
SB 29: Taxpayer Funded Lobbying

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Background:

- Taxpayers should not have to foot the bill for lobbying efforts that advocate against their interests, such as cities lobbying against bills that could lead to lower taxes. Taxpayers should not have to pay for influencing legislators for a cause they don't support.

Committee Substitute for SB 29:

- The committee substitute for SB 29 would prevent political subdivisions from using funds to directly or indirectly influence the Legislature.
- An elected official would still be able to advocate for or against legislation. An employee of a political subdivision would still be permitted to advocate for or against legislation as long as they refrain from actions that would require them to register as a lobbyist under Government Code, Chapter 305.
- C.S.S.B 29 would still allow a political subdivision to pay dues or fees to a membership association or organization as long as they follow all of these criteria: (1) their governing body approves, (2) the organization exists for the betterment of all local government, (3) the organization isn't associated with a labor group, (4) the organization or its employees don't engage in lobbying activity, and (5) the organization doesn't contribute to political campaigns.
- Any individual, regardless of the provisions of C.S.S.B 29, would be permitted to accept the invitation of a legislator to provide information to the Legislature or testify before a legislative committee.
- C.S.S.B 29 would provide injunctive relief and allow recovery of attorney's fees and court costs to a taxpayer who seeks to prevent a political subdivision from engaging in the prohibited activity.

Talking Points:

- C.S.S.B 29 would level the playing field between individual citizens and special interests. Citizens are not paid for voicing their opinion or their travel expenses, while lobbyists' expenses and salaries are often paid with taxpayer money.
- It is unethical for a taxpayer to be forced to pay for influencing legislators about a cause they don't support, such as an increase in tax rates.
- At the 2018 Republican State Convention in San Antonio, ending taxpayer-funded lobbying was identified as a priority legislative issue. In fact, it is Plank 217 in the Party Platform.