

Wrap-Up

Lawmakers returned to the Capitol on July 18 to take on a special session agenda driven by bad ideas that should have been buried after an unproductive regular session. Twenty-nine days later, the Legislature adjourned without having accomplished much. A few common-sense bills passed that should have been taken care of during the regular session, such as maintaining the licensing of the Texas Medical Board and extending the Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force. A “school non-finance” law that started out strong but got weaker did pass and will pit education against health care funding by relying on a budget gimmick. Fortunately, most other discriminatory, punitive, and short-sighted proposals failed to pass. Below is an update on the legislative priorities we worked on during this special session.

Expand Economic Opportunity

Our vision: Texas funds its public schools to meet the needs of students and close achievement gaps between socio-economic and racial groups.

See page 7 for regular session update.

Good Bills Passed and Bad Bills Blocked

- A commission to study the school finance system and bring innovative ideas to the next legislative session was tacked onto an otherwise disappointing education bill.
- Voucher proposals were blocked from this same education bill, and a last-minute amendment ensured new funds for charter schools are used only for facilities.

Missed Opportunities and New Challenges

- While the House worked hard to craft school finance reform for all public schools, the Senate neutered their bill by drastically reducing the funding and introducing new inequities.
- A school finance commission makes sense to study what it costs to ensure all children get a quality education, but our history of underfunding previous recommendations calls for a serious discussion about revenue and how to stop a 30-year trend of shortchanging Texas kids.

Invest in Texas

Our vision: state and local revenue systems are capable of fully funding necessary public services.

See page 10 for regular session update.

Bad Bills Blocked

- House and Senate proposals that would have interfered in local decisions and hamstrung the ability of Texas’ cities and counties to pay for public safety, roads, and health care died at the last minute.
- A bill to tighten the state spending cap despite existing constitutional limits on state spending passed the Senate but died in the House Calendars Committee.
- A bill that would have arbitrarily limited local spending to state growth—even though some local communities grow faster than the state average—died after second reading in the Senate.

Missed Opportunities and New Challenges

- A bill that would have increased transparency for property taxpayers was added to an otherwise bad bill and died along with it instead of being considered separately.

SEPTEMBER 2017