



CAI Texas/TCAA LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE AND OVERVIEW

TCAA Minute – January 13, 2021

Welcome Back

Supporters of the CAI Texas Chapters and Texas Community Association Advocates (TCAA) are united by a common mission: to ensure that Texas community associations function properly for the benefit of all residents, that property values are protected, and that community associations are well governed and properly managed to serve homeowners across Texas. We believe in responsibility and working together with public officials on public policy and working to find common ground to benefit homeowners and protect the quality of life of Texas neighborhoods.

With that mission in mind, the CAI and TCAA legislative team has turned its focus to the Texas Legislature, which begins its 87th Regular Session on January 12th, 2021. We look forward to another productive and successful session for community associations and the homeowners that we serve. Since the Texas Legislature only meets in regular session for a few months every other year, it is important for us to hit the ground running. Preparations are already well underway to ensure the continued protection and support of community associations across the state.

Last session, legislators filed approximately 7,400 bills and joint resolutions in the House and Senate, one of the highest totals in Texas history. Legislators also submitted thousands more amendments in committee and during floor debate. Keeping track of all of that activity requires a tremendous amount of effort and organization, and our legislative team did an exceptional job.

LEGISLATIVE OVERVIEW

Big Issues and New Faces

State legislators arrive in Austin this week for the first meeting of all 181 House and Senate members since the COVID-19 outbreak, and will face several serious crises related to the pandemic. Despite optimism related to the ongoing vaccine distribution and the recently signed federal relief package, the Texas economy is still sluggish and unemployment remains high. Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar is analyzing all of this data ahead of his announcement this week of the official budget revenue estimate, which is the amount of money that state legislators will use in crafting the state budget. In July, Hegar announced that the state was on track to end the current fiscal biennium with a nearly \$4.6 billion deficit, though in November he predicted that the economic outlook could be slightly better for the upcoming legislative session.

Members of the Texas Legislature began filing bills last November, and over 1,300 bills and resolutions have already been filed. Big issues this legislative session will include the state budget shortfall, COVID-19 response and relief, and criminal justice and policing reform. There are also a number of bills already filed that seek to expand Medicaid, decriminalize marijuana, and authorize casino gambling, but those contentious legislative initiatives will be difficult to pass. This is especially true because legislative

leaders have warned that, due to COVID-19 restrictions and safety protocols, there will likely be fewer hours of debate and fewer bills passed during this session.

There will be a few new faces at the Texas capitol, though there was very little turnover among the legislative membership. After securing support from an overwhelming majority of his fellow House members, Republican Rep. Dade Phelan from Beaumont will preside as the new Speaker of the Texas House. Influential Houston legislator Sarah Davis lost her re-election bid to a Democrat, one-term legislator Gina Calanni, also from the Houston area, lost to returning Republican Michael Schofield, and there were a handful of retirements from the Texas House. On the Senate side, Roland Gutierrez left his House seat and successfully defeated Republican Pete Flores for the SD-19 seat stretching from San Antonio to West Texas.

New Safety Protocols

After being closed for months due to the pandemic, the Texas capitol will be open to the public during the upcoming legislative session, and the House and Senate have outlined plans for modified legislative operations. There are varying degrees of testing, social distancing, and mask use required, which are different for the House and Senate, for common areas and private areas, and for first day operations and ongoing operations. Legislators will also spend less time than usual on the floor of the House and Senate, and will work a shorter schedule than usual during the first month or two of the legislative session. In addition, plexiglass shields have been installed in capitol committee rooms, new mobile sanitizing machines have been purchased, and new air filters and purifiers are being installed for the legislative chambers, committee rooms, and capitol offices.

The House and Senate will manage public access to their offices and assemblies once convened and rules are adopted. Safety protocols such as COVID-19 testing, mask wearing, and distancing are encouraged, but not required inside legislative offices. Visitors are encouraged to check with members' offices for specific guidelines, including whether an appointment is necessary before visiting the office.

COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION ISSUES

TCAA will be monitoring hundreds of bills during the next legislative session, as well as communicating regularly with legislators, stakeholders, and the CAI Texas and TCAA community. The highest priority for TCAA in these efforts is to preserve the existing power of community associations to be largely self-regulated and self-governed, without undue government interference, so that they may continue to best serve homeowners in Texas. TCAA will also continue to monitor implementation of recently adopted regulatory changes, including numerous changes relating to notices, elections, meetings, and liens. The bottom line is that CAI and TCAA is proud of the work being done by local community associations and professionals in Texas, and wants to empower you and your neighbors to continue that success.

TCAA hopes to hear from you about the issues of concern to you and your neighbors. We also encourage you to share your support of community associations with your local legislators. For more information on the Texas Legislature and updates on TCAA activities and events, please visit www.txcaa.org or www.caionline.org/txlac.