state agencies, including any restrictions that would prohibit the use of public funds to pay membership dues to organizations that hire lobbyists.

Annette Falconett

Self

Austin, TX

No taxpayer dollars should ever be spent on lobbying

Andy Reese, Operations Director

self

Canton, TX

Over 200 counties in Texas have a population under 100,000 and thus limited revenue sources. These counties use various nonprofit associations as a source of legislative matters that could effect them. These associations charge a minimal fee for the services they provide. Services that are a valuable asset in the functioning of the county or local government. These counties or local governments could not duplicate the services on their own without a substantial cost to the taxpayers. As currently written, this bill would eliminate the ability of these associations to provide their services leaving counties and local governments to fend for themselves. I am opposed to this bill. Do not punish the many for the actions of a few who abuse their authority to spend taxpayer funds for self interests.

Clyde Hairston, Mayor

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

City of Lancaster, TX

Lancaster, TX

I am Clyde C Hairston, Mayor of the City of Lancaster. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding HB 749. I am representing my community and Council to preserve the voices of our elected officials by standing in opposition to HB 749. As an elected official of a majority-minority community, the issues that greatly impact our constituents and community must be represented, heard, and advocated during the legislative sessions.

HB 749 and SB 234 are two bills designed to limit cities, counties, and school districts from advocating on behalf of local taxpayers; which in turn threatens our economic strength and potential growth in our communities. As with all municipalities, taxpayer funding goes towards critical infrastructure, community services and resources, and a better quality of life for constituents; therefore, advocacy is no less important and a critical need that taxpayers expect from their elected officials and community leaders.

The broad term of "taxpayer funding lobbyist" does not accurately represent each municipality, nor does it specify each cities funding ability that is utilized for lobbying purposes. The City of Lancaster is transparent in our policies and budget which is available to the public at any time. Our annual Budget Town Hall meetings are one of the opportunities provided to our constituents to have to share their concerns regarding how city funds are allocated. The concern of funding community advocacy has not been expressed to our elected body as an issue of our constituents; however, if done so these issues are better addressed on a local level. Our constituents rely on City Council to represent their needs and a one size fits all approach prohibits various municipal governing bodies to do so effectively.

As an elected official the training, education, and support from non-profit organizations that advocate on our community's behalf is critical for our governing body. We receive the necessary training to advocate efficiently for our constituents and to identify the issues that are relevant to our unique communities. Prohibiting cities from this interaction, negatively effects are taxpayers and elected officials. Every two years, thousands of bills are filed and some of those bills are beneficial to our communities while others if implemented on a local level have adverse effects on city operations and the potential financial growth of our communities. Our elected officials rely on the ability to organize and opportunities to share ideas with other cities and counties through a designated non-profit organization or representative that is advocating on behalf of local governments.

Elected officials cannot do this work alone without missing critical information that affects our constituents and communities. Because we believe all voices should have a right to be heard and recognized during the political process, I am in opposition to HB 749 and SB 249; limiting critical voices. Thank you.

Karen Terry

self - Community member

Grapevine, TX

You are silencing the voice of many as they are needed on their campus to perform their duties...they have a right to ask someone to be actively involved in looking out for their best interests! My daughter is a teacher and cannot leave campus to make sure their voice is heard - and furthermore are working on lesson plans and preparing for the next day and NOT trying to keep up with bills that are possibly hidden where they cannot see them. In addition to all of this, if principals/staff made their way to Austin to fight for their rights, you may possibly change move that meeting and they will have wasted funds and time to try to attend.

Sharon May, Treasurer

Parmer County

Farwell, TX

Please consider this reason why I am opposed to HB 749. Serving as Treasurer for Parmer County, I see this as taking away part of the voice from the small communities. The minimal dollar amount that we pay in dues to the Association help us to express concern for issues that are important to our counties. I would not have the time or the resources to leave my position in order to spend as much time needed to be in sessions. The Association informs us of the Bills that have changed/updated so we can do our

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

job more effective & efficiently. I feel that in losing this Association contact in legislation I will become uninformed & fear that may hinder my job duties & responsibilities.

Thank you for this opportunity

Susan Syler

retired RN

Galveston, TX

I am adamantly opposed to this bill. In a state as large as Texas, one size does not fit all, contrary to recent legislation forbidding cities from having ordinances that address their unique situations. Cities (and counties) need lobbyists who can stay abreast of current legislation and alert their clients when legislation is proposed that would deleteriously affect them. I'm happy that my tax dollars support a lobbyist and the best interests of my city.

Alfred (Lynn) Pulliam, Superintendent

Canadian ISD

Canadian, TX

I believe this bill will be harmful to school districts, especially small rural districts like Canadian ISD which is over 475 miles from the Texas Capitol (about a 7.5 hour drive). A very small portion of our annual fees for our organization memberships goes toward advocacy on topics that impact public education. As the superintendent of a small school district far from Austin, I have neither the time to frequently travel to Austin nor the manpower to send a representative on our school's behalf when important educational bills are being considered in Austin. Just as I believe it is important for our great state to have a voice on the impact of federal legislation, so I also believe local entities should have that same opportunity on the state level. For our district, one of the best ways to do that is through our organizational memberships.

J.D. (Butch) Wagner

Self / Terry County

Brownfield, TX

To the House State Affairs Committee: To the members of the committee, I would like for you to know that I oppose H.B. 749. I am the County Judge in the small County of Terry. My duties prevent me from being in Austin this week so I am letting you know that our representatives of our nonprofit association are present to provide efficient information and to have input on many of the bills that are essential to us small Counties. Without them we could not and would not be able to have input on many bills, amendments and substitutes that effect our County Government. We all need to be working together for the people of this State and the County's that we all live in. They voted for all of us to provide the needs for them to live in this Great State. We need to make sure that is what we do for every Citizen of Texas and make sure that the State and Counties work together hand in hand. Without our association the smaller Counties can't be heard and we don't have the funds to travel back and forth to Austin every two years to oppose or support bills. That's why we send emails and call our Representatives and Senators to hear our concerns because we can't be there all the time! Thanks for consideration in this matter.

Terry County Judge J.D. (Butch) Wagner

Anna Kroese

Self

Wimberley, TX

Political lobbyists absolutely should not receive tax dollars.

Paul Osbourn

self

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Bryan, TX

The tax payers of Texas should not be funding lobbyist

Frances Karlsrud

self retired

Spring, TX

The lobby business has too much money and power. The common citizens suffer. Please prevent lobbyists from getting public funds.

julissa cantu

self, student

San Antonio, TX

Hello, I am a Texan concerned about homelessness and I strongly oppose HB 1925 on the agenda in State Affairs on Thursday. This bill will punish people for having nowhere else to go. By saddling unhoused people with tickets they cannot pay, warrants that prevent them from getting ID and arrests that give them criminal records, this bill would hurt their chances of getting employment and housing and in turn keep more people homeless longer.

Paul Yamarick

self

Moulton, TX

Taxpayer dollars should be used to finance core functions of government. They should not be used against taxpayers and they should not pay third party lobbyists.

Personal and private lobbying is critical as we exercise our free speech rights. For example, the Farm Bureau is a private association that lobbies on behalf of their members. I personally think they do a good job; someone else may not agree with what they represent and they can choose to not support them. I as a taxpayer do not have that choice. Lobbyists may be lobbying against my best interests with my tax dollars. When a lobbyist is employed by a governmental entity, the dynamics change. After all, only people have rights. Governments have powers.

Many local jurisdictions, from counties, to cities, to school districts, and even municipal utility districts, have outsourced a very basic part of their job as elected officials by hiring professional lobbyists to lobby state government. Lavaca County hires the Texas Association of Counties (TAC) and they provide a wide range of valuable and important services. A concern has been voiced that new bills would completely end that relationship with TAC or any other association. That is not the case; it would just end any lobbying with taxpayer money. Whomever the county/city hires can still advise, inform, and support as needed. Our direct elected officials can and should lobby on our behalf (for example lobbying against unfunded mandates from Austin). I believe State officials are motivated to listen to our local elected officials. The legislation being considered would thus end large counties and cities with large budgets, like Harris County and Houston, from utilizing taxpayer money to lobby. The direct lobbying of the many smaller city and rural county judges and commissioners would therefore be more impactful.

Paul Yamarick

Citizen of Lavaca County

Donnis Baggett, Executive Vice President

Texas Press Association

Bryan, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

The Texas Press Association regularly advocates for open meetings, open records and public notices — the three pillars of government transparency and accountability. We believe deeply that a newspaper's first responsibility is fulfilling the watchdog role envisioned by our Founding Fathers when they drafted the Bill of Rights and listed freedom of the press in the First Amendment. I have been personally committed to this mission for my entire 48-year career, and for the past 25 years I have been active in our association's legislative efforts. Virtually every time we advocate for legislation to protect or expand citizens' rights to know what their government is doing with our tax dollars, we face stiff opposition from governmental entities. Many of those governmental are members of powerful lobbying associations that are funded by our tax dollars. Something about that just doesn't seem right, and I believe our Founding Fathers would spin in their graves if they knew it. It is time to put the needs of the citizen ahead of the wishes of government officials. For that reason the Texas Press Association supports HB 749, and we applaud Rep. Middleton for filing this important legislation.

Catherine Van Arnam

Self / Chief of Staff

Cedar Park, TX

I write in support of HB749. It is unconscionable that taxpayer money is used by pensioned government bureaucrats and their gold-plated consultants to further fund their already large and lumbering media machine. This machine crushes the voices of individual Texans and reinforces the power of government bureaucracies - like school boards over parents, and elected officials over residents. In Cedar Park, where I live, and Austin, where I work, progressive Councils fund aggressive lobbies against the interests of politically moderate residents, who may be pro-life, for families having school choice, property rights & 2nd Amendment issues, tax, fee, and red tape relief - and a host of other legislative issues!

Joni Hancock

Self

Denver City, TX

If Big Business wants lobbyists, they should have to pay them, NOT ME OR ANY TAXPAYER ????

JoAnn Juhasz, Precinct 396 Chair

HB 749

Georgetown, TX

I am requesting that each House Representative honor their constituents expectations by supporting this bill. Texas Counties who have joined the Texas Association of Counties have done so with the express purpose of utilizing taxpayer money to fund lobbyists. This is an affront to the trust every taxpayer placed in their elected County Commissioners. We, the people did not vote to use our money to support legislation or candidates that we may or may not agree with.

Thank you,

JoAnn Juhasz

Precinct 396 Republican Chair

John Hawkins, SVP, Government Relations

Texas Hospital Association

Austin, TX

The Texas Hospital Association opposes HB 749 as filed for the following reasons:

1. The bill will restrict the ability of local governments, including hospital districts, from engaging in issue advocacy for the betterment of their communities. The bill would prohibit public hospitals from membership in certain hospital associations that

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

engage in advocacy, which includes, but is not limited to, lobbying.

- As advocacy organizations, hospital associations generally follow a broad definition of advocacy: to strengthen the ability of all the state's hospitals to deliver the highest quality patient care and be financially viable and resilient. As such, advocacy focuses on identifying members' current needs, anticipating future needs and implementing programs, products and services that address those needs.

- Lobbying is just one member service. Member hospitals also benefit from educational programming; technical assistance and consulting to improve quality and patient safety; identification of innovative partners that make hospital operations more efficient and cost effective; and analysis of and education around health care trends.

2. Public hospitals rely on association membership for information and education because their boards are citizen-volunteers, and executive leadership are responsible for the management of complex institutions -- often also the largest employers in the community. Neither trustees nor hospital executive leadership have the time or resources capacity to track every health care-related bill; provide information to lawmakers on possible impact to their hospital, patients and community; and provide information back to the local governmental body on legislative actions. Hospital leaders cannot routinely travel to Austin from all corners of Texas -- it is not fiscally responsible and would take the executive officer away from his or her primary responsibilities.

3. The Texas Legislature is proudly a body of citizen lawmakers. As the Legislature meets just every two years, elected officials are not professional politicians. This is a laudable feature of Texas government. But the result is that lawmakers must rely on professional organizations, such as associations, for education, guidance and objective information on a range of complex issues, including health care policy and financing.

4. As the largest statewide association representing all Texas hospitals, including public, private, not-for-profit, urban, rural and children's hospitals, THA's advocacy is informed by the needs, challenges and perspectives of a broad coalition of hospitals. Losing the public hospitals' perspectives would reduce the quality and caliber of information lawmakers can get from the association. Additionally, the state's approach to financing the regional hospital safety net typically relies on financing from public hospitals and arbitrarily excluding them from association decision making potentially undermines those collaborations.

Andrew Fahey

Self

DRIFTWOOD, TX

I agree with this bill and submit that taxpayer funding should not be used to fund lobbyists. Please consider this comment as acceptance and approval of this bill.

William Glenn

Self, Retired

San Antonio, TX

This bill represent some of the worst legislation that can be considered. Texans understand the need for local government authority to be able to actively appeal to the legislature for redress and to ensure the legislature understands the impact of any given legislation. This bill represents a denial of representation by local authority of their constituents who may be preyed upon by a thoughtless legislature devoted to some special interest at the expense of the locality. While my comments appear to accuse the legislature of bad acts. This kind of legislation makes bad acts even more possible. Let's avoid the temptation of bad acting on the part of the legislature. The legislature must respond to the needs of local government authorities represent constituents in their area. Your attention to voting this down or refusing to allow it to go out of committee and onto the floor is requested. There's been too much denying representation on the basis of race, political affiliation, national origin and now local government representation. I present this to you with respect and I ask you to consider it seriously.

Tammy Blackwell

Self/retired, V.P. of Walker County Republican Women

Huntsville, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

NO taxpayer funding should be allowed for lobbying activities! Our money should go to the most important priorities that need to be funded by our taxes.

Michele Thompson

self, retired

Austin, TX

Please pass HB 749.

Too often, lobbyists for cities and counties are funded by our tax dollars and sent to the Capitol to advocate for even higher taxes! We shouldn't be forced to fund campaigns against our own interests. Local elected officials can and should participate in the legislative process — but they should not be permitted to use our money to hire lobbyists to do their dirty work instead.

Curtis Evans, County Judge

Jeff Davis County Ju

Fort Davis, TX

I am writing to express my complete opposition to HB 749 . If this Bill passes you will have completely muzzled the rural counties in Texas . Jeff Davis County relies heavily on the resources and talent provided by TAC . Without their assistance and knowledge small poor counties will lose our voice at the state level . I would hope that is not the Goal of the Legislature . Jeff Davis County operates on a 2 million dollar annual budget . By having TAC and other organizations track and review bills introduced is an investment in what is best for our taxpayers. Our small county cannot afford to hire lobbyist for protection from Legislators that don't have any idea of the struggles we go through on a daily basis to overcome the unfunded mandates put on small counties with only real estate ad-valorem revenue. Please understand , we cannot afford to send a person to fight for us and keep up with all the bills that would adversely affect our citizens of Jeff Davis County.Do Not allow HB 749 to go any farther it is not good for TEXAS !!!!

Karen Freeman

Self

Helotes, TX

TASB was established to 1949 with a primary focus on advocating on behalf of its public school district members. For the past 25 years, TASB has earned the trust of 100 percent of Texas districts who have renewed their memberships year after year.

Those members have found value in TASB, not only for its advocacy on behalf of our students and schools, but for the myriad other services members may access, such as legal and policy advice, human resource services, and leadership training. Lobbying is less than 1% of TASB's budget.

Part of that training is learning how to communicate with others on our boards and within our communities to develop and govern the best schools we can. That is why I am here today.

We are elected officials. You are elected officials. We share the same constituents and desire to see our students succeed. We need to share the best information available so that you can make informed decisions that best impact your schools and students back home.

This bill represents a major shift in the way a school board trustee could advocate the Legislature on behalf of her school district. It eliminates the ability of a trustee to communicate with a legislator through nonprofit associations that often serve as our “eyes and ears” at the State Capitol.

Trustees are unpaid volunteers who often have jobs that preclude them from taking

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

additional time off to track legislation, visiting legislative offices, attending multiple committee hearings on different days throughout session, and fielding requests from staff members on how legislation would impact school districts across the state.

My school district is about 90 minutes away from Austin - in good traffic

I am able to travel to the State Capitol to advocate on behalf of my school district.

But that's not the case for trustees in Corpus Christi, El Paso, Canadian, Brownsville, Texarkana or Kermit. For others, a trip to the Capitol is cost and time prohibitive, as they would have to miss a couple of days of work, pay for lodging, or pay for airfare. Let's not forget the meals while waiting to testify before a committee or walking the halls to visit members.

And they frequently incur this expense for the sake of conveying very important information on proposed legislation within a three, and sometimes two minute time restriction.

It is the most efficient, economical and effective process for you and us to have an organization to facilitate the flow of the best information to assist in lawmaking.

Therefore, I would ask that that the members of this committee oppose HB 749.

Marty Lucke, Judge

Floyd County

Floydada, TX

This bill is a direct attack on Counties and Cities and the associations/organizations that represent and assist them and therefore an attack on local control. The associations/organizations that represent us provide efficient information. This allows us to have a uniform voice to be both for and against legislation. The preservation of the collective voice through the associations benefits us in supporting or opposing bills that affect our local government. It therefore benefits our citizens, our communities, our counties and this great state. If this legislation was truly about saving taxpayer dollars and benefiting the taxpayer, the legislation would not exempt school districts, special interest taxing districts, colleges and universities and the state itself. Counties and Cities are responsible for approximately 1/3 of the property tax levy for the state while school districts and special taxing districts account for approximately 2/3 of the total levy. Floyd County spends 0.109 of 1% of our total budget on association/organization dues, while we spend over 8.5% of our budget supporting state required services (district courts, probation departments and appraisal districts) that we have no control over. The Texas Association of Counties tracked and kept its members informed of 2,372 bills in the last legislative session that affected county government. If the federal government attempted this legislation, the screaming from Austin would be heard worldwide as an attack on local control and an act of tyranny. The associations/organizations that represent and assist counties and cities should be taken totally out of the equation. County government is required to include in the budget a line item for legislative (lobbying) expenses. If the problem is that big, let the local voters decide whether the money can be spent on hiring "actual" lobbyist, not our associations/organizations, for the benefit of the taxpayer. This could be done in much the same way as a vote on the tax rate. Local government is not going to hire a "lobbyist" when it would not benefit our tax payers. Remember, these local officials were elected and are closer to the citizens than you are. If the tax payer doesn't like the way the money is being spent, they can vote the officials out. One size fit all legislation that is introduced because a loud small group is screaming because a government they didn't vote for is spending money in ways they don't like is not the solution. If a local government is spending money in a way the citizens don't like, let the citizens make the change at the ballot box. I can assure you that if the citizens of Floyd County don't like what is going on with their tax money, they will vote us out. Let local government control local money or don't exempt any level of government from the legislation - don't make it "we must pass it to know what is in it" piece of legislation. Thank you.

Robert M Santini

Republican Party of TX

San Antonio, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

I support this bill. Please bring it up for a vote in committee and ask committee members to vote to pass it out of committee.

Alex Meed

Self, cybersecurity analyst

Austin, TX

Chair and members,

Since this bill is about cities and counties lobbying the state, I wondered if states lobby the federal government. As it turns out, they do. Last year, this state spent \$120,000 on lobbying, according to the OpenSecrets lobbying database. Governor Abbott is part of the National Governors Association, which spent \$270,000 last year. The Council of State Governments spent \$70,000 last year and \$220,000 the year before.

If your committee recommends this bill, it should offer a committee substitute that also prevents the State of Texas from lobbying the U.S. government. Then, this bill will finally be fair. Or I guess lobbying is okay when red states do it, but not when blue cities do the same thing.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex Meed

Debra Wolgemuth

Self Employed

Waco, TX

This is a RPT priority - please pass out of committee.

Herman Waters

Self; retired

DRIPPING SPRINGS, TX

Lobbyists should be paid only by the entities who employ them. Lobbyists should not have access to the hard earned funds of the public. This is one of the critical sources of corruption in our country.

Lisa Dickison

Self, not employed

WACO, TX

I support this bill because taxpayer funds should not be used to urge the legislature to make laws that may not be in the best interests of the taxpayers. Nothing in this bill prevents members of city councils, school boards, or other groups to testify before legislative committees on their own behalf. They just can't hire professional lobbyists.

John Bullock, Judge

Young County

Graham, TX

I am opposed to this bill because; It singles out a group who is elected by the voters to represent them to you and are the same voters that elect you. It silences their voices on any issue that would negatively or positively effect the citizens they live with

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

every day. This bill, along with its siblings, is punitive and vindictive in its nature and intent. I implore of the committee to kill or let this bill die.

Charles Busbey, MAJ(ret.)

self(retired)

Dripping Springs, TX

It is absolutely wrong, and should be illegal to use public money for any lobbying purposes. It is NOT the purpose of public funds obtained through taxation to pay lobbyists to convince elected officials to spend public funds on any project or initiative.

Maria Cavazos

Self

Houston, TX

Good Morning to all State Affairs members,

I am writing to support SB234/HB749 to ban taxpayer-funded lobbying.

I am of strong conviction that Government should not use taxpayers funds to Lobby against that very same taxpayer's interest.

I Ask the Committee to hear my Voice as a taxpayer and Ban taxpayer-funded lobbying.

Respectfully,
Maria Cavazos

Ed Smith, County Judge

Mills County

Goldthwaite, TX

The proposed bill omits the enabling language for Texas Association of Counties (TAC) which provides critical support for Mills and most other small counties including website and email hosting, risk pool based insurance, human resource support, risk management and insurance services, advice on legal issues relating to operating a county, notebooks of advice ranging from outdoor burning and fireworks to open meetings and budgeting. TAC also provides training to all elected county employees plus law enforcement and heavy equipment operators. In counties with limited staff (Mills has 12.5 FTE excluding law enforcement and road precincts) we do not have the specialists to provide this help internally. Hiring it would require increases in property taxes which I want to avoid.

We also rely on TAC for information about legislation and hearings in Austin to assist me in educating staff and citizens as appropriate on matters that may or will touch their lives. County government is the local body implementing and enforcing State codes in many cases. Without the help of TAC it would fall to me to decipher state code which all too often is filled with cross references and not in simple English.

Finally, the idea that if I contact Senator Buckingham or Representative Slawson about matters involving Mills county I may be considered a lobbyist (despite the fact that I am not being paid by anybody). A recent example has been my contact with them and their staff over the February freeze, power outages, problems with FEMA's additional requirements placed only on rural counties and the need for more visibility into the load shedding plans and practices of electrical utilities (including the LCRA).

I ran for Judge without accepting political donations, serve unpaid and now find that politicians at the State Level are attempting to block me from contact with them.

Small Counties deserve to be heard . There is more to Texas than a few big cities

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Christopher De La Torre

Convention of States

Leander, TX

Taxation is theft.

Christopher Ohlsen

SELF - EDUCATION - SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER FOR JOSHUA ISD, MEDICAL, AGRICULTURE

Joshua, TX

NO PERSON, PERSONS, OR ORGANIZATION SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO ACCEPT TAXPAYER FUNDING FOR THE PURPOSE OF "LOBBYING"!!! This is a very poor and discriminatory use of the general taxpayer's monies. Also, the intent is an abomination of character for anyone associated with such practices. Please consider the fact that "YOU" are the elected representative for "ALL" the people and it is your primary responsibility to be fair and honest in the eyes of justice when you vote to enable any bill to become law for everyone in this state.

Joe Shuster, County Judge

Pecos County

Ft. Stockton, TX

TAC is our only flow of information on the State Legislation and with their voice TAC informs the rural level of good and bad bills. Pecos County is 350 miles from Austin it is impossible to make the trip several times a session to voice our concerns. Vote NO on HB749 rural Texas will have no voice if any bill like this passes. Please do the right thing.

Kris Kallina, Kris Kallina

Self

Wimberley, TX

Against this bill...

Renee Franklin

City of Benbrook Councilmember

Benbrook, TX

The purpose of lobbying is to communicate with the government a group's desires. Benbrook is one of 1,160 Texas cities that belong to the Texas Municipal League (TML). TML exists solely to provide services to Texas cities. Since 1914, the League's mission has remained the same "to serve the needs and advocate the interests of cities and city officials".

The 2020 TML membership was 0.000166% of the City of Benbrook's 2020 total expenditures. The cost of the 2020 annual membership breaks down to 16 cents per citizen for 2020.

The First Amendment to US Constitution includes "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances". Egemoglu of Cornell Law School summarizes "The right to petition the government for a redress of grievances guarantees people the right to ask the government to provide relief for a wrong through litigation or other governmental action. It works with the right of assembly by allowing people to join together and seek change from the government" (2020).

Texas cities join the Texas Municipal League who have individuals on staff with the desire and skill to navigate and communicate the legislative process as well as advocate on behalf of Texas cities. I would like to see this freedom continue.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

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Egemenoglu, Elvin. 2020. First Amendment. March. https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/first_amendment (March 2020).

Texas Municipal League. <https://www.tml.org/>

U.S. Constitution, First Amendment. <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-1/>

Randy Jackson, County judge

Archer County

Archer city, TX

Opposition to this Bill. Local decision making should remain unchanged.

Charles Bradley, Mr.

Self County Judge

Eldorado, TX

Although there is need to curb lobbying of our State government, I do not see the need to try and silence the voices of Local Governments. The very people that are locally elected to represent the people that put us in office. Thank you.

Mark McCaig

Texas Republican Initiative

Houston, TX

Texas Republican Initiative strongly supports HB 749. We do not believe that a taxpayer should be forced to subsidize lobbying activities that go against their values through the practice of taxpayer funded lobbying. Individuals are certainly free to support organizations with their own money to support lobbying efforts on issues important to them, and this legislation in no way hinders the ability of an individual or public official from communicating with legislators.

Jim Barron, County Judge

Self, county judge

Plains, TX

In opposition. Limits input from rural officials and residents on effects of proposed legislation

Joel Hicks, Councilman District 7/ Mayor Pro Tem

City of Cibolo

Cibolo, TX

Good morning I would like to be heard in the hearing of HB749. I don't believe it is right to take away a Cities ability to have someone come and speak for . There are many smaller Cities that just don't have the ability to take time out of their busy lives to travel to the Capital and be heard. Smaller Cities usually have volunteers that Govern their Cities they are not paid positions, many of us have regular jobs that we work during the day. So for a City to have a entity for example TML (Texas Municipal League) to be able to read over the many Bills that are filled each Legislation session to go through and filter out the ones that affect Our City and go to hearings and represent Us at the Hearings. It would be a whole different story if Our positions as Elected Officials were paid positions like the Larger Municipalities like San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston, to were I could filter through 2000+ Bills to see which ones I would be in favor of or opposed to. My honest opinion is it is no different than Developers, Companies, and Corporations hiring lobbyists for Legislation to fight for them. As a Municipality it is nice to have

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

the ability to have someone go in person to Legislative Hearings and be heard. Listening to Municipalities that Our hands continue to be tied which puts pressure on us as Cities to figure out how to resolve the issues that developers bring to Our City. As a Statesman I am here for my Citizen's and their rights as property owners. One example of hands being tied is the issue of ETJ development, if a property owner in the County doesn't want Annexation I am good with that however when that property owner decides to sell their property to a developer that wants to put HIGH DENSITY housing on the purchased property because they don't have to follow the City's Codes in a City's City Limits it puts a stain on the City's Taxpayers. They generally are the ones that end up funding issues that arise after the developer is gone, because the subdivisions will ask to be Annexed afterwards to fix roads, sewer lines, give police and fire services. On properties that are not in compliance of Our City's UDC, houses are on top of one another the streets narrowed to the minimum standards. Also when a developer Does NOT have sewer services at time of develop and uses pump and haul services. This is a Human Safety issue TECQ doesn't define temporary, there has to be a way to stop this type of development from happening until there are services available. These are some of the many issues of a City that myself and many other Statesman deal with yet its okay for Developers to Hire Lobbyists on their behalf yet here is HB749 to silence the Smaller City's ability to have someone come and speak to Legislation on Our behalf. Thank You for hearing my concerns. I hope the State Legislation will listen to a Fellow Statesman on behalf of the Citizens of TEXAS.
Joel Hicks Cibolo Councilman District 7/Mayor Pro Tem

Carol Anderson, McCulloch County Commissioner

McCulloch County

Brady, TX

Vote No on this Bill! It will limit small rural counties from having a voice! Thank you

Dan Hicks, Honorable

Scurry County

Snyder, TX

Cities and counties, their leaders and employees don't have time to look at the roughly 7000 bills presented every 2 years. We rely on others to do this for us and to pass this information to us so we can be aware of those bills that will both benefit or hurt our certain area. Every jurisdiction is different and cannot be fit into one size fits all. Those that go through the bills know this and are able to let us know if something comes up that is directed at the large counties that will hurt us small counties or vice versa. TAC and TMRS do not and cannot lobby. I know this is directed at the larger counties and will hurt us smaller counties as described above.

John James, County Judge

Collingsworth County

Wellington, TX

This will limit small counties ability to be represented in Austin.

Bill Penn

self music agency

BUDA, TX

I support HB 749

Stephanie Davis, County Judge

Comanche County

Comanche, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

I am in opposition to HB 749. This legislation would truly end the ability of smaller political subdivisions like Comanche County to collectively communicate with legislative offices through our nonprofit associations like Texas Association of Counties, Sheriff's Association of Texas, etc. Small counties like Comanche County do not have the money to engage private lobbyists. If this Bill passes, every individual local official in Comanche County would be forced to start researching, tracking, monitoring and separately communicating with you on each piece of legislation that had an effect on their office. Our elected officials in Comanche County simply do not have the resources (manpower or financial) available in their offices to track, monitor, and communicate with legislative offices on thousands of bills. H.B. 749 would silence the collective voices of our local officials in Comanche County and would definitely not serve the interests of our taxpayers and constituents that we share with you. Thanks for listening to us. Please do not support H.B. 749.

Thank you for all you do and for taking our position into consideration.

Elisa Tamayo
Emergence Health Network
El Paso, TX

Emergence Health Network, El Paso's Local Mental Health Authority, opposes HB 749 / SB 234.

Frank Holman, Citizen
Self
Austin, TX

We are a country where government is to be of the people for the people. My tax dollars were never intended to be used for one government department or agency to spend the tax collected to lobby other government agencies be it for me or against me. If we have spare tax funds reduce my property bill and sales tax. I support HB 749.

Therese Emert
Coke County Treasurer
Robert Lee, TX

As County Treasurer for a small county in West Texas, I'm opposed to HB 749. We've a small budget for travel. Also, my office is a one-person shop. The County Treasurers' Association of Texas is a well-respected organization with dedicated professionals. My efforts are better spent in day-to-day activities in my home county instead of being in Austin to lobby and discuss bills of concern with legislators. While being in contact with Representative Drew Darby and Texas Senator Charles Perry is not a problem, each is one voice/vote. HB 749 will limit the capacity to just my state legislators. Yet there are a multitude of bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is an excellent use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I respectfully request your consideration.

Adrian Metzger
self
Luling, TX

I am in favor of the passage of this bill. It is time for lobbyists to stop being allowed the use of public dollars to further special interests often in contradiction to the interests of the very taxpayers who are forced to pay the lobbyist's tab.

Calesta House
Self - Principal of a public school

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Cleveland, TX

Please stop HB 749 from moving forward in the State Affairs Committee.

Principals are busy running schools. We do not have time to follow the thousands of bills filed each session. This is why we join organizations like TEPSA. Often times committee hearings are rescheduled or postponed and we do not have time to run back and forth to Austin every other spring to monitor potential laws affecting public education.

Nathan Watkins, City Manager

City of Mont Belvieu

Mont Belvieu, TX

My name is Nathan Watkins, City Manager of the City of Mont Belvieu, and we oppose HB 749.

As you debate this bill as a committee, I ask that you please do so from a stance of partnership with local governments; the more we work together, the more it benefits all taxpayers. The City has been instrumental in fostering strong relationships between our local governments, community organizations and our state representatives - Representative Middleton and Senator Creighton.

Representative Middleton and his staff have a great rapport with our City. But, when it comes to Local Control issues, we often see things from a different perspective. With HB 749 trying to remove the ability for local governments to advocate on issues that benefit our citizens, this is one of those issues. Local governments often join associations and hire advocates to work on behalf of the citizens. These advocates are experts in their fields and can explain proposed bills and their potential impacts so that we, on the local level, can determine how it will affect each of our unique communities. Hiring experts to represent our interests is extremely important, that is why the state of Texas has lobbyists in Washington, D.C., to represent us.

If we lose our ability to advocate for our local government, who will represent us in Austin? We have heard statements such as cities, counties and ISDs should utilize relationships with their State Representatives and Senators. Everyone involved in the legislature knows the limited amount of time involved and it cannot be expected that our State Representative and Senator can advocate on our behalf on the more than 600 bills that we are tracking. Representative Middleton is an example of this. The City has had numerous meetings with Representative Middleton and his staff since the last legislature including recent weekly meetings. The City has repeatedly requested that Representative Middleton visit with us on municipal and local government issues that he has before filing a bill that will impact the communities he represents. At the very least we would like to understand his intent so we can share how the bill will impact our City and residents. We have yet been able to accomplish this goal. If our elected Representative will not represent us, and if HB 749 passes, who will represent the interest of Mont Belvieu and our citizens at the state level?

In closing, I ask that you remember that local governments have elected officials that represent the local interest of each unique community whether it is a city, school district, or a county. Our local elected officials want the very best for our residents and they need to have the ability to advocate for our community. One-size-fits-all legislation does not work locally just as similar legislation from the federal government for all states often falls short of meeting the needs of Texas.

Jaime Estrada, Dr.

Texas Doctors for Social Responsibility

San Antonio, TX

Our organization, Texas Doctors for Social Responsibility, based in San Antonio, is against this bill because it severely restricts the ability of our City government to advocate for legislative initiatives that improve the health and well being of our people.

Craig Lindholm

City of Winnsboro

Winnsboro, TX

Honorable Members of the State Affairs Committee - I wish to express my strong opposition to HB 749. I as a citizen of a small

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

city view this bill as community censorship. Our city of 3,500 residents has no representation to express our concerns to the Texas Legislature other than that provided through the Texas Municipal League. We have witnessed the legislature infringe on the self-governing ability of Texas cities over the last several sessions and we view this bill as another attempt for the state to usurp local control of our affairs. Local government has been the most responsive form of government in our nation, because we see our elected officials regularly. This bill as well as the accompanying senate bill is simply another attempt at state control of local government. As a voter and local leader the legislatures attempt to limit the self government of counties and municipalities while decrying the federal government's interference in state affairs appears to be quite hypocritical. I respectfully request that you do not forward this bill to out of committee. Thank you.

Janice Friese, Executive Director
Texas Counseling Association
Austin, TX

The Texas Counseling Association (TCA) represents more than 6,000 professional counselors in an array of work settings across Texas. TCA opposes HB 749 as it will adversely impact professional counselors, especially school counselors, who rely on TCA for continuing education and other professional resources as a result of the very limited lobbying that TCA does on their behalf each session. Payments to TCA by school districts, especially for conference registrations and membership are nominal yet this bill will prohibit school districts from paying membership and conference fees to TCA. Only 5 percent of a TCA member's dues is allocated to advocacy efforts; 95% of their nominal membership fees are spent to provide professional development resources and support to help school counselors enhance their skills, add to their toolkits, and better serve school children across Texas. TCA is very concerned that an unintended consequence of HB 749 will be cutting back on school counselors' access to the professional development and resources they need now -- especially as our school children are reporting significant increases in anxiety, depression, withdrawal and suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts. For this reason, TCA does not support HB 749. We hope you will consider the broad and adverse impacts this legislation may have on the professional development of all Texas educators and vote "no" on HB 749. Thank you for your consideration.

Carol Dean
Self/Retired
Dickinson, TX

Support Representative Middleton! STOP Taxpayer Funded Lobbyists!

Wilma Joy Putnam, Mrs.
self
Georgetown, TX

I support This bill as it will end public entities such as cities and counties in Texas using the tax payers monies to lobby against the tax payers.

Christine Bryan, VP, Information Technology and Public Policy
Clarity Child Guidance Center
San Antonio, TX

Clarity Child Guidance Center is opposed to HB 749. Clarity is a non-profit providing inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services to children ages 3-17. Clarity's patient census is comprised of 70% low-income, state-supported children through Medicaid, CHIP, STARHealth, STARKids and low-cost contracts with area local mental health authorities.

San Antonio has long been known for its close collaborations between community organizations and municipal leaders. As our community organizations advocate and lobby, so should our governmental entities. Non-profits are required to be transparent with their lobbying funding; if a governmental entity is transparent with the spending, public funding for these activities should

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

be left to the discretion of the municipality. Clarity appreciates that our local governments work with community entities to determine a legislative agenda, and should be allowed to hire professional groups to work filed legislation, good or bad, for the best of our families and the region. We respectfully ask that the committee oppose HB 749.

Michelle Villarreal, Deputy City Attorney

City of League City, Texas

League City, TX

FROM THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LEAGUE CITY, TEXAS (in opposition) - The Texas State Legislature routinely considers hundreds of bills each session that directly affect local governments and impact all Texans. Local governmental officials are elected and held accountable by their constituents to assure effective local governance, judicious spending of taxpayer dollars, and the delivery services in a timely, effective manner. The implied and expressed intent of SB234 and HB749 is to prohibit city and county funds from being expended to join or support nonprofit organizations that provide many necessary services, including, but not limited to, training, best practices, and economic development as well as information about state governmental action and provide a means to communicate effectively with state legislators and other state officials, thus saving citizens money by avoiding the potential costs often associated with corporate and other special interest legislation. The State of Texas, the Texas Legislature, and state agencies currently and actively employ large numbers of taxpayer funded lobbyists to help develop, analyze, influence, and monitor the aforementioned thousands of bills and also to advocate for Texas' interests in Washington, DC. SB234, HB749, and any like them, seek to deny local governmental agencies the same ability while continuing taxpayer support for state agency lobbying. Local governmental expenses for both direct and indirect lobbying account for only 10% of the total lobbying activity in Austin, with corporate and other special interest lobbying accounting for 90%. Preventing Texas cities and counties from employing competent representation before state and federal legislative entities deprives local governments from presenting a unified voice on key constituent issues and saves additional funds through cost-sharing. False, misleading, and anti-democratic claims of misuse of taxpayer funds are the opposite of what actually occurs as the Legislature continues to pass unfunded mandates and other costly legislation, thereby forcing local governments to divert their resources or to raise taxes to pay for said laws and regulations the State imposes on its citizens, thereby allowing legislators to avoid the consequences of their actions and thereby undermining local governmental entities. SB234 and HB749 violate the basic American tenets of open and fair legislative deliberation as well as representation in government while allowing corporate and other special interests to dominate government, leaving Texans without a voice in matters that affect their quality of life and livelihoods. The City Council of League City strongly opposes SB234 and HB749 and any attempt to silence the voices of local governments and the citizens they directly and daily represent.

Diane Newberry

Self. Administrative assistant HB

Austin, TX

I am opposed to this bill as I believe our cities deserve to have representation at the Capitol.

Paul Wyloie

Self - County Auditor, Archer County, Texas

Archer City, TX

Another attempt to control local government and silence our voice in Austin. Please do not advance this bill.

Will Jones

McLennan County

Waco, TX

HB 749 will be heard before the House State Affairs Committee tomorrow morning. The bill by Representative Middleton, prohibits local governments from spending public funds to hire an individual required to register as a lobbyist.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

The bill also prohibits local governments from paying dues to any nonprofit state association that primarily represents political subdivisions and provides lobbying activities as part of its services. This provision prohibits expenditures of county funds for membership in organizations like the Texas Conference of Urban Counties (CUC) and Texas Association of Counties (TAC).

Setting aside the issue of lobbying for the moment, organizations like CUC and TAC provide education and training for their respective members, and forums for sharing ideas and best practices. The inability to assess dues to staff these associations will likely mean the end of many, if not all, of them.

Regarding lobbying, these associations present an effective and efficient means of conveying valuable information to legislators. Without CUC and TAC, for example, our members would have to find another way to review nearly 7,000 bills, analyze them for potential impact on their respective counties, communicate with legislators sitting on relevant committees, and be present to testify when each problematic bill is considered in committee – sometimes with notice given just minutes before a hearing. It makes no sense for all of our member county judges and county commissioners to keep abreast of all pertinent legislation, and to travel to Austin to convey support or concerns.

Government should be run efficiently; not inefficiently to silence opinions that some in the do not want to hear is unfair and unconstitutional. I ask you to oppose this bill.

Cindy Yeatts Brown, County Treasurer
Denton County and County Treasurers Association of Texas
Denton, TX

I am OPPOSED to HB749. This bill is bad government and an abuse of the legislative process. No bill should limit the ability of any person, much less another elected official, from engaging their state legislators on public policy. The state has pushed for transparency and open government, yet this very bill diminishes the very bases of that function. Local governments are an extension of state government that is closest to the people. Allow us to have a voice, allow us to use all available resources to communicate with you for the best interest of our constituents and our state. Vote NO on this bill or leave it pending in committee to die.

Darryl Swann
self
KYLE, TX

I do not want my tax dollars going to fund lobbyist. For any reason. If you need to lobby for something, do it yourself. Represent us.

James Dunn
Self / Data Scientist
Austin, TX

Taxpayer funds shouldn't be used to lobby legislators for more taxpayer funds. This bill helps end the cycle of increased spending

Michael Sweeney
Central Texas Tea Party
Georgetown, TX

I support HB-749 and ask that you commit to pass it

Donna Nunley, Deputy Treasurer

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Brewster County

Alpine, TX

How our taxpayers funds are spent is a serious issue. We made big voluntary cuts to our budget this year in money and personnel to not create a bigger burden on the taxpayer during the pandemic this past year. We did not anticipate having to defend the very association that helps us keep up with what those in Austin are trying to do. With little staff in each office there is no time to check on all of your bills being put forth.

The Texas Association of Counties (TAC) does that for us. They also provide quick answers to our many questions, handle our insurances, keep us all in compliance with all laws, offer conferences to keep our Elected Officials informed and up to date with their training hours. Brewster County Courthouse never shut down since the start of Covid. Everytime I tried to get hold of any state agency there was no answer to the many phone calls and emails. However; TAC was there for us. To take away any agency's ability to lobby, especially TAC's, would be detrimental to us and all the other counties in Texas. Texas is a great and proud state. We should be able to be proud of our leaders. Our right to be heard should not be taken away with this bill. Say NO to HB 749.

Katrina Evenhouse

Self - Galveson Republican County Precinct Chair #280

DICKINSON, TX

I Say No to Taxpayer Funded Lobbying! I support Mayes Middleton's Bill - HB 749 I do not believe or want tax payer money to be used for Lobbying against us.

Scott Janes

self

Temple, TX

Lobbying SHOULD be ILLEGAL!! At minimum, taxpayers should not be forced to fund campaigns against our own interests.

Ashley Nystrom

City of Waco, Chief of Staff

Waco, TX

The City of Waco opposes HB 749, its companion SB 234, and any legislation that would limit a City's ability to advocate in the interest of Waco residents. The ability to hire legislative representation provides local leaders a critical voice at the Capitol on policies that impact all Waco residents.

Rachal Hisler

Self

Anahuac, TX

Chairman Paddie,

I support HB 749 and the elimination of tax payer funded lobbying. This practice is unethical. A majority of bipartisan voters are in support of ending tax dollars going to lobbyists. Please vote this bill out of committee for a full house vote. Thank you.

Allison Greer Francis, Mrs

The Center for Health Care Services

San Antonio, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

My name is Allison Greer and I am opposed to HB 749. We rely on our state organization to provide us with information on important legislation that will affect over 1.5 million residents in San Antonio, and We don't have the manpower to accomplish this on our own. This bill would prohibit our organization from receiving that information. Please consider revising this bill to only include true paid lobbyists, not those who spend only a portion of their time in legislative advocacy.

Terry Putnam
self, retired
georgetown, TX

I completely support this bill. It is time to end the corrupt practice of using public funds to lobby the legislature against the public interest. It is also corrupt when lobbyist take public funds and then donate to political candidates that do not enjoy public support.

Caroline Wadzeck, Mayor
City of Dayton
Dayton, TX

Respectfully, I oppose HB 749 that would prevent cities from using public monies to join organizations like Texas Municipal League who represents our interests in the state policymaking process. We depend on TML to keep us abreast of bills being presented that directly affects the way we can conduct the business of our citizens. It is very important to us that this bill not go forward.
Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Elizabeth Lutz
Bexar County Community Health Collaborative
San Antonio, TX

We are in opposition of this bill.

Sandra Tetley
Galveston County Republican Party
Galveston, TX

Texans' tax money should not be used by our elected officials to influence legislation that ultimately increases our taxes or further limits our Freedoms! If they want to lobby for legislation, let them do it out of their own pockets just like we have to! Thank you Representative Middleton for standing up for the people!

Robbie McDaniel
Grassroots Gold, Self
Lubbock, TX

I'm testifying FOR HB 749

I want to thank Chairman Paddie for bringing this legislation forward, and to the committee for providing this forum for debate and discussion.

Using taxpayer dollars to hire paid lobbyists is equivalent to paying a bully to punch you in the face! Using our tax dollars to hire private lobbyists to advocate for MORE taxes is simply ludicrous. This practice is deceitful and devious to the taxpayer, and should be discontinued immediately.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

“According to a 2019 poll by the nonpartisan Texas Public Policy Foundation, 91% of Texans oppose using tax dollars to fund lobbyists, with 80% saying they oppose it strongly.” Source: www.dallasnews.com

Paid lobbying of any kind is tantamount to legalized bribery. It is incomprehensible that this practice is condoned and promoted by politicians who are elected to represent WE, THE PEOPLE!

Please vote YES on HB 749 to END Taxpayer Funded Lobbying in Texas.

Thank you,

Robbie McDaniel
Lubbock, TX

Jelynn Jamison

self

San Antonio, TX

This is a terrible idea. How are Cities going to educate legislators and protect themselves from adverse interests. You are allowing alternative interests to have access to legislators with gifts, money and information thus leaving municipalities and municipally owned entities with no way to protect themselves from these alternative and adverse interests. Citizens elect representatives to represent them at the local level and is just another opportunity to diminish the local citizen's voice in support of big corporate interests, dark money and alternative interests. This is another attempt of a political party to promote voter suppression and limit voter representation.

Rita Braeutigam

City of San Antonio Animal Care Services Advisory Board

San Antonio, TX

Please vote no on HB 749. We need every avenue available to us as we advocate for animals in the State of Texas. Thank you.

Christine Sederquist

Leander City Council

Leander, TX

Cities do not have the resources to be able to advocate in front of you. Our budgets are tight and our councils are volunteers with day jobs. We can't afford staff to go to Austin. We can't afford to take time off of work to volunteer going to Austin. And we can't afford to hire in house lobbyists to go to Austin. We also don't have the resources for anyone to stay on top of the magnitude of bills that are introduced every session: you have paid staffers that do that work; we don't. The most responsible thing we can do is work with organizations like TML to help advocate when the legislature is considering changes that are harmful to municipalities. It's actually the most financially responsible thing we can do.

Taking this ability away silences us and is guaranteed to lead to passage of bills that are going to be burdensome to municipalities. Taxpayer-funded lobbying is not ideal, but until the legislature sets up a system to get input from us before passage of any bill relating to municipalities, it's the best system we've got.

Thank you,
Christine Sederquist

Linda Hardberger

Self

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

San Antonio, TX

This bill would quiet the voices of all organizations that are interested in local civic matters. If you are going to prohibit lobbyists advocating for civic issues ALL lobbyists should be banned from the legislature.

Michael Smith, City Manager

City of Jacksboro

Jacksboro, TX

The City Council for the City of Jacksboro recently approved a Resolution opposing HB 749. As the City Manager for the City of Jacksboro, I personally am opposed to the idea that the State of Texas would even consider a bill that limits the ability of a local government to express their opinion of any piece of legislation. The City also acknowledges the fact that the bill does not prohibit the State from spending tax payer dollars to pay a lobbyist, but only prohibits local governments from doing so. This is a dangerous step towards censorship, and should not be approved. Local leaders know best how to manage their cities. These decisions should be made at the local level and not be managed from Austin.

Patricia Seidenberger

Self, Retired

San Antonio, TX

I vote YES

Anne-Marie Racelis

Self/Student/COS

El Paso, TX

I completely agree with every aspect of this bill. Taxpayer money should never be used by any government official for personal gain of any kind.

Jerry Bearden, Mason County Judge

Mason County

Mason, TX

I am opposed to this bill.

Charles Wolf, Judge

Winkler county

Kermit, TX

I want to express my disagreement with this bill. Please record my county's opposition to this.

Regards Judge Wolf

David Rogers, Mr.

Self, Attorney

Pflugerville, TX

I support this legislation. As a City Council member, I recognize that it makes my job harder. Nonetheless, because I agree with

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Thomas Jefferson that "To compel a man to furnish funds for the propagation of ideas he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical," I believe that it is inappropriate for cities to use taxpayer funds to lobby for unlimited taxing authority in the face of citizens who desire to limit such authorities, and to do so behind the guise of paid lobbyists. I believe that a league that informs city officials about the actions of the Legislature is legitimate, and that, to the extent they support or oppose legislation, city officials, once informed, have a right and duty to communicate to the members of the Legislature.

Thus, I support this change in the status quo.

Thank you for your work streamlining and simplifying the work of government.

Don Huffines, Senator

Self

Dallas, TX

To The Committee on State Affairs,

Today, I respectfully urge each of you to vote in favor of HB 749 and to support it through the process in its strongest form. Ending the practice of using taxpayers' dollars to lobby against them has been a priority of the grassroots and the Republican Party of Texas for years and it's past time to prioritize it in this building. I look forward to you doing that today.

God Bless Texas,

The Honorable Don Huffines

Linda Grant, Freestone County Judge

Freestone County Government

Fairfield, TX

Freestone County opposes HB749

Cindy Vanlandingham

Bosque County

Kopperl, TX

I am against this House Bill. It would force small counties to be uninformed of the bills, and incapable of relaying our support or lack of support due to lack of manpower.

Matthew Parker

Self

New Braunfels, TX

HB 749- our tax dollars should not be used to fund lobbyist. Our tax dollars should be reduced and used sparingly; never frivolously nor for personal gain of special interest groups.

Teric Hughes

Self

Arp, TX

The bill's language is written as a 'one size fits all'. Certain organizations, such as School Districts and School Boards cannot run

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

down to Austin, nor get a callback from our representative, to voice our concerns relating to how a bill such as this one would limit our voices in Austin. Public Schools through their School Boards especially need representation from organizations such as TASA or TASB to represent us. This bill either needs to be rewritten to address that issue or tabled for further investigation on exactly who, and how, it impacts the voices that represent public schools.

Daryl Fowler, Honorable
County of DeWitt
Cuero, TX

My name is Daryl Fowler. I am the constitutional county judge of De Witt County. Our commissioners court adopted a resolution on Monday, March 22 opposing this bill. Our belief is that the Texas GOP and the Texas Legislature are targeting county officials and painting all county officials with a broad brush that has been dipped in the rhetoric of certain partisan political organizations that purport to represent Texas taxpayers. DeWitt County has contracted with a registered lobbyist in the past, and currently contracts with a registered lobbyist. The county website fulfills all of the obligations under current law to make this relationship transparent. The rhetoric about county elected officials using taxpayer funds to work against the taxpayers is inaccurate in our case. The services provided by our lobbyist working with the registered lobbyist(s) of the County Judges and Commissioners Association and the Texas Association of Counties have yielded remarkable benefits that save our local taxpayers millions of dollars, not only in our county, but statewide.

In the period between 2011 and 2013, the oil and gas industry was wreaking havoc on rural county roads in the energy sector. Millions of dollars of damages were done every day across the state, particularly in the Eagle Ford Shale region. The State of Texas was raking in billions of dollars in sales and production tax, but assumed no responsibility for the damage to the roads. The oil and gas industry was concerned and would benefit by better roads, but there was no additional local ad valorem tax revenue available due to the then Rollback Tax rate cap on revenues at eight (8) percent annually. A local revenue shortfall developed because the increase to the tax rolls caused the tax rates to fall in order to comply with Tax Code section 26.04. Our efforts to have the Legislature address the revenue shortfall resulted in Senate Bill 1747 by Uresti. A county transportation reinvestment zone (CETRZ) was created to provide relief from the Rollback Tax Rate cap and the Legislature appropriated \$250 million to counties in the form of a new grant program called the County Transportation Infrastructure Fund grant. Additional lobbying efforts in the 86th Session saw another \$250 of State General Revenue appropriated to the CTIF grant program. The cumulative amount of \$475 million has saved local taxpayers an equal amount of local tax levy and has improved public safety while helping the State of Texas achieve more Sales Tax and Production Tax revenue. In closing, I believe this bill targets a straw man. Taxpayers in energy producing counties are not harmed by the employment of a registered lobbyist that represents county officials who are up to their necks in local government issues. Indeed, I asked myself, "Who would gain if counties are prohibited from this activity?" The short answer is that the oil and gas industry would benefit because it would be educating the legislature without county input. ###

Robert Skelton, Judge
Shackelford County
Albany, TX

We as a small County need the Associations to help us stay informed about legislation. We are not opposed to any transparency requirements. If your citizens are opposed to the County spending money on association, let them voice their concerns locally.

Priscilla Cantu, Ms.
County Treasurers Association of Texas
Kingsville, TX

As Kleberg County Treasurer, I appreciate the opportunity being afforded to voice my opinion to oppose HB 749. My fiduciary duties as County Treasurer for Kleberg County limit me from engaging in legislative sessions to closely monitor for or against bills that affect county government. Working full time on a daily basis for the citizens of my county also makes it hard to closely monitor the thousands of bills which may impact us in our duties and as such, we as elected officials, should not be out of office for long periods of time neglecting the day to day duties we were elected to do. Our tax payers depend on us doing a good job for our communities. We are blessed in the fact that we are able to utilize great resources afforded to us through the Texas

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Association of Counties and our County Treasurers Association by paying dues to allow us to have a voice with our state legislators. I believe that our local tax dollars are well spent through these resources while also allowing us to stay informed with all pending legislation. We are grateful for such afforded opportunities and desire that it is not taken away from us. This is the best information I can provide in opposition to HB 749. We can only hope that you can make the best decisions for the State of Texas as possible.

Roy Hodges, County Judge

Crane County

Crane, TX

Crane County opposes this bill!

Rodolfo Morales Urby, Dr.

Self. Physician

San Antonio, TX

I oppose this legislative bill which if enacted, will reduce consideration of matters of great importance to local governments.
Thank you

Juan Ayala, General

Texas Mayors of Military Communities

Austin, TX

The Texas Mayors of Military Communities (TMMC) strongly opposes H.B. 749 (Middleton) and urges the members of the House Committee on State Affairs to defeat this proposed legislation. Formed in 2014, TMMC is a nonprofit corporation formed to educate the Texas Legislature and public about the needs and benefits of communities that host military installations. TMMC consists of defense communities hosting the 15 military installations and the United States Army's Futures Command. TMMC represents more than 30 cities and counties in Texas. These include Abilene, Austin, Bryan, Corpus Christi, Del Rio, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Killeen, Kingsville, San Angelo, San Antonio, Texarkana, and Wichita Falls. The defense industry in Texas is the second largest economic sector ahead of even agriculture. According to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Texas military installations produce more than \$123.7 billion in economic output and more than \$73.3 billion in Gross Domestic Product annually. In many of these 30 Texas cities and counties, the Department of Defense (DoD) is the top employer and DoD's presence can be a catalyst for additional growth in defense related industries such as cyber, medical, manufacturing and aerospace. HB 749, as written, will silence the TMMC, and the voice of millions of Texas residents whose economic well-being depends on the military. In addition, the National Guard and reserves, military families, veterans, and the defense industry will lose an important ally. Without the TMMC there is no organization empowered to advocate on critical issues like protecting military bases and operations from urban encroachment, enhancing licensing standards and employment opportunities for military spouses, and funding for essential programs like the Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant (DEAAG) to upgrade and improve infrastructure. Over the last three biennia, \$62 million has been appropriated by the Texas Legislature to the Texas Military Preparedness Commission in the Office of the Governor to DEAAG. These generous grants have resulted in the completion of 24 projects which have improved infrastructure, enhanced security, increased operational readiness, and leveraged local, state, and federal partnerships. According to the Office of the Governor, DEAAG funding leveraged over \$204.8 million in additional funding for infrastructure projects with a positive return on investment (247%). HB 749 would prohibit defense communities from uniting through the TMMC to protect the interests of Texas military installations. Federal law prohibits active duty and civilian personnel from advocating for or against legislation. HB 749 would leave the Texas Legislature with no means to obtain and understand the impact some of its decisions have on Texas military bases. Such decisions could easily jeopardize the future of those installations costing Texas thousands and jobs and millions in tax revenue and economic impact.

Sue Hildebrand

Blackland Prairie

Round Rock, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

As a principal of an elementary campus, and an educator for 40 plus years, I know the value of having a lobbying entity represent my interests at the state level. I could not be present for the meetings and committee discussions, nor do I have time to read the pages of information put forth for consideration, that is why I pay dues to an organization that can concentrate on being informed of all things pertaining to public education in Texas and being a voice for my concerns. By limiting funding for this purpose you are stifling the voice of administrators and teachers in the state. I believe HB 749 is a poor piece of legislation that limits the voice of educators in particular and should not be voted in.

Tully Shahan, County Judge

Kinney County

Brackettville, TX

Opposition to said bill. City/Counties will lose rights to be heard in State Government through a spokesperson on proposed legislation; whereas thousands of other entities will not. Freedom of speech, thoughts and legal rights will be arbitrarily stopped. Taxpayers should have a voice like other taxpayers and you have no right to limit or muzzle their/our rights.

Please protect all citizens rights!!!!

Respectfully

Tully Shahan

Roger Harmon, County Judge

Johnson County

Cleburne, TX

I am writing in opposition of HB 749 as it is written. I have been the County Judge of Johnson County for 26+ years and also been a past President of the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas. Johnson County, to my knowledge has never hired an outside lobbyist to represent our County, I do work with our associations to help our legislators on bills that may incur additional cost for our local tax payers more money, and make recommendations to change up the wording of a bill or even try to defeat a bill that will end up costing our County more money if passed.(Unfunded Mandates) . HB 749 would prevent us as elected officials in working with our Associations to prevent bills that may cost our tax payers more money. Please reconsider this bill as written. Sincerely Judge Roger Harmon

Kristin Cobb

Self

Spring, TX

Stop listening to lobbyists and start listening to the people you represent. Our taxpayer dollars are used to lobby AGAINST our Interests. We must ban political subdivisions from hiring lobbyists.

Instead, we must encourage and empower political subdivisions & Texas citizens to lobby the legislature directly so that real community needs can be addressed. The state has, not only the right but the obligation to protect taxpayers from overeager local governments' increasing their power and budget. Local political subdivisions are creations of the State and under the jurisdiction of the State.

“The inherent flaw with taxpayer-funded lobbying is The perversion of forcing a person to give over his time, talent, or treasure to support a policy that he genuinely opposes.” -Chris Hill, Collin County Judge, 12/9/20. Banning taxpayer-funded lobbying, “...removes the middleman between local governments and legislators; local lawmakers elected to represent their cities or counties should be speaking to state lawmakers directly, instead of spending taxpayer dollars on lobbyists.” Hon. Mayes Middleton, 2-6-21

David Billings, Mayor

City of Fate

Fate, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

I would like to share with the House State Affairs committee our insights about HB 749. We are very concerned that the intent of this bill is limiting the voices of our citizens in the state legislative process.

On a good day, the legislative process is hard to navigate for local elected officials. The process favors those with the access to influence legislation, whereas local officials have had to wait up to 15 hours to testify for 3 minutes. Each session has over 7,000 bills filed, many of which are duplicates, making it hard to track which bills will get a public hearing. Handling daily questions and requests from lawmakers and staff is a full-time job, and a simple "procedural error" can change the outcome in the legislative arena. Unfortunately, any committee hearing's schedule and agenda are subject to change at a moment's notice. This makes it difficult for local elected officials to plan trips to Austin and to provide critical input on key issues. HB 749 would prohibit the City of Fate, and others like it, from joining an association like the Texas Municipal League (TML). TML provides cities with critical services, such as ethics training, health insurance, provides statutory Workers' Compensation Coverage, Employer's Liability coverage, Cybersecurity liability insurance, General Liability, Automobile Liability, Law Enforcement Liability for the city and its employees. These services are critical to the success of our city. We also share best practices between cities to create efficient governments, which are the economic engine of Texas. It is important to remember local government leaders advocate in Austin for policies that bolster local efforts to provide quality services, meet the needs of our communities, and protect our unique local and regional economy, and quality of life. As we have seen in the City of Fate with other significant issues, if our constituents disagree with the decision to employ a consulting firm to advocate for important community priorities before the Legislature, they will take the appropriate action at the next local election. We already know the State of Texas has strong state and local provisions, which provide transparency regarding the use of public funds to hire professional advocates. Therefore, If House Bill 749 is passed, it would set a dangerous precedent by allowing every other stakeholder in the legislative process the ability to hire professional lobbyists, while denying that right to local officials and community leaders. They would have a disproportionate amount of influence over the legislative process, which is harmful to our city. Unfortunately for me, we have a special City Council meeting on the evening of March 24th, and another one in the evening of March 25th, so I will be taking the day off on the 25th to run down and back to attend your committee meeting in-person to provide my testimony. We look forward to discussing our concerns with the committee and to find common ground.

John Newberry

self, Geophysicist

Austin, TX

Lobbying has been around since the 1800s. There is no way to do this legally unless you get rid of all PACs, company donations, Etc. This is what Bernie Sanders has wanted for years. In my opinion, this is just another lawsuit waiting to happen if this bill passes. Remember, if you go after some of the money, you will have to go after it all. This bill doesn't make sense as written.

Alan Bojorquez

Self

Austin, TX

As a lawyer who has dedicated his entire career to serving democracy at the local level, I respectfully OPPOSE passage of HB 749. It unfairly and unnecessarily cuts off municipal participation in the statewide legislative process. Over the course of my 24-year career, I have represented over 165 municipalities, counties, and special districts. Most of my clients have been tiny communities in rural, remote parts of Texas. They have limited resources, small staffs, and most of the officials serve as part-time volunteers. These villages, towns, and cities cannot be expected to monitor all of the legislation filed by the Texas Legislature, much less provide timely feedback. It is simply not realistic to expect mayors and city council members to read and understand each and every bill to determine if it helps or hinders their ability to govern in accordance with the will of their voters. Local governments need the assistance of experienced professional advocates and the informational resources of nonprofit associations if they are to have any hope of making sense of the legislative process. Corporations have armies of lobbyists. Even the State of Texas itself spends public funds lobbying the federal government. The substantive expertise, procedural know-how, and long-term relationships lobbyists develop is part of our process of governing. It does a disservice to our democratic institutions to single-out cities, foreclose their input, and essentially exclude them from the process. I submit this message to you on my own initiative, and on my own behalf. I was not paid to send these remarks. I, myself, am not a lobbyist, and our law firm does not employ lobbyists. I wish you, your committee, Representative Middleton, and Senator Hall the very best of luck in your deliberations.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Dianna Biscan

Self

Plano, TX

Very little 2020 election fraud was investigated and prosecuted. Some are intentionally denying the facts of electronic vote manipulation. Why?

HB 6 BY CAIN

We are fed up with “business as usual” state politics. We demand stronger statewide oversight, fraud reporting, training, and standards for all officers, observers, poll workers, or volunteers involved in elections. We must have real-time transparency of all voters and audits, increased security and preservation of records, deterrents, and reduced opportunity for fraud; much more severe penalties for violators, and more prosecutions. Only lawful Texas resident citizens with current picture state ID should participate in any aspect of our elections. We demand 100% transparency and auditability of all: ballots, records, systems, logs, hardware, and software, to include contractors, all persons at polling stations, service providers, and manufacturers; no judicial or executive waivers ever, including SOS!

1. 100% Transparency and Auditability: Real-time accountability for open audit of voting records, and active security deterrents with much higher penalties for voter fraud, and the highest mandatory penalty for election fraud (over 20 ballots). Increase ID standards; instant fraud detection; real-time reporting of dead, duplicate or ineligible voters.
2. Early & Absentee Voting: Early voting must be eliminated or limited to no more than 2 days. End the gap between early voting and Election Day or early release of data; Sunday and Monday before an election day only. Voting Absentee should only be allowed for: (A) in-state residents with a severe physical disability, verified by a doctor within 90 days, and identity-checked by a notary, and (B) Texas resident active duty or activated military reserves outside the State on Election Day. Allowing anyone to vote absentee has opened the door to blatant and rampant fraud.
3. Restrain Computer Usage: Computer election fraud is real. We must return to paper ballots. Outlaw internet connection for all voting systems. Tabulation must be based only on the paper hand count (double-verified, certified by a supervisor with commissioned observers present, and mandatory state audits, all under severe penalties for fraud), no tabulation on computers except for real-time audit, ballot reconciliation, detection of fraud, dead voters, duplicate or repetitive voting, ineligible, or unregistered voters.
4. Federal & Tech Restraints: We demand a resolution that provides severe criminal penalties, fines, arrest, or expulsion for any non-resident, to include any federal agency or social media entity that advocates for or attempts: voter registration, vote-by-mail, application distribution, prison registration, ballot distribution or harvesting, computer intrusion, foreign or external intervention. We DEMAND that federal overreach into Texas elections is stopped. Texas Elections! There should be a constitutional amendment for taxpayers

George Briant, County Judge

Hemphill

Canadian, TX

I wish to express my total opposition to HB 749. This will only serve to silence the voice of my constituents.

Respectfully

George Briant

Hemphill County Judge

Jarrett Atkinson, City Manager

City of Lubbock

Lubbock, TX

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee - thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding House Bill 749. I serve as City Manager for Lubbock Texas and these comments are submitted on behalf of the City.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Access to Austin based, professional lobbyists is essential to the City. Lubbock is 6 and 1/2 hours away from the Capitol by vehicle and a similar time by air travel, if flight schedules align. The Legislative process moves quickly, with numerous hearings each week that review bills of general or specific interest to cities. House Committees will hold 24 committee meetings this week alone with eligible bills that have a potential impact on municipal services or finance. The Senate also has a large number of posted Committee meetings. Notice periods are often short and the ability to analyze and focus our efforts to participate in the legislative process is essential.

Managing our efforts and making our elected officials available to testify or confer with Members would be very time and cost prohibitive without assistance from Austin based lobby professionals. It would also make meaningful participation in the process difficult.

We do not support making it more difficult, more expensive and less effective to participate in the legislative process in a meaningful manner.

The City of Lubbock supports full disclosure and transparency regarding lobby efforts and are willing to discuss other possible constraints regarding certain topics. Please know we stand ready to provide our thoughts and suggestions if desired.

Thank you again for this opportunity and thank you for your service.

Sincerely
Jarrett Atkinson
City Manager

Josh Schroeder, Mayor
City of Georgetown
Georgetown, TX

On behalf of the City of Georgetown, I respectfully submit comments in opposition to HB 749 (Middleton), which will be before your committee on Thursday, March 25th. The City strongly opposes this bill. The bill would prohibit political subdivisions from spending public funds to hire lobbyists to advocate before the Texas Legislature. This legislation would also prohibit local officials and community partners from joining associations that employ lobbyists, or even possibly removing the opportunity to employ effective in-house, salaried professionals to monitor legislation and advocate for community interests. While the language would allow us to have salaried professionals in-house that would not have to register as lobbyists under Chapter 305, this bill would severely limit the scope of work these salaried professionals could do to monitor legislation and advocate for community interests. This legislation would apply to school districts, cities, counties, public hospital boards, community colleges, river authorities, ESDs, special districts, and regional economic development coalitions. On average we see around 1,500 bills each session that impact local government. This year alone we have seen around 1,882 bills that impact local government, which is why it is imperative that as a City we can advocate on behalf of our best interest and that of our community as well as track the legislation and its potential impact to our services and operations. At the Capitol, local government and community leaders advocate for policies that advance economic development, provide reliable public services, and protect their unique quality of life. And, we bring an important nonpartisan perspective to public policy discussions in Austin. Georgetown created a Legislative Task Force, a special ad hoc group, comprised of active leaders in the community - the leadership of City Boards and Commissions who are knowledgeable members of the community, educated on City priorities, and representing a wide range of City interests. This 26-person task force reached consensus and created the City of Georgetown's Legislative Program for this session. It is because of our legislative program that was adopted by Council that we oppose this bill due to its limiting nature of the City's ability to advocate on behalf of the community through trade associations and consultants. It is our objective, just like with any service we provide, that we utilize public funds wisely and efficiently. In stripping the ability to spend public funds to hire a lobbyist we would have to pay significantly more for the same level of service in advocacy that a consultant can provide at a fraction of the cost were we required to create an in-house legislative team. This bill will be even more detrimental to smaller communities who may not have the resources to advocate for themselves and rely on associations to aid them with these efforts.

Christopher Sacia
Self - Consultant

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Eules, TX

Members of the committee,

Use of taxpayer dollars to contract lobbyists is wrong. Political subdivisions of the state should maintain contact with the legislature in the same way the average citizen does, by direct advocacy to their elected officials using private dollars for travel and contact. Taxpayer funds should not be used for issue advocacy by any political subdivision of the state. The current system is bad, and Mr. Middleton's bill is a great step towards a better system. I support this bill, and urge the committee and the House to pass it immediately.

Thank you

Ann Krpoun, Brown County Treasurer
Brown County Treasurer's Office
Brownwood, TX

I am the Brown County Treasurer and I am opposed to HB 749 as it will absolutely limit my capacity to engage with my state legislators. As a treasurer in a smaller county, we are not able to afford a larger staff for my office, therefore my duties do not allow me time for extensive travel during the legislative session to lobby either for or against bills that I believe will be harmful, expensive or just, in my opinion, an unnecessary burden on my county. Most legislators have no idea how their bills impact our work. Being able to have the resources provided to me through the County Treasurer's Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a very good use of our local tax dollars and allows me to keep track of all pending legislation. Without using the small amount of tax dollars to have a lobbyist give me a voice with my state legislators, I, and all of the other Treasurers, would have our opinions and needs unrepresented. Please consider that most elected officials in small to medium counties are not wealthy and cannot lobby on their own. I appreciate your consideration on this matter.

Kenny Edwards
Van Zandt County
CANTON, TX

As the Treasurer for Van Zandt County, I would like to go on record to say that I oppose HB 749. My job, as well as my budget does not allow the time necessary for me to do all of the traveling to be present at all of the legislative sessions. Therefore, to keep up with all of the bills for and/or against our county government that will be discussed during that time, being able to rely on Texas Association of Counties is a great benefit to our county because they help us track all pending legislation. I appreciate your time and your consideration.

Lorena Zertuche, Dr.
Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA)
Houston, TX

Principals are busy running schools. We do not have time to follow the thousands of bills filed each session. That is why we join organizations like TEPSA. As well, committee hearings are often postponed or rescheduled. We do not have time to run back and forth to Austin every other spring to monitor potential laws affecting public education. Please stop HB 749 from moving forward.

Paul Lilly, County Judge
County of Brown, State of Texas
Brownwood, TX

I am wholly and completely against the adoption of this bill. As a smaller community/county, we depend on all aspects and services that the Texas Association of Counties provide us. This bill, if passed, would greatly reduce our ability to affect other

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

bills and services within the State.

Sonja Keen

Self semi retired

Dripping Springs, TX

I support this bill. I am against using tax payer dollars to fund lobbyist that may not support the beliefs of the tax payers. we should have the right to choose who we are hiring and exactly what they are lobbying for

marybeth fisk, CEO

The Ecumenical Center

San Antonio, TX

Concerned we are in opposition of this bill.

Paul Virgadamo, City Administrator

City of Conroe

Conroe, TX

On behalf of the City of Conroe (City), I respectfully submit the following comments in opposition to H.B. 749 (Middleton). H.B. 749 would prohibit a municipality from spending public funds to hire experienced, professional, registered lobbyists to advocate before the Texas Legislature on behalf of the local governments and the constituents they represent. H.B. 749 would also prohibit cities and counties from using public dollars to join associations or organizations that employ lobbyists to advocate for their community's interests. Unlike larger cities in Texas, we do not have the resources to employ dedicated government relations staff to attend or monitor the endless days and nights of legislative engagement in Austin. Instead, the City contracts with legislative consultants to aid in the implementation of our legislative agenda. We ensure that our legislative consultants represent the best interest of our citizens by contractually obligating them to be bound by a legislative agenda adopted by the City Council. In other words, it is a breach of contract for our legislative consultants to lobby against the best interest of our citizens. As you know, if local officials' constituents disagree with the decision to employ a lobbyist to advocate for important community priorities before the Legislature, they can and will take the appropriate action at the ballot box. That's how accountability really works - not by imposing state dictates that stifle local participation of legislative policy considerations. Additionally, strong state and local provisions already provide transparency regarding the expenditure of public funds used to hire professional advocates. There are many options available to ensure more transparency in the use of taxpayer funds, but an outright ban on the participation of local officials in the development of state laws does not serve the interests of our joint constituents. We acknowledge that you have always maintained an open door when dealing with Conroe officials and we thank you for that stance. Nevertheless, it is important that we have the choice to retain professional representation to assist us in dealing not only with you but with other legislators from around the state with whom we have no relationship. There can be no substitute for professional representation when dealing with legislators outside our home delegation and wherever possible we direct our lobbyist to work with the members of our local delegation to advance our mutual interests. It is our hope that whenever possible we function as a team. In conclusion, experienced consultants equip the City to maintain an equal playing field when important community-building programs and initiatives are being debated at the state Capitol. We urge you to protect our ability to provide a voice for local taxpayers in the legislative process by opposing any attempt to limit or prohibit the use of public funds to communicate with legislators.

Brigid Shea, County Commissioner

Self

Austin, TX

My questions are for Rep Middleton. I'm trying to understand the issues this bill is concerned with. If it's the act of lobbying, then why is the state not also prohibited, since they used \$30 million the last biennium to lobby the federal government. If it's the

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

use of public dollars, then why are corporations and special interests not included in the bill, restricting them from taking tax deductions for their lobbying expenditures. If it's a general dislike of lobbyists, then why are legislators not prohibited from becoming lobbyists after they leave the legislature as you have introduced in a separate bill?

I think Democracy benefits when many voices are heard, not when they are muzzled. I can't imagine your intent would be to muzzle the democratic process, but that is certainly the effect of this bill.

Carlos Falcon, County Judge

Andrews County

Andrews, TX

Rep Middleton and Honorable Committee members, I write this comment to let you know my opposition for this bill. As a County Judge, I represent my constituents just as you do, I believe this bill will limit must ability to stand for what is best for our County.

Paula Smith

Self

Bacliff, TX

I support a ban on tax payer funded lobbying

Patricia M. Kampenga, Mrs.

self

League City, TX

HB 2640 I support a statewide uniform date needs to be established. There is no need to change election dates to suit someone's whim. It's confusing.

HB 2157 I strongly support voter identification. You need ID to cash a check, get a library card, write a check, even a doctor's office. And election is the most crucial place for identification in the prevention of fraud.

HB 6 All elections should be without fraud. Fraud occurs when identification is not checked and dead people vote. Dead voters need to be removed from the rolls. Also, non-citizens can vote without proper ID, thus committing fraud. Fraud in voting should be punishable, those doing the voting and those encouraging the vote. I support all the points discussed in this Bill.

Karen Speer

self

San Antonio, TX

I oppose HB 749. This is bad public policy that will limit the voices of our communities.

Oscar Leeser, Mayor

City of El Paso

El Paso, TX

The City of El Paso opposes this bill because it denies local officials the ability to hire knowledgeable professionals to advocate on their behalf on state legislation that may have either a beneficial or a harmful impact on their communities. The bill also prevents the Legislature from getting needed information to analyze pending legislation so that they can ensure that the most informed decision is made for the benefit of State and local communities. During past legislative sessions, our lobbyists have worked with El Paso to provide valuable information to the Legislature during legislative committee hearings, and they have

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

worked on priority legislative initiatives that are approved by City Council in public meetings. The public has the opportunity to provide input on those legislative initiatives, and our lobbyists are present during these meetings to answer questions from both council members and the public. Additionally, there is transparency in the hiring process for their services. The city posts lobbying contracts on our City Council agenda. The agenda is on the city's website. The city also allows for public comment on all City Council agenda items. If taxpayers or any member of the public has a concern with the expenditure of those taxpayer funds, they have the ability to voice those concerns so that the City Council can make an informed decision taking into account all feedback. I urge you to keep the lines of communication open so that there can be a continued spirit of cooperation between the state and local governments. Texans are best served by having state and local leaders work together, and it is only through this joint effort that the State and local communities become stronger, wiser and more prosperous. I want to thank the Committee members for their continued service to Texas. There are multiple critical issues that the Legislature is trying to address, and I appreciate your efforts in keeping this great State of Texas safe and strong.

Daniel SATURN

self / retired

Killeen, TX

We voted for our Representatives to represent US, not the lobbyists.

We do not want Government of political insiders, by the lobbyists, and for public corporate special interests.

Dale Carruthers, Honorable

Terrell County

Sanderson, TX

I'm opposed

Delbert Roberts, Mr

Kimble, County

Junction, TX

I don't support this bill.

Sydney Murphy, Polk County Judge

Polk County, Texas

Livingston, TX

The legislation proposed in this bill would prohibit the use of county funds for legislative communication. If passed, a County Judge would not even be able to pick up their county phone to call a legislator to discuss proposed legislation, meaning county officials would be effectively silenced unless they wanted to use their personal funds to communicate with legislators. We also would not be able to maintain our membership with the Texas Association of Counties ("TAC") in their current capacity. Polk County spends very little in membership dues to TAC and we receive numerous benefits from this membership. County officials have too many day-to-day responsibilities providing services to our taxpayers to spend four months in Austin every other year reading up on every proposed bill, meeting with legislators, and attending every public hearing that affects county taxpayers. One of the many benefits we receive from TAC is our ability to communicate with our legislators through this nonprofit association. Without this collective voice, smaller counties like ours would be effectively excluded from the legislative process. The Polk County Commissioners Court adopted a Resolution on February 23rd in opposition to HB 749, and its efforts to silence county officials. We hope that our legislators will oppose any legislation that would limit the voices of Texans.

Brady McKinney

brady mckinney

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Cleburne, TX

Lobbyists are the "living breathing" menace to Taxpayers in Texas. We pay local politicians, we pay, Texas politicians and we pay federal politicians-If these people can't to the jobs they were hired to do, we darn do not need lobbyist bribing them to do this or that. LOBBYIST, and the physical act of lobbying in public or private should and must be outlawed in TEXAS.

barbara ra;eu

Myself

CARROLLTON, TX

"SUPPORT HB 749; Ban Taxpayer-Funded Lobbyists"

Dale Spurgin, Jones County Judge

Jones County

Anson, TX

I register my opposition to HB 749.

Local elected officials need the ability to join together to have a qualified person discuss the concerns and offer input on proposed legislation.

Cindy Ramos-Davidson, Chief Executive Officer

El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

El Paso, TX

Strong local and regional partnerships among business and community leaders are the bedrock upon which our state's economic success was built and is maintained, even in difficult times. Local elected officials, chambers of commerce, educational institutions, and other community partners work together to protect local quality of life and create and sustain jobs in the many unique communities across our great state. We are troubled to learn that the Texas Legislature may be considering a proposal from the 86th Session that would stifle the ability of local businesses, taxpayers, and community leaders to be heard when lawmakers in Austin debate economic development policy. This short-sighted idea was soundly defeated by a bipartisan majority in the Texas House last session, and we are urging the Senate State Affairs Committee to reject any plan that would silence us by eliminating our ability to hire professional lobbyists to support crucial regional initiatives. It is deeply concerning to see this failed legislation promoted as "taxpayer protection." As local business leaders, we want to protect our right to hire professional lobbyists whom help us navigate the legislative process, provide institutional knowledge and represent our interests consistently as legislators change. Ultimately, we want all our community partners to be afforded the same right to be heard. The current system by which regional partnerships hire lobbyists is the most transparent way for local taxpayers to ensure that we can measure results and hold local leaders accountable for their decisions. The efforts made by cities and their regional economic development partners to drive economic development create and sustain jobs should not be a partisan, political pursuit. Please protect our ability to provide a voice for local taxpayers in the legislative process by opposing any attempt to limit or prohibit the use of public funds to communicate with legislators and state agencies, including any restrictions that would prohibit the use of public funds to pay membership dues to organizations that hire lobbyists.

Kathryn Novack

Self

La Marque, TX

SUPPORT HB 749; Ban Taxpayer-Funded Lobbyists

Brynn Myers, City Manager

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

City of Temple, Texas

Temple, TX

Our local governments need to be able to provide the services that local residents need and desire in areas such as streets and roads, drainage, parks, libraries, water and sewer, and public safety.

We encourage all legislators to work in collaboration with City and County government to ensure that the entire governing process is as effective as possible and, to that end, seek input and advice from the local level of government on issues that have a direct impact on their ability to undertake their responsibilities.

It is important that elected representatives of state government fully understand the implications of legislation they act upon to ensure there are no unintended negative impacts on the community.

Over 2,000 bills were introduced in the last legislative session that would impact cities in some way. It is imperative that local Texas leaders have an effective voice in discussions on the merits of legislation and state policies that affect their communities. Their diverse voices amplified through the actions of associations and professional advocates is an essential part of producing good public policy.

Professional lobbyist help local leaders and local stakeholders navigate legislative process.

Local government and community leaders advocate in Austin for policies that bolster local efforts to provide services, meet the needs of their communities, and protect their unique local and regional economy and quality of life. Local taxpayers know best what meets the needs and characteristics of their communities. Any effort to marginalize or silence their right to advocate for their community priorities in the legislative process should be defeated.

Debbie Southwell, Treasurer

Medina County

Hondo, TX

As Treasurer for Medina County, I cannot afford the time or expense to travel to and from Austin during the legislative session to voice my opinions in person on proposed bills that affect my office. We rely on Texas Association of Counties and County Treasurers' Association of Texas to be our voice and look out for our best interests.

I respectfully request that you vote no on HB 749. Thank you.

Laurie Guidry, Councilmember

City of Mont Belvieu

Mont Belvieu, TX

My name is Laurie Guidry and I am a Councilmember for the City of Mont Belvieu, we oppose HB 749. The City of Mont Belvieu is located in Chambers County, Texas along I-10 approximately 35 miles East of the City of Houston within Representative Middleton's District. We are a city of 8,000 and rapidly growing with an estimated population of 30,000 in the next 20 years. Our tax base is largely concentrated in midstream oil and gas production and storage with over 85% of the nation's natural gas being processed in Mont Belvieu.

I have the privilege of serving as a local elected official, which I believe it is the ultimate form of giving back to one's community. The job is hard, often 24/7, but it's also most fulfilling. We see our constituents every day at work, in our neighborhoods, at our HEB, when we go eat, and when we go to the park to watch our family and friends at the ball fields. We have daily interaction and communication with our constituents and they have the opportunity to attend one of our legislative meetings twice a month year-round and we are at most 5 minutes from their home.

Local governments have to maintain their ability to advocate on behalf of their own citizens and community to provide what is best for them not a one size fits all solution that the State feels is best for a few local governments and impose that on all local

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

governments within Texas' 962 unique cities and towns. We are a small city and do not have all the resources that some larger cities have. Therefore, we do rely on our state associations to work on our behalf to advocate, monitor bills, explain those bills to us in a way that I can understand them and share the potential impacts they could have on the citizens I represent. I would bet that many of our local citizens probably do not know their state representatives or senators; but, they most likely know their mayors, council members, commissioners and school board representatives. They know us, they see us, and they elect us.

In closing, I ask that you remember that one-size public policy does not fit all. That's why I believe the government closest to the people should continue to have a voice and advocate for what is best for our own citizens. As an elected official, I am accountable to those that have elected me and I desire to provide them the very best for my constituents, community and great City. Just like the state who is allowed to advocate for what is best for Texas, we need to continue to have the ability to advocate for our unique local governments.

Marie Day

Self and past president, Lavaca County Taxpayers Inc

Shiner, TX

SB 749. I fully support this bill and pray this committee will pass it. Lavaca County is a small rural county between San Antonio and Houston and Austin and Corpus Christi. There is no time when it is OK for a single penny of taxpayer money to be used to pay lobbyists. This bill is way past due. Thank you.

Cheryl Johnson, Galveston County Tax Assessor Collector

Galveston County Tax Office

Galveston, TX

Since first taking office (2005) I have worked with legislators to draft, find sponsors and pass over 30 tax and voter bills...without a lobbyist. During the same period, over \$15M was spent to lobby you. My professional association spent \$75,000 of government funded dues hiring a former House Chair to pass SB546 in the 83rd session. County tax assessors and county employees across Texas were striped of their earned tax professional TDLR licenses. Pass HB 749 and you will continue to see local officials providing input instead of taxpayer funded lobbyists and associations. Working directly with you and your staff is our duty as elected representatives of the people.

90% of voters surveyed oppose taxpayer funded lobbying. Please represent the majority against special interest expenditures of taxpayer money.

Associations have been lobbying their members what to say against this bill. Associations should provide education, networking and be resources to elected officials not provide scripts for them to read.

Brandy Fannon, Administrator

Garza County Health Care District

Post, TX

I am the Chair Person for the Texas Indigent Health Care Association, (TIHCA) We use CUC to help us organize and provide education and training for our members as well as forums for best practices and sharing of ideas. The only training some of our members receive is from the State Conference and the forums that the CUC help us to provide. If we are unable to assess dues to staff associations for this purpose it will likely mean the end of this greatly needed program. We rely on CUC to present effective and efficient means of conveying valuable information to legislators. Most of our Texas Indigent Programs are staffed by 5 or less people, I am a one person office. If this bill passes it would mean that myself as well as several other counties would have to find a way to review the thousands of bills that come through, analyze them to see if they impact our programs, then communicate with legislators sitting on relevant committees as well as be present to testify when each bill is considered in committee. We would have to do this while still finding a way to help and treat our Texas residents needs in a timely manner. It absolutely makes no sense for all of our Texas county judges, commissioners and or board of directors to be kept informed of all pertinent legislation and not to mention have to travel to Austin to convey our support or concerns. I personally feel that if this

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

bill passes it will simply silence our opinions and keep our programs that are meant to help Texas residents in need from running as smoothly as possible. I would hope that you would not even consider this bill as will only cause concern and problems for the staff and patients. I appreciate and thank you for your time and consideration of my opinion on this matter.

Steve Campbell, City Mgr

City of Merkel

Merkel, TX

Mr. Middleton and State Affairs Committee members,

It appears that HB Bill 749 is aimed at the Texas Municipal League (TML).

Efforts by TML's largest cities in "cahoots" with the National League of Cities to "defund" or to provide "sanctuary" or to "reform" the the justice or election systems are harmful to Texas and the Country.

I, and many other Texans, fully support the Legislature's efforts to reign in liberal, radical, activist municipal and county authorities to help protect and preserve the character of Texas and our communities; to prevent the erosion of our uniquely Texan way of life; to protect our institutions (police) and our constitutional rights (free speech and guns) from threats from within the State and from federal overreach from outside the State; to continue to resist wokeness and cancel culture; and to provide a secure border. We need you to continue that important work.

But, many of the services TML provides are vital to the hundreds of smaller cities within its membership; Risk Pool, legal department, HR training, budget and finance training and assistance, networking opportunities, and yes, legislative updates, just to name a few. Awareness and understanding of proposed legislation is vital to us all. TML soliciting input from cities and providing relevant information to the legislature regarding the possible detrimental effects a piece of legislation may have on a particular group, including cities, should be solicited and welcomed, not censored.

Crippling TML 's important work as an advocate for cities on cities' behalf smells a bit like "blocking my twitter feed". It really is an attack on fundamental rights of free speech and assembly.

The honest and fair criticism of the Bill is that it would essentially eliminate small cities' (most without the financial means to keep themselves "in the loop") ability to actively participate in the process in any meaningful way (disenfranchised).

Please don't forget, Texas must have strong cities. The brunt of the work and expense in providing basic services, infrastructure, not to mention public safety, to the additional millions coming to our State for liberty and opportunity each year, falls squarely on our shoulders.

Local government is closest to the people and is most trusted by the people.

Thank you for your consideration of the above as you debate HB 749.

Respectfully,

Steve Campbell

Chris Hill, Judge

Collin County

McKinney, TX

Support

Cindy Burchfield, Alderman Position 1

City of Daisetta

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Daisetta, TX

I would like to adamantly oppose the passage of this bill. I serve the citizens of our small Texas city, population 934, as a councilwoman. For the last seven years, I have relied on the Texas Municipal League to keep me informed and educated on everything happening at the Capitol. From current legislation, all COVID matters, just...everything. As a small city, with a very limited budget, we don't have the funds to travel back and forth to Austin on a regular basis. TML acts as our voice to relay important issues to you at the state level. Texas has so many diverse cities, with diverse needs and views. But the thing that the vast majority of cities share, is our wish to work effectively to bring our citizens the best possible guidance and leadership. That starts way down at local level and goes all the way up to the legislature. To truly provide that, we NEED to communicate our wants and needs, and we rely on the Texas Municipal League to advocate on our behalf, and also to educate us on our responsibilities at the local level. Please take this into consideration and vote No to HB 749

Mark S. Ramsey, P.E.

self / engineer

Spring, TX

I am FOR HB749 by Middleton. Paying contract lobbyists with taxpayer funds to potentially lobby against those very taxpayers' interests is immoral. The practice promotes the worst possible type of "positive feedback loop" deterioration of republic forms of government. It can result ultimately in promoting corrupt practices and even raising the specter of formal or informal payments or benefits to legislators through lobbyists but paid for by taxpayers--utterly repulsive. As a former chair of both a state convention platform committee and separately as a former chair of a state legislative priorities committee, I can think of few if any bills ever whose passage would improve Texas government at all levels. This is the lynchpin of good governance. You should enthusiastically work for passage of this bill to finally abolish the practice of taxpayer funded lobbying.

teresa McKinney

teresa mckinney

Cleburne, TX

Lobbyist and the people who pay them should be banned from the legislature building and operation

Lora Davids

Self/Retired

Tomball, TX

Residents of Texas should not be funding lobbyists, especially those working against the people of the state.

Thank you for considering.

Susan Beldon

self

SAN ANTONIO, TX

I oppose this bill as it limits the voices of those in our San Antonio Community!

Ron Jensen, Mayor

City of Grand Prairie

Grand Prairie, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

I am writing to express my opposition to House Bill 749. The highest priority for the City of Grand Prairie is the welfare of its citizens and businesses. To that end, the City collectively and collaboratively works to provide services and respond to the requests and needs of our specific community. As locally-elected officials, Grand Prairie leadership is directly accountable to the citizenry of Grand Prairie, and we honor that responsibility. In fact, as Mayor of Grand Prairie, I took an oath to protect our taxpayers. Every single decision the Grand Prairie City Council makes is with the best interest of our taxpayers at the forefront. To that end, the decisions we make to join organizations like TML and to engage the professional services of legislative consultants are made with the best interests of our residents in mind. We firmly believe that these decisions are in their best interest and are designed to protect our residents, not harm them. Moreover, the ability of the City of Grand Prairie to advocate on behalf of the Grand Prairie Community is essential. The depth and breadth of complex legislative issues which impact local communities like Grand Prairie is staggering. Our consultants not only assist the City during the dizzying 140-day legislative session, but also throughout the year, as the state agencies tasked with executing the laws swing into action. Just as the City hires architects or engineers for a specific project, these consultants are the specialists the City relies on to provide counsel and advice in a highly complicated, regulated arena. The elected leadership of the City of Grand Prairie enjoys a transparent relationship with our citizens. For example, in November, the citizens of Grand Prairie voted overwhelmingly to allocate a portion of the local sales tax to support public safety for the next 20 years. Previous referendums passed by our citizens supported other priorities, such as street maintenance and tourism developments, like Epic Waters and the Lone Star Park Racetrack. These amenities are all impacted by the state legislature, and the citizens expect the City to advocate on their behalf in Austin to protect those amenities. Grand Prairie residents would face many obstacles if they were asked to be the sole advocates for the City. The physical distance between Grand Prairie and the Capitol serves as a very real obstacle to their political involvement, especially when they are focused on their own careers and raising their families. As such, our residents rely on their locally-elected officials and our consultants to advocate on their behalf, making their voices heard in Austin. Restricting community advocacy does not further the goals of open government and transparency, but instead restricts the community's impact. We ask for the ability to continue advocating on behalf of our citizens and business community. Please vote against H.B. 749.

Werner Schatke, Mr.

Self, Unemployed

Benbrook, TX

SUPPORT HB 749; Ban Taxpayer-Funded Lobbyists

Rhonda Burkhart, County Treasurer

Hill County

Hillsboro, TX

Please do not pass HB 749. My responsibilities as County Treasurer for Hill County do not allow me to correspond with my state legislators on a regular basis. My thoughts on bills that come before those legislators are most often put forth through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas (CTAT) and the Texas Association of Counties (TAC). Their help is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Kevin Homesley

Myself

Grandview, TX

Support HB 749

Tanya Robertson, SREC SD 11 Committeewoman

Republican Party of Texas

Seabrook, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Speaking in FAVOR:

Texas tax payers should not have to worry about their hard-earned tax money being spent on lobbyists who advocate for policies that aren't in their best interest.

The Republican Party of Texas's Legislative Priorities Committee has identified HB 749 as aligning with the 'Ban Tax Payer Funded Lobbyists' legislative priority.

Thousands of Republican Party convention delegates are the voices of millions of Republicans in Texas who overwhelmingly agree. On the 2020 Republican Primary ballot, this particular proposition garnered 94.29% of millions of voters in support of this bill language!

We're respectfully asking Chairman Paddie to bring this bill up for a vote in committee along with asking committee members to vote favorably to pass it out of committee.

Thank you for your time!

Kathleen Fletcher

Voices for Children of San Antonio

San Antonio, TX

Voices or Children of San Antonio opposes this bill. We, and our Board, believe it would limit the local voice of our and other communities. There are issues that impact local or political subdivisions that only those directly involved and representing local populations can well articulate. This, we believe, should not be limited. Thank you.

Joshua Jaros

Self/Carpenter

Magnolia, TX

I am in favor of HB 749. Taxpayer funded lobbying is a practice that needs to be abolished.

Alexandra Schilling

Fort Bend County precinct 1008 chair

Wallis, TX

In Favor

William McKinney

Nate McKinney

Cleburne, TX

I support HB749,Eliminate lobbyists in Texas

Christina Van cleave

Self and spouse

Burleson, TX

Wrong use of tax payers dollars ,let's put a stop to misused tax dollars .

Brenda Wright

Self

Camp Wood, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Support HB 749; Ban Taxpayer funded Lobbyists!!

John Neuman, Mr

Self

Burleson, TX

It's wrong

Karen Eudy

self

Royse City, TX

I support eliminating property tax and moving to a fairer system.

Caleb Pillado Leon

Self - Engineer

Katy, TX

I am FOR HB 749. No body cares about my community more than I do, my neighbors and people living in my community. City and local government officials should be banned from using taxpayer funds to lobby our legislature. Whenever an important issue comes up, our local government officials should come to us, the community, so that we can represent ourselves before this body and our legislators. When I drive to the Capitol I take time off from work, my employer does not pay me to come to Austin and no one reimburse my expenses. I meet with my legislator because I care about the issues. It is wrong and immoral to take money from my family (in the form of taxpayer funds) and give it to a lobbyist. I do not oppose anyone from testifying before our legislature, I just don't want my money to be used to pay lobbyists.

Julie Dahlberg

Self

LA VERNIA, TX

I support HB749 to prohibit political subdivisions from using public funds for lobbying activities. I believe that county officials should not be better represented than the taxpayers, in the interest and need to attend and testify at hearings to provide their input to legislators to support or favor a bill - as it affects the county as well as the taxpayers. Legislators need to hear from the principals on either side - both the political subdivisions and the taxpayers.
Please vote to pass this bill HB749 out of committee.

Coy Stockton

Self

League City, TX

"SUPPORT HB 749; Ban Taxpayer-Funded Lobbyists"

Donna Stockton

Self

League City, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

"SUPPORT HB 749; Ban Taxpayer-Funded Lobbyists"

Jill Glover

Republican Party of Texas, Chair Legislative Priorities Committee

Double Oak, TX

Please pass HB 749. Our Republican delegates selected this as a top eight Legislative Priority.

H Apley

Self and Senate District 11, Republican Party

Dickinson, TX

Speaking in FAVOR:

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We're respectfully asking Chairman Paddie to bring this bill up for a vote in committee along with asking committee members to vote favorably to pass it out of committee.

Thank you for your time!

Nancy True

Self

Hickory Creek, TX

I urge SUPPORT for HB 749, banning lobbyists funded by, nevertheless unaccountable to, taxpayers. I respectfully ask Chairman Paddie to bring this bill up for a vote in committee, and ask committee members to vote favorably to pass it out of committee. Thank you.

Paul Cooke

Self

The Woodlands, TX

I absolutely oppose this bill. It is a misuse of tax payer funds. Funds used this way do NOT represent ALL the people.

James Peinado

El Paso Republican Liberty Caucus

El Paso, TX

I strongly support this bill.

It is theft to use our taxpayer money against us. Government agencies may claim they do this in our favor, but plenty of times that is not the case. They should have to lobby on their own dime and time, the same way the rest of us Texans do. When we elect leaders to a political subdivision of the state of Texas, we elect them to weigh in on issues at the local level, we pay taxes to

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

that subdivision to pay for the roads, the police, the county hospital, not to lobby against causes we use our own hard-earned money to advocate for at higher echelons of government. So that they can continue to raise taxes endlessly, or prevent accountability to them and our local government agencies. That is what I see happening from my own local government, wherein El Paso, we are burdened with arguably the highest property taxes in the country when you take into account the absurd annual rises in property assessments. The property taxes in El Paso are a huge reason to sell our property and leave town, which saddens me because I don't wish to leave West Texas, but we need relief.

What do we get for all these taxes, we fund stadiums for billionaires and hire out-of-state artists to create vanity projects, it's all a racket. That's all maddening enough, but recently I find out that the El Paso city government uses our taxpayer money to lobby the state legislature against property tax reform and relief. I'm outraged by that. That practice should be illegal. We have some of the lowest median incomes in the US, and these politicians and offensively highly paid bureaucrats, making as much as a Supreme Court Justice if not more. Yet they use our taxpayer money to hire lobbyists to fight against restricting them from raising taxes even more!?! They seek to be unrestricted in their extraction of wealth and prosperity from us the taxpayer.

Taxation is theft. That being said, in the absence of being able to persuade others to find a better way to solve community work, let's at least agree that taxpayer-funded lobbying is theft.

I strongly support HB 749.

Jennie Moore
self/homemaker
Santa Fe, TX

It is unconscionable for elected officials to use taxpayer dollars to pay someone else to work against and support legislation that is not in the taxpayers best interest. Our elected officials are elected to work FOR us. They are paid to put our best interests FIRST, not last. Our hard earned money should never be used for anything that is NOT in our best interest. It is past time for our elected officials to do the job they are there to do; represent the honest, law abiding, tax paying citizens of this great state.

Tracy Soldan, County Treasurer
Kerr County
Kerrville, TX

As County Treasurer for Kerr County, I am opposed to HB 749 as it will severely limit the capacity in which I engage with my state legislators. My fiduciary duties for my county do not allow time for limitless travel during the legislative session to engage in conversations for and/or against bills that affect county government. Being able to utilize the resources available to me through the County Treasurers' Association of Texas and the Texas Association of Counties is a good use of local tax dollars, and helps me keep track of all pending legislation. I appreciate your consideration.

Sheryl Preddy
self/Titus County Treasurer
Mt. Pleasant, TX

Good morning,
Thank you for allowing me to voice my opposition to HB 749. As County Treasurer for Titus County, I am the only one in my office and this HB 749 will severely limit the any capacity I will have to engage with my State Legislators. Titus County is a smaller county and I would not have the time nor the money to travel to each session to express my views and thoughts on bills that affect county government. The State of Texas, it's Legislature and several State agencies employ tax payer funded lobbyist to monitor the legislative actions in Washington, yet this bill does not deny that voice for them. Working daily and full time for our counties on behalf of its citizens makes it extremely hard to monitor all the bills that will impact us. Again, I am against HB 749!
Sheryl Preddy

Billy Wright
Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Self

Camp Wood, TX

Support HB749; ban taxpayer funded lobbyists!

Bailey Burk

Self- retired

Covington, TX

SUPPORT HB 749; Ban Taxpayer-Funded Lobbyists"

Chelsey Cegielski

Self

Bay City, TX

Support HB749; Ban taxpayer funded lobbyists

Dana Singer

Self

Victoria, TX

Support HB749; Ban taxpayer funded lobbyists

Charles Bujan, Mayor

City of Port Aransas

Port Aransas, TX, TX

Here are my blunt as usual comments: Why in the world would we as a municipality give up our rights to self-governance so that a very broken system like the State Legislature could make it somehow better?

Jennie Gren-Prats

self/Realtor/semi-retired

Surfside Beech, TX

This bill is not supportive of local and city representation. Please vote against it.

Georgia Polley

Council of PTAs of Spring Branch ISD

Houston, TX

I oppose this bill. Speaking specifically to public education, I would rather a portion of my tax money go to TASB or the PTA to consolidate lobbying on behalf of Texas school children and teachers rather than each individual district give up their Superintendent, who should be running the district, not running all over Austin trying to catch the attention of legislators. The unintended consequences of this bill are broad and detrimental to tax payers.

JENNIFER YOCH, Mrs.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Self Teacher

BLUE RIDGE, TX

Please support the Ban Taxpayer Funded Lobbyists bill by Middleton. It is an important bill because it does the following:

- Prohibits political subdivisions from hiring paid lobbyists (who are required to register as lobbyists). These lobbyists often lobby against the interests of taxpayers, even though they are paid with taxpayer funds.
- If a political subdivision engages in this activity, citizens are entitled to relief in court, and if successful, the political subdivision must pay attorneys fees and court costs to the citizens bringing suit.
- Repeals a section of existing code that allows County Commissioners to spend county money on membership in state county associations.
- This legislation needs to be done for ALL political subdivisions (city, county, school).

I feel this is absolutely crucial and I'm counting on you to support the voters and pass this legislation. Thanks for your support!

Frances Romero, Mrs.

Cy-Fair ISD Community Leadership Committee

Houston, TX

As a parent of a child in Cy-Fair ISD and as an advocate for public education, I am opposed to HB 749. School districts should have the same opportunities to lobby for the interest of our students, faculty and staff the same way the State of Texas has the opportunity to lobby for the State of Texas in Washington D. C. This legislation does not serve the greater good nor does it have the public's best interest at heart. Please vote "no" on HB 749. Thank you.

Carrolyn Moebius

Self/ Past Plano ISD School Board Trustee & parent

Murphy, TX

As a past Plano ISD School Board Trustee for seven years, I find House Bill 749 is an attempt to silence School Board Members' voices. The majority of School Board Members have full time jobs, volunteer in their community and spend many hours preparing for their meetings and serving their community the best way possible. To place another time consuming responsibility on their plate would limit the effectiveness of the Board. While State Representatives get paid "something", are able to focus on their elected position without too many distractions, a School Board member works hard to support students, fit everything in their daily life and keep their job.

How in the world is a School Board going to be able to keep up with all the education bills that are introduced? How many of the Board Members even understand the verbiage used in drafting the bills?

Banning local governments from joining associations that hire lobbyists would seriously limit School Board's ability to advocate for what's best for Texas Students and schools.

HB 749 is wrong on so many levels. Most of all it would censor community voices and be detrimental to Texas public school's students. Potential Good Board Members would have to reconsider whether serving would jeopardize their livelihood. Do you really want Trustees from over 1000 school districts to come visit you in Austin? Do not silence our local elected politicians' voices.

James Raines

self

Austin, TX

I urge you to oppose HB 749. HB 749 provides that a political subdivision (municipalities, counties, school districts, community colleges, CVBs, chambers, etc.) may not spend public funds to hire a lobbyist under Chapter 305 of the Government Code, nor pay a nonprofit state association dues for an organization that primarily represents political subdivisions and hires lobbyists to

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

advocate on their behalf. Why does HB 749 allow only certain organizations and individuals to lobby? If passed, HB 749 would allow every other stakeholder in the legislative process the power to hire a lobbyist while denying the same right to community advocates. Why is the goal of HB 749 to amplify the voices of the special interest lobby whilst silencing the voices of grassroots, tax funded organizers? If the Legislature is concerned that local government advocates are lobbying against the will of the people, then allow me to educate the Committee on the fundamentals of democracy. If I, the taxpayer, disagree with decisions made by my local elected officials, I will take appropriate action at the ballot box. That's how accountability really works – not by imposing state dictates that stifle voices that aren't as well funded as the special interest lobby. Special interest groups, such as the Texas Public Policy Foundation, have outsized influence in the legislative process by denying local officials access to our state elected leaders. So, no wonder they are lining the campaigns of elected officials to pass legislation like HB 749. Lastly, I would like to bring to the Committee's attention that the Texas' Office of State and Federal Relations is the State's advocate in Washington, D.C. They represent the State of Texas before the administration, congress, and federal agencies to advance the interest of Texas. The legislative agenda of the State Office of Federal Relations is not adopted in a public forum in the same way that political subdivisions adopt their legislative agendas. Why should the State be allowed to have a seat at the same table that they are uninviting local advocates from? I urge the Committee to vote against this legislation, and any other legislation which has the same goals, such as SB 10.

Kenneth Bullock

Convention of states

Katy, TX

In these days of runaway government and, in my opinion, over spending and taxation. I don't feel that the use of tax payer funds to pay for lobbyist's is a proper use. I am a fiscal conservative independent voter and a U.S. army combat vet. I feel we need to limit the list of things that we spend our limited resources on and this should be one of them.

Nancy Groves

True Texas Project

Colleyville, TX

It is time to STOP spending taxpayer money to pay lobbyists. Taxpayers are not fairly represented. County Commissioners should not be using county money on memberships to state county associations.

Ken Dahl, Mayor Pro Tem

Town of Bayside

Bayside, TX

Our Town operates the entire year on around 130,000.00 tax revenue. We use and rely a lot on the legal guidance that TML provides us as we navigate through the complexities of the legislative aspects of governance. We get this service through a modest annual fee. The cost to our constituents to go through our attorney on everything would be 10 fold. This is a needed cost effective way to govern our residents. Do not take this away. This benefits all involved. Thanks for listening. Ken Dahl

Dan Looten

Carson County

Panhandle, TX

I have many concerns with HB 749 and all similar legislation. One of my largest concerns is how unfair it will make many parts of this great state to live in. Texas is a very large state that I don't really believe all the members of the legislature understands. I live in the Panhandle of Texas. It takes us 8 to 10 hours to drive to Austin to testify or to visit in person to our Representative. Our connection with our various organizations that monitor the day to day proceedings is invaluable to me and my constituents. This bill would severely hamper our ability to get equal representation in Austin with those that live much closer to our capitol. This bill is "Washington" politics and has no place in our great State of Texas.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Kelly Haight, Mr.
self vision plan sales
Sattler, TX

Using public funds for lobbying activities is blatantly wrong. This is a conflict of interest as large as I've ever seen. Please end this travesty at your earliest convenience.

pamela lucas
self
southlake, TX

It is shameful that the practice of using tax payer money to pay for lobbyist, this practice should be stopped. Please have your state in mind and vote for HB 749.

David Beebe, Judge
Presidio County
Marfa, TX

I represent, as Justice of the Peace here in Presidio County, over 8000 Texans more than 425 miles from Austin who have historically been ignored by State government. Ignored both in funding and also in policy. Being that I have to go to work every day here in my own County on regular daily business, I rely on my JPCA organization, TAC and to a lesser extent, TML to inform me of what impacts are come in our way with regard to funding, legislation and policy. As elected officials we are unable to travel more than once or twice per session to have our voices heard on behalf of our constituents. I oppose limiting our ability to communicate with the Legislature through our professional organizations. I am certain that our local taxpayers prefer me to be in my office to serve them in person that traveling across the state every two years for months just to play defense on measures restricting our local control of policies that apply to real people, here, on the ground on the Texas southwest border. Please do not mimic Washington DC in blindly removing our representation in favor of the same interests that have co-opted and ruined the Congressional process outside of Texas. Passing this bill as written will accomplish just that. Please call me directly on my cell phone is you need any more information about my views or Presidio County. 432-295-3494. Thank you. - David Beebe

Vicki Baiamonte
Self
Mansfield, TX

Announcing my support of passage if this Bill

Mark Consentino, Mr
self
Richardson, TX

The government has no right to use my tax money for lobbying activities. I insist that lobbying not be paid for with my tax money. Therefore, I insist on the adoption of HB 749 to reject and make illegal any use of public tax dollars for lobbying purposes.

Kathleen Hill, Mrs
Self
The Hills, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Using tax payer money to lobby is unfair. Taxes should be well spent for benefit of everyone. We have many much more important uses for tax money. Especially now, as we are in difficult times. I am against using tax for lobbying.

Pamela Kennedy

Self - Independent Contractor Telecommunications

San Antonio, TX

I strongly oppose this use of public funds for lobbying activities. There are many more urgent and necessary uses for those monies. Please do not support this bill. Please do not pass this bill.

Alan Basinger

Self

Wimberley, TX

When the Constitution was crafted by Framers such as James Madison, their intent was to design a governmental system in which powerful interest groups would be rendered incapable of subduing the general will.

It is evident that is no longer the case and Lobbying is the tool being used by the rich and powerful as well as the soulless corporations to allow them to pass laws that are good for them and bad for the people who elected and trusted the political class.

I propose that all lobbying by corporations, officers of corporations, non profit groups, etc. be made illegal in Texas with a punishment to the officers, board members, etc. who break the laws. I of course do not expect you as a paid off corporate shill to vote or even propose real change, but will let it be known that the people are growing tired and are ready for leadership that will "drain the swamp".

Politics is supposed to be a service to your country, state, city. Something you do like joining the reserves. You come serve a term, represent the area you live in, and help communicate the peoples will for their lives. Instead it has turned into a profession for self service power hungry Narcissist's.

It is time to end the enrichment of the corporations by lobbying to have regulations put in place that serve them only and hurt people your elected to serve. End Lobbying, set an example for the other states and give control of peoples lives back to the people you were elected to serve.

Pamela Kennedy

Self - Independent Contractor Telecommunications

San Antonio, TX

In an earlier written testimony I misunderstood this bill and wish to support the ending of use of public funds for lobbyists.

D'Linda Dockery, City Secretary

Self

Childress, TX

It is imperative that local governments maintain the flexibility to govern themselves. That is the TML mission. TML advocates for small government to represent their constituents and their needs without state interference. They remind our state representatives that things like potholes and water delivery are non-partisan issues, and to minimize such state political interference in local government issues. They provide the tools and support that local governments need.

Vikie Schwartz

Self, retired

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Boerne, TX

Taxpayer dollars should never be used to pay lobbyists. I still cannot believe this needs to be said. I fully support this bill and I fully expect the legislature to support it.

Mikki Thiele

self- retired

North Richland Hil, TX

I believe that public funds are just that, and therefore should never be used to promote any one agenda, political view over another.

BILLY Gober

Texas Citizen

Smithville, TX

Why would the people of Texas fund organizations and people that may lobby against a law or belief the people would not condone or vote for. It is my belief that any funds given to the lobbyist from tax payer dollars is not ethical or correct. I has a Texas citizen wish this bill to stop all of Tax Payer Dollars to be used for any such funding.

GAYLA HAWKINS, COUNTY TREASURER

Grayson County

Sherman,, TX

As an extremely concerned Elected Official, I would like to express my opposition to HB 749 and how this bill will negatively impact local government and any resources we utilize which aid us in making prudent decisions to protect our taxpayers/constituents. Following are collective concerns, and I respectfully ask you to consider these when HB 749 comes before Committee hearings. It seems the passage of this bill would be another crack in the foundation of what our Great State of Texas truly stands for as it would seriously weaken the bonds between our Local and State Governments, as well as weaken our abilities to serve of our constituencies appropriately by silencing our collective voice for them.

- * HB 749 will prohibit counties from providing support to a nonprofit association (CTAT/TAC) that hires or contracts with any person for legislative communications.
- * HB 749 would compel each county official to individually communicate to legislators on every piece of legislation.
- * HB 749 would require each county official to maintain a daily vigil over county-related legislation and smaller counties would be challenged to review all bills and send someone to Austin every week...this would effectively silence County officials.
- * HB 749 would NOT prohibit special interest groups from lobbying and they would be the only voices heard at the Capitol.

Respectfully,

Gayla Hawkins

Grayson County Treasurer

CTAT First Vice President/Legislative Chair

Dimas Cavazos

Self

Hitchcock, TX

Tax Payer should not be funding any lobbying activites

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Laura Harris

Self

Fort Worth, TX

Please support this legislation to prohibit use of public funds for political purposes (lobbying). I believe it subverts the government process to use our state tax dollars (franchise, sales, property) for political purposes. Lobbyists by nature are working to persuade elected officials to support legislation to benefit their cause or employer. These efforts should never be paid by our state government. Doing so corrupts the process and reduces our faith in our elected officials. And it encourages forms of political payback by our elected officials funded by citizens of Texas.

Please stand up and do what is right to improve Texas for Government for the long haul. That is what you have been elected by the people to achieve.

Scott Douglas

Private citizen representing myself and my family.

Fort Worth, TX

Please take action to prevent tax-payer funded lobbying. In my opinion, it is usually taking our taxes and giving them to political groups to use against us and common sense government.

Abram Ogea

Self Clergy

Whitewright, TX

I highly encourage that this bill be passed.

Rick Bailey, County Commissioner

self local Gov

Rio Vista, TX

Good Day to all, Thank each of you for serving the Great State of Texas' I strongly oppose this bill, If passed the ability for local elected officials to be effective in our perspective day to day roles for us will become overwhelming. Legal representation to help us understand the good and bad of any bill has always and should continue to be a resource we can depend on for accurate and timely information during and after sessions, Education comes from the experience of our legal staff that represent us at The Capital' We are not elected to spend a140 days in Austin during session nor can We local elected, or the Taxpayers afford that. Our County Judges And Commissioners contribution CJCA for our Johnson County tax payers equals \$3,000.00 annually I encourage all of you to look up local amounts being paid in the local areas you serve Our Legal Representation and our associations are the life blood we depend on daily to navigate through AG opinions , Statutes, Legal advise and on and on , Our ability to govern depends on the ability to Represent our citizens with accurate information on vast issues 'We must and our people must have a right to Legal Representation' Regards' Commissioner Rick Bailey

Paul Moore

Self

Terrell, TX

Say NO to any and all good old boy activities. Business is business so NO hands in the cookie jar.

Kristopher Bonilla

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Self owner of Integrity Services

San Antonio, TX

I'm totally against tax payer funded Lobbying. It is theft of the tax paying citizen whom they have not earned support from. I believe the funds should be raised solely on it's own by the lobbying entity itself.

Doug Foster

None

Katy, TX

Public funds should not be used for lobbying, individuals using these funds historically have used funds enacting legislation designed to enrich political favors.

Robert Sensabaugh

I represent myself and any taxpayer that agrees with me.

Arlington, TX

I am against using taxpayers money to pay lobbyists. They do not represent the people. They represent the local government and it is wrong to use my taxes to pay for issues I am against.

Nicholas Tebet

Scottoils

ABILENE, TX

I wish to voice my concerns about the funding of lobbying activities with tax payer funds. It must be banned.

Eva Graham

Self/Entrepreneur

Fort Worth, TX

I support this bill. Taxpayer money should NOT be used in any way to support lobbying activities! Though why wait until September 2021 for this to go into effect? Should this not go into effect as soon as this is signed? Why give anyone the opportunity to make any further payments until that time.

John Rhyne

Self

Angleton, TX

I fully agree with and support HB 749 and it's purpose in stopping any taxpayer funds from being used to support lobbying of the legislature on any level.

Sharon LOVEALL

True Texas Project - a grassroots watchdog organization

Fort Worth, TX

How can a lobbyist be paid by taxpayers to lobby against the interests of the taxpayer?

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

This needs to be passed for all political subdivisions - city, county, school - not just large cities). Excluding the rural counties and cities is discrimination. Political subdivisions should not be able to hire paid lobbyists.

VOTE TO STOP PAID LOBBYISTS. PASS THIS BILL.

Respectfully, Sharon Loveall - Fort Worth

Rick Schroder, Chief Administrative Officer / City Secretary

City of Johnson City, Texas

Johnson City, TX

The City of Johnson City is opposed to any measure that would reduce and/or eliminate a municipality's ability to spend public funds to hire lobbyists or join nonprofit associations - most importantly, the Texas Municipal League - that represent political subdivisions and hire or contract with individuals who are required to register as lobbyists.

Laura Cottam Sajbel, Prof.

self, adjunct faculty, also Parks & Rec Board Member

Austin, TX

I am a member of the Parks & Recreation Board in Austin, Texas, a city where I have lived for more than 30 years. I am writing to voice my opinion, in opposition to HB 749, that relates to the prohibition of community advocacy. My community, at a grass-roots level, benefits from the ability of our city to advocate for our residents' best interests. Our voices deserve to be heard. Many hearings are outside the scope of regular citizens to attend--we hold jobs, have children, and other occupations that prevent us from attending hearings. However, having advocates for the city allows us to be represented. Big money and other lobbyists will continue to have access to these hearings and to politicians, so in pursuit of equity, cities and municipalities should be able to exercise those same rights. I urge you strongly to vote NO when HB 749 comes before the House State Affairs Committee on Thursday. Local government is elected and best suited to protect their citizens' best interests.

Rebecca GROSS

SELF - RETIRED

Boerne, TX

To whom it may concern:

I am traveling Thursday, April 25 and will not be able to attend the hearing on HB749 but SUPPORT banning taxpayer funded lobbying in Texas and urge our representatives to pass this legislation. I pray God saves this Republic.

Respectfully,

Rebecca Gross

Jan Henshaw

self / retired teacher

Flint, TX

I do not want any of my taxes to go toward lobbying activities. Legislators should listen to their constituents, not lobbyists, when considering all bills. Also, lobbying only creates corruption in my viewpoint. It is too easy to use money to influence decisions. Legislators can make good decisions doing their own research and listening to their constituents.

Maria Luisa Flores

Self Attorney

Austin, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

My name is Maria Luisa "Lulu" Flores and I live in Austin, Texas. I am an attorney and currently serve as a commissioner on the Austin Arts Commission. I am representing myself.

I am opposed to House Bill 749 by Middleton, the bill that prohibits community advocacy by prohibiting a municipality and other political subdivisions from retaining community advocates. I firmly believe my community benefits from having community advocates. Community advocates advocate on the interests of our community and the residents we represent. They amplify the voices of our constituents - the citizens of Austin, including the arts community - and provide an unmatched opportunity for their voices to be heard in the legislative process. I urge you to vote NO on HB 749 so that community voices can be heard.

Thank you.

Shay Luedeke, Hon.

self - Tax Assessor-Collector

Belton, TX

I oppose HB 749. This bill silences the taxpayers. We have a representative form of government. Like any public office I was elected by my constituents to represent them by performing the duties in my office. I also represent them when legislation is being proposed affecting my office and the work I do for my constituents. We are here to serve the people. If I am unable to go down to Austin and offer my expertise on bills introduced because of a ban on taxpayer funded lobbying, the only lobbying you will see is corporations, unions, and special interest groups. That sounds like it would lead to more corruption and poor public policy without the taxpayer funded lobbying. If the taxpayers do not like what the elected officials are lobbying on and the elected officials become destructive on these ends, it is the right of the people to alter it and elect new representation. As long as the elected officials continue to lobby in Austin, it will benefit the taxpayers and not just the corporations, unions, and special interest groups.

Another avenue for representing our constituents is through the associations with whom local officials and counties maintain membership. This collaboration is vital in disseminating important information like statute changes at the state level, state agency rule changes, and interpretations of the laws and rules. These associations are vital for smaller counties that make up the vast majority of counties in Texas. Smaller counties do not have the resources larger counties have, for example, human resources and information technology services which are provided by associations at fractions of the cost for counties. If these associations cease to exist, the services they provide to all counties, including models for best practices will now need to be provided by the counties and will likely create a need for increased taxes so those local entities can function properly.

During Legislative Session, the sheer volume of work associated with keeping up with what the Legislature is doing is a full-time job, a job that would take away time and limit the local official's job to adequately perform the functions of their elected position. The primary function of a lobbyist is to monitor the legislation and support local elected officials by keeping them abreast of what's happening in the Legislature. The elected official is still making the calls on what actions need to be made on Legislation brought to them by their lobbyist. The amount of money spent on lobbying efforts is grossly exaggerated and is typically a very small percentage of the total budget for local governments and removing this from the budgets will not impact local taxes.

Please do not impede local elected official's ability to effectively represent the best interests of their constituents. Please Oppose HB 749.

Sammi Hammers

self

LaPorte, TX

In A Perfect world, I would not need to pay others to represent me in the legislature. (actually MIS-represent me). This happens these days, regardless of my vote for Legislative members to represent my true values.

It certainly makes no sense (to "We the Taxpayers" to pay for lobbyists to ask for more of our Tax Dollars. I realize how important it is to them – They always show up at committee hearings to make their voices heard.

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

This is the third Legislative Session, I believe, where we tried to ban the use of public funds to influence the outcome of items pending before the legislature. (2015)
During the 86th Session, a minority of Republicans joined with a majority of Democrats to defeat the bill. Shame on them! It got as far as the third reading. I am looking forward to getting to the finish line this time

Representative Middleton has introduced this measure once again. (HB 749) A companion bill was introduced in the Senate, as well, (SB 234) by Senator Bob Hall. This is the time to finally address the abominable practice of robbing Peter to pay Paul (especially since Peter and Paul are one and the same).

I am well aware that the taxpayer's opposition are trying to finance their livelihood – but with the financial situatioOn as it is, we need to look more at cutting our expenses – rather than increasing them. E VERYONE has suffered from COVID – so everyone should contribute to our recovery – especially those who fight against the Taxpayer – who obviously has suffered the most from recent events.

I appreciate your favorable consideration of my comments.

Nancy Hotchkin, Mrs

Cos

Corpus Christi, TX

I am against funds being used incorrectly

Valerie New

Self - Physical Therapist

McKinney, TX

Support this bill

Hilliard Brittain

Self

GARLAND, TX 75044, TX

I am not OK with my hard-earned tax dollars going towards paying any person to lobby legislators without my express and direct permission. Ending taxpayer-funded lobbying is a top priority of the Republican Party of Texas and should be for all individuals who care how their tax dollars are spent. Please support HB 749 and help get this bill enacted into law. Thank you!

William Schur, Mr.

Self

Fort Worth, TX

My name is William Schur. I am a retired attorney having spent 17 years in private practice in Fort Worth and 23 years in-house with Southwestern Bell/SBC/AT&T. During my professional years, I worked from time to time with lobbyists and industry organizations that engaged in lobbying activities. Lobbying is an essential part of the political process that serves to facilitate effective, informed communications between legislators and those who are affected by proposed legislation. Industry organizations, whether for profit or non-profit, serve a vital role in educating their members about matters pending before legislatures and how specific bills may affect them. Cities (municipal corporations) are no different than other corporations. They have the right to petition government and express their views in response to legislation. This right implicitly includes the right to retain advisers - whether lawyers, public policy professionals, or lobbyists - who can assist them in understanding proposed legislation and expressing their views to the legislature.

Voters are responsible for electing public officials and holding them accountable for their budgetary decisions. If citizens do not

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

approve of their actions, the proper response is to vote them out of office. We do not need to create private rights of actions giving taxpayers opportunities to sue cities over line items in their budgets. Cities are charged with responsibility for local government. If legislation is proposed that would be contrary to the interests of the citizens who live in cities, cities should - in the public interest - express opposition in an informed matter. Likewise, if cities have needs, they should be able to have full access to the tools required to explain those needs to the legislature.

This legislation is unnecessary, counterproductive, unwise and should not move forward.

Thank you for your service to our State and for considering this input.

Terri Hall, Founder/Director

Texans for Toll-free Highways, Texans Uniting for Reform and Freedom (Texas TURF)

San Antonio, TX

We wholeheartedly support an end to taxpayer funded lobbying. With more than 13 different government toll agencies, the taxpayer doesn't have a chance at having their voices heard in Austin compared to the army of paid lobbyists with special access to our representatives. To add salt to the wound, most of the discussions and communications between taxpayer funded lobbyists and these governmental entities are shielded from public view entirely due to a supposed 'attorney-client' privilege when requested through public information laws. So transparency is nowhere to be found. Taxpayer funded lobbying and their lobbyists' tricks to keep all information from the public who pays their salaries is outrageous and MUST stop! We support HB 749 because it prohibits political subdivisions from hiring paid lobbyists (who are required to register as lobbyists). These lobbyists lobby against the interests of taxpayers, even though they are paid with taxpayer funds. I've witnessed this personally! Many times, these paid lobbyists outright mislead our lawmakers about the impact of certain legislation only to find out later concerned citizens like those in our groups were right. Yet the damage is done at that point. These lobbyists have unfair advantage and access we the people do not. If a political subdivision engages in this activity, citizens are entitled to relief in court, and if successful, the political subdivision must pay attorneys fees and court costs to the citizen bringing suit. The bill repeals a section of existing code that allows County Commissioners to spend county money on membership in state county associations. (**This should also apply to cities!** Do NOT limit this legislation to large metropolitan areas, excluding the rural counties and cities. It needs to apply to ALL political subdivisions, especially toll entities like Regional Mobility Authorities, county tollway authorities, regional tollway authorities, TxDOT and MPOs! Pass HB 749 immediately. It's long overdue -- the people are watching and demand it!

Jay Jenson, Mr.

True Texas Project

Eules, TX

I support banning taxpayer funded lobbyists being used in elections and taxpayer lobbying. This obviously winds up, we the people, fighting and paying for our own opposition. I also oppose taxpayer funded lobbyists being used to fight Constitutional Carry. Totally unfair to ALL citizens.

Jo Foley

Self N/A

Henderson, TX

I am in favor of HB 749. I do not understand who thought that it was a good idea to make taxpayers pay for lobbyists to go to Austin and lobby for things that we do NOT want. It seems like a no-brainer that people should not be forced to pay lobbyists to go against their wishes. I ask you to vote for HB 749.

Frank Holman, Citizen

Self

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

Austin, TX

Taxation without representation led our founding fathers to write, sign and defend the Declaration of Independence of the United States. We now have a situation where the people are being taxed and those tax dollars are being used against them. Tax payer funded lobbying is being used not to represent the people or to serve a greater good for the people but to serve the government. This practice has no place in Texas or anywhere in the United States of America. Pass HB 749.

Ron Butler

Concerned citizen of Flower Mound

Flower Mound, TX

The bill HB 749 would ban taxpayer-funded lobbying, where government officials spend citizens' cash on hiring lobbyists to influence state lawmakers—often toward legislative decisions that harm citizens.

Last session, a bill to ban the practice passed out of the Senate, but was voted down by members of the House. Ending the practice remains a priority of the Texas GOP. It is reported “Up to \$41 million per year has been spent on taxpayer-funded lobbying, even though 91 percent of all Texans oppose the practice. It’s time to de-fund this bureaucracy.”

Please approve this bill for consideration.

Aron Kulhavy, City Manager

City of Huntsville

Huntsville, TX

The City of Huntsville passed a resolution in opposition to this bill on March 2, 2021. A copy of the signed resolution was sent to our representative and senator. The text of the resolution is as follows:

Resolution No. 2021-09

Opposition to SB234/HB749 Efforts to Silence City Officials

WHEREAS, S.B. 234/H.B. 749 files in the 87th Texas Legislature would prohibit city funds from being used to join and support associations that provide collective communication to state legislators; and

WHEREAS, most Texas cities do not engage private lobbyists and only provide a minimal portion of membership dues to nonprofit associations for legislative communication; and

WHEREAS, “taxpayer funded” lobbying by local governments accounts for less than 10% of total lobbying activity, while corporate and special interest lobbying interests make up 90% of total lobbying activity; and

WHEREAS, the State of Texas, the Texas Legislature and state agencies activity employ large numbers of taxpayer funded lobbyists to analyze and monitor the thousands of bills filed each legislative session and to advocate for its interests in Washington, yet these bills would deny local communities this same ability while continuing public support of state agency lobbying; and

WHEREAS, prohibiting Texas cities from retaining experienced representation before federal and state legislative bodies and agencies would place our communities at a disadvantage in efforts to obtain and retain federal and state projects and military bases; and

WHEREAS, city officials require the ability to express our positions and information through associations, form a unified voice on the issues important to our communities, and share the associated costs among all counties; and

WHEREAS, it is a false claim that taxpayer funded lobbying works against the interest of taxpayer. Indeed, a priority of city government and its “lobbying” effort is focused on ending the state and federal practice of passing unfunded mandates, which

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

impose billions of dollars in increased taxes upon local property taxpayers annually; and

WHEREAS, smaller cities especially need to be able to combine their resources through their associations to monitor the thousands of bills filled each legislative session and effectively present their unique issues to the state and federal government; and

WHEREAS, the prohibition in S.B.234/H.B. 749 would violate the basic principle of open and robust discussion and turn the halls of Texas capitol into a one-sided conversation dominated by special interests.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the undersigned officials of the City of Huntsville do hereby express their opposition to S.B.234/ H.B. 749 and its attempt to silence the combined voices of the local communities of this state.

RESOLVED, this 2nd day of March, 2021.

Thank you for allowing us to express our opposition to this bill.

AK

Nelly Paulina Ramirez

Self

Austin, TX

I live in Austin, TX and am an active member of the community by way of neighborhood advocacy. I am also a Commissioner on the City of Austin's Public Safety Commission. I am writing in opposition to HB 749 which would severely restrict our city government, school district, community college, and local chambers' ability to advocate for change. Individual advocacy, although amazing and always encouraged, is increasingly difficult to navigate at a state legislative level and even more so during this session. Our local council members and boards are infinitely more accessible to their local constituents and as such are more connected to the day-to-day needs of their citizens. It is dismaying that this bill is being considered because it will, in effect, censor our local governing bodies and the communities that they advocate for.

I implore you to vote no when this bill comes up for a vote before the House State Affairs Committee on Thursday.

Elnora Joyce Wolfe, Ms

City Council Alderperson for City of New Berlin TX

LaVernia, TX

Please do not pass this bill, thank you

Julie Kellogg

self

Corpus Christi, TX

Vote Yes, tax money should never be used to fund lobbyists. Tax money spent on lobbyists is money that should have been used to benefit the taxpayers, ie schools, infrastructure etc. Using tax money for special interest, or otherwise, is theft of public funds and should be treated as such.

Fred Chavez

City Councilman, Place 2, City of Copperas Cove

COPPERAS COVE, TX

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

This piece of legislation does nothing more than silence the people and their elected representatives. By taking this action the legislature is doing nothing more than preventing elected representatives from bringing every tool available to do the people's business. Will the legislature eliminate lobbyists from corporations, and groups like the NRA? This is bad legislation and does not serve the people of Texas. Small communities need all the assistance and tools available to have our voices heard. With HB 749, you will gag us and bullying through any legislation the legislature deems appropriate; no push back, no dissention, just your echo chamber. This bill is wrong-headed and regressive. If your goal is to reduce lobbying at the capital, start with corporate and industry lobbyists; get rid of them and maybe this would be palatable. This bill is supposed to be in the public good, it is not. This legislation is an attempt to insulate and isolate the legislature from the people that put you there. HB749 should be stricken from the record and nothing of it's ilk should ever be brought up again, unless and until, ALL corporate and industry lobbyists are banned from doing business with legislators. Pushing HB 749 forward and keeping corporate and industry lobbyists states clearly who the author of this bill truly serves.

Bert Cunningham, City Manager
City of Bowie, Texas
Bowie, TX

HB 749 is a muzzle to Texas cities. Our organizations like TML and ARCIT are rural Texas' only voice in Austin. Stop the attacks on cities. Small rural Texas cities cannot afford lobbyist. Enact this bill on large metropolitan cities that can afford to hire lobbyist.

Merle Taylor, Snyder City Manager
City of Snyder
Snyder, TX

State of Texas needs to stay out of Local Government Activities. One legislation does not fit everyone from Austin, Texas. This has been proven over and over with Schools, Counties and Cities!

Erica Gill
Self - Librarian
Richland Hills, TX

Hello. I am writing in opposition of HB 749. I am a librarian that has worked for several cities in Texas, all of which have budgeted public funds for my membership to the Texas Library Association (Lobbyist #3038). The Texas Library Association is not just a registered lobbyist, but an organization that provides invaluable support to libraries across the state. The training and conferences they offer are by far among the best in the country. Early in my career, I would not have been able to afford purchasing my own membership, and I know many librarians across the state are in the same position. They will lose an essential service for training and networking and a support group that is integral to their success. For this reason, I ask you not to support HB 749. Thank you for your time.

Tom Nobis
Republican Party of Texas
Houston, TX

Chairman Paddie and other committee members
Thank you for allowing me to testify For HB749 by Representative Middleton to ban taxpayer funded lobbying. This is a priority of the Republican Party of Texas. 60% of the convention attendees voted to make this on of the top 8 priorities. The results of the 2020 Republican Primary Propositions showed that 94.29 % of the participants are in favor of this priority. This would prevent the spending of our tax money to in essence work against us and necessitate more taxes. The Platform plank states: 198. Tax-Funded Lobbying: We oppose using tax dollars to hire lobbyists or pay dues to associations that lobby the Legislature

Printed on: March 29, 2021 3:37 PM

There is bipartisan support for this legislation by over 60% of Texans.
If political subdivisions want increased funding they should explain it to us the taxpayer.

sincerely
Tom Nobis
SD7 SREC Committeeman