

CSSB 29 by Senator Bob Hall – End Taxpayer-funded Lobbying

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What does "political subdivision" mean?

A: Water / Aquifer / River authorities, special purpose districts, school districts, counties, cities, etc...

Q: What activity, if any, is an elected official allowed to participate in before the Legislature under this bill?

A: An elected official would still be allowed to advocate for and against legislation before the Legislature.

Q: What about free speech rights?

A: Political subdivisions don't have free speech rights; the First Amendment doesn't apply to them. Only individual citizens have a right to free speech. CSSB 29 would still allow individuals to lobby, as long as they don't directly or indirectly receive compensation from political subdivisions.

Q: Would this bill prevent public employees like teachers, police officers, or city managers from advocating for or against legislation? What about legal counsel to a political subdivision?

A: No, as long as they don't engage in activity that would require them to register as a lobbyist under Chapter 305. Also, anyone invited by a legislator to testify is still permitted to do so under CSSB29.

Q: What activity would require an individual to register as a lobbyist?

A: Any activity described by Chapter 305, Government Code, for example, direct contact with an elected official via one-on-one visit, email, phone call, or text message or if they make certain expenditures.

Q: Would CSSB 29 prevent organizations like Texas Municipal League, Texas Association of Counties, Texas Association of School Boards from lobbying before the Legislature?

A: No, the bill would still allow organizations like TML and TAC to lobby as long as they don't receive money of any kind from political subdivisions. They could get funding from individuals all day long and still lobby the Legislature.

Q: Who will oppose CSSB 29?

A: TML, TAC, lobby firms, TASB, etc....

Q: Is this just a big city problem?

A: It's a widespread problem among all political subdivisions at every level of Texas government across the state. Even the City of Austin hires a lobby firm, when they're the closest local government to the State Capitol. Smaller counties and cities often hire proportionally more lobbyists compared to their citizen population than their larger counterparts.

Q: What about organizations that are funded by individual member fees like TMPA (TX Municipal Police Association)?

A: CSSB 29 would not affect them as long as dues and fees are collected from individuals instead of political subdivisions.

Q: Does CSSB 29 affect the Office of State Federal Relations at all?

A: No, because they are not required to register as a lobbyist under Chapter 305.

Q: What do "state funds" and "public funds" mean?

A: These terms are not defined in Texas statute.