

Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, Speaker Straus and State Legislators:

We are writing to urge you to limit state government interference with local government policymaking, especially when it comes to quality of life policies. Communities around this state have to balance competing interests, and drawing from different perspectives and values they have arrived at different policies on issues as diverse as single-use bag pollution, heritage trees, oil and gas production, historic preservation, smoking in public places, sexually oriented businesses, payday lending and vagrancy. In most of these cases, the state has offered little to no assistance in alleviating the challenge that municipalities face. **We ask that you refrain from hindering local governments' abilities to serve the interests of their residents** by pre-empting possible solutions on these issues.

We, the undersigned, do not all agree on any particular policy on any of these issues, but we are united in a firm opposition to any attempt by the Legislature or Governor to tell our respective communities how we should deal with these

issues. In each of these cases local governments and our neighborhoods are shouldering these burdens with little to no help from the state government. When people are affected by nuisances, they tend to call police or their local 311. When public safety is impacted, they call fire and EMS. Pollution, litter, nuisances and other direct impacts often tax local infrastructure far more than anything maintained by the state.

When neighbors see their quality of life slipping away, they move elsewhere, robbing each of our communities of vital human capital. **Local governments need to retain the autonomy and authority necessary to respond to their residents' needs**, especially on issues where state government is not directly impacted, not able to be flexible or not interested in providing resources for a solution.

Local governments are also closest to Texans and the most immediately responsive to their perspectives and needs. They are the easiest level of government to change wholesale if bad or unfair policies are adopted. Finally, they are the only level of government in Texas subject to initiative and referendum, meaning that they always face the threat of direct grassroots accountability in a way the state and federal governments do not. This is why **Texas has a variety of distinct solutions to quality of life concerns, each solution reflecting the unique character of that community**. We urge you to keep state government out of the way of these solutions.

Finally, allowing state government to pre-empt common sense quality of life solutions at the local level would set a dangerous precedent. While current talk has centered on oil and gas drilling, single-use bag ordinances, regulation of payday lending and heritage tree protections, there are a variety of local ordinances which have evoked opposition in some cities while nonetheless improving Texans' quality of life. Will next session bring calls to undo local smoking bans, or limitations on alcohol sales and sexually oriented businesses? Will we have to give up architectural standards which allow us to maintain neighborhood characters? Will we no longer be able to enforce city codes against unruly yards or garish structures? Will we lose zoning authority altogether?

The best policy is to leave decisions over local impacts to local governments and let residents and other stakeholders influence those decisions at their local city halls. **We do not want the legislature to be the City Council of Texas.**

A blue rectangular box containing the text "Local Control for Texas" in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below it, the phrase "Accountability & Quality of Life" is written in a white, cursive script font.

Local Control
for Texas

Accountability & Quality of Life

Different communities have different ways of doing things and this is what makes Dallas distinct from Fort Worth or Sugar Land distinct from Katy or Tyler distinct from Longview. Different perspectives lead to different policies which attract different people which create different cities. Texas is strengthened by this diversity, and heavy-handed mandates from the State Legislature benefit nobody. Texas has a legacy of local control and a reputation for a rich quality of life. Please preserve these virtues by opposing efforts to pre-empt local policies on important local issues.

Sincerely,

Darren Hodges, Fort Stockton Mayor Pro Tem

Lanham Lyne, former State Representative and Wichita Falls Mayor

Karen Darcy, Active Montgomery County Republicans, Stop the Toxic Wells

Texans Standing Tall

American Institute of Architects—San Antonio

Fort Worth League of Neighborhood Associations

North Dallas Neighborhood Alliance

Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance

Aquifer Guardians of Urban Areas (AGUA)

Sea Turtle, Inc.

Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation

Workers Defense Project

Texas Campaign for the Environment