



TEDC ADVOCACY GUIDE

A Guide to Lobbying the Texas Legislature for Economic Development Professionals

TEDC members are uniquely positioned to lobby the Texas Legislature because you bring a specialized perspective, in-depth knowledge, and a strong connection to your local economies. Our lawmakers need to hear from you to make informed decisions about economic development. While lobbying may seem daunting, the benefits of your advocacy can be significant, affecting everything from community resilience to job creation.

By engaging your elected officials, TEDC members ensure that Texas remains a vibrant, competitive, and economically powerful state. This guide will provide an overview of the Texas legislative process and offer practical advice on engaging with lawmakers.

DO I NEED TO ENGAGE WITH MY LEGISLATORS?

The answer is **Yes!**



Lobbying enables TEDC members to champion policies that keep Texas at the forefront of economic development. Every legislative session, lawmakers can make significant changes to the following tools we utilize to attract business investment.

- Economic Development Corporations (Type A and Type B)
- Chapter 403 (JETI Act) School District Property Tax Abatements
- Chapter 311 & Chapter 312 Agreements
- Chapter 380 & Chapter 381 Agreements
- Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZs)
- Texas Enterprise Fund
- A variety of districts: Municipal Management Districts (MMDs), Municipal Development Districts (MDDs), Public Improvement Districts (PIDs), Venue Districts, Spaceport Development Corporations

Legislative offices hear from many different people but frequently from the same people. This does not mean you need to pester your elected officials every day. But **you should aim to communicate enough so they think of you when they have a question about economic development!**

THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE

The legislature consists of a 31-member Texas Senate and a 150-member Texas House of Representatives. The Lieutenant Governor is the presiding officer of the Texas Senate and is elected statewide.

The Speaker of the House is the presiding officer of the Texas House, and the 150 House members elect the Speaker on the first day of the legislative session.





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UNDERSTANDING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

It is fair to say that the Texas Legislature operates in a unique and confusing way. We are one of only four states with a biennial legislative session, meaning the legislature meets once every two years. Furthermore, when the legislature does convene, **the regular session lasts just 140 days!**



140 DAYS

Regular Legislative Session

January 2025 to June 2025

Special Legislative Session

To be determined - Only the Governor can call a special legislative session, and the Governor must specifically mention the topics that can be passed in one.

Interim Legislative Session

This refers to when the legislature is not in session. During this time, legislators typically stay in their districts but occasionally return to Austin for interim hearings. They may also campaign for upcoming primary elections in March/April and the general election is in early November.



Pro tip: The interim is the optimal time for a more extended, unrushed meeting with your legislator in your community. If possible, take them to a project site—it will be a more memorable experience (and a good photo-op!).

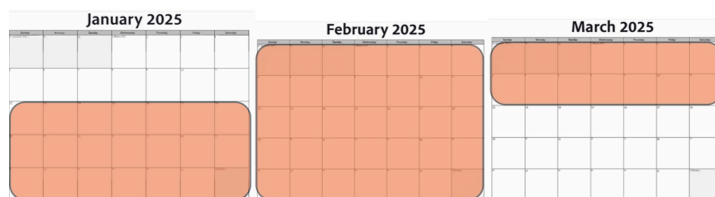
DEEPER DIVE - THE LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

The 140-day legislative session can be broken down into three phases:

The legislative session begins with a festive atmosphere, featuring countless "Days at the Capitol," where local communities and interest groups share their priorities with legislative offices. Lawmakers are busy filing bills, but due to a restriction in the Texas Constitution, no bills can be considered in the first 60 days—though the Governor's "emergency items" can be taken up at any time. The Speaker of the House and Lieutenant Governor assign committees, which hold introductory hearings with relevant agencies and interest groups. **All legislation must be filed within the first 60 days, with around 7,000 to 8,000 bills expected each session.**

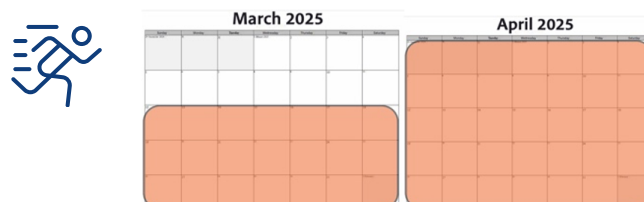
The legislative session is gaining momentum with the "bill filing deadline" behind us. House and Senate committees will hold weekly hearings for public feedback on policy proposals. Typically, the first major bill to reach the floor is the biennial budget, which will allocate about \$250 billion over the next two fiscal years. Expect 200-300 amendments in the House, often discussed well into the evening on "budget night." As the session progresses, floor activity increases rapidly, with hundreds of bills being considered daily until the first legislative deadline.

Day 1 to Day 60 - The Honeymoon Period



Pro tip: Try to meet with your lawmakers during this period to outline your top priorities and key bills you will be watching.

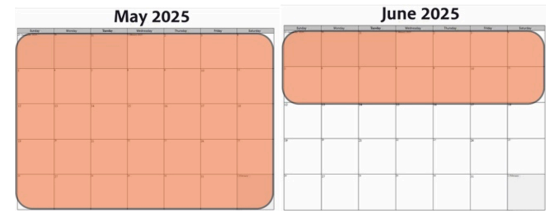
Day 61 to Day 110 - Crawl to Sprint Phase



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Lawmakers established legislative deadlines to limit the amount of legislation passed in the final days of a session. As deadlines approach, it's crucial for bills to progress through specific stages; failure to do so will render the legislation "dead." At this point, lawmakers are confident that their months-long efforts to make a legislative change have failed. This, combined with long nights and weeks away from their family, can create tense moments and exchanges.

Day Day 110 to 140 – Are We There Yet Phase?!



During the final days, efforts focus on reconciling the House and Senate differences. **On the 140th day, the legislature adjourns "sine die," although the Governor has until the 160th day to veto any legislation.**

CULTIVATE THE RELATIONSHIP

Building a personal relationship with elected officials is ideal but can be challenging since they often have full-time jobs. Lawmakers' legislative staff will handle policy research, vote recommendations, and scheduling. Cultivating a good relationship with them is valuable! Always be kind and patient, as they can champion your cause to their boss!



Pro tip: Call your elected official's office before you come to Austin and ask if you can bring lunch to the office. This small gesture goes a long way with staff who work long days and hours.

STRATEGIES FOR AN EFFECTIVE MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

- **Schedule Ahead** - Depending on the time of year, you may be meeting in the district or Austin; either way, you should always call ahead to schedule a meeting. You will likely schedule a meeting between 15 and 30 minutes long. During the legislative session, do not be surprised if the elected official must step out or have a legislative staffer take the meeting. Do not be offended - this is very normal.



Pro tip: When you call to make an appointment, always tell them you are a constituent. Legislators have limited time for meetings, but they generally prioritize meeting with their voters!

- **Prepare Properly** - To maximize your 15–30 minute meeting, use a one-pager highlighting 3–5 key points for the legislator. TEDC can create a customized one-pager with your legislative priorities and district-specific economic development info. Longer literature can be a "leave behind" for legislative staff or elected officials.



Pro tip: Researching your legislator before the meeting can pay dividends! First, you can spend time on something other than asking about their background, and second, you can tailor your talking points to their experience and expertise.

- **During the Meeting** - Stay on message and make the most of your time! Your goal is to have your elected official (or legislative staffer) walk away with a better understanding of what we do. If they understand what we do, they are more likely to support our programs in the future.



Pro tip: Everyone gets nervous when meeting with their legislator. The best way to lower stress is to come prepared with the three main points you want to convey.

- **Follow-up Post-Meeting** - Email them any information you promised to send and create a line of communication for future efforts.



Pro tip: Take five minutes to write quick thank-you notes to the legislator and the staff members who attended the meeting.

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGE

So, you have a meeting, now what do you say? Keep it simple and start with the basics:

- **Do they know what you do?**
- **Do they know what you do to improve the community?**
- **Do they know your legislative priorities/requests?**

If they can answer these questions after your meeting, they will likely support our economic development legislative priorities.



Pro tip: Bring a list of recent or upcoming projects in your community. Legislators will want to hear about their district's investment and job creation! And don't just bring the successes – lost projects present an opportunity to address weaknesses in our economic development programs.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. My legislator opposes economic development programs; do I still need to meet with them?

A. Yes! The only way to get your legislator to consider a different policy position is to talk to them. The more they hear about the positive impact of economic development efforts in their community, the more likely they will be to support your cause.



Pro-tip: There is a difference between a lawmaker voting “nay” on a bill and a lawmaker actively opposing it. Sometimes, simply voting “nay” can be seen as a victory!

Q. Why do we need incentive programs? Texas has a great business environment—aren't companies going to come to Texas anyway?

A. While Texas provides a business-friendly environment, there are still factors that concern companies thinking about relocation. Economic development programs help to mitigate these concerns and attract capital investment to the state.

Q. How do I respond to an elected official who thinks economic development lacks transparency?

A. Transparency is essential for public trust, and the TEDC has historically backed initiatives to enhance transparency.

Tips for Testifying

- **Keep it short** - You must be concise because you will likely only have two or three minutes to speak to the committee. However, you can talk longer if a lawmaker asks you a question.
- **Keep your head on a swivel** - Lawmakers can ask any questions they want, so be prepared to defend your position.
- **Keep TEDC informed** - If you plan to testify, let us know. We can help you prepare your remarks and with logistics. The legislative calendars can also be confusing, so we can help you watch the meetings to give you an idea of when you will be testifying.

