

# Texas Impact Legislative Platform 2021-2022

## Ten To-Dos for a New Texas

1. Give local decision-makers the broadest possible discretion to act in the best interests of their communities.
2. Provide an adequate, responsive system for funding the dynamic needs of the state and its residents.
3. Sustain the state's health care and public health infrastructure to ensure equitable access to health-preserving and health-promoting resources.
4. Strengthen equitable access to affordable, healthy food.
5. Ensure access to safe, affordable water for all Texans.
6. Close Texas' technology gap.
7. Ensure fair, secure, and transparent election administration and ensure voter access in Texas election systems.
8. Strengthen and clarify laws prohibiting all forms of voter suppression.
9. Support and strengthen civil protections from physical and sexual abuse for vulnerable populations.
10. Dismantle policies that perpetuate the disproportionate arrest, charging, incarceration, or sentencing of people of color.

## Economic Justice

### Education

- Fund the cost of enrollment growth in the public school system.
- Oppose school vouchers and any other strategy to divert funds that are assessed under provisions of the public school finance system to non-public education providers or

services.

- Establish a state personal income tax to provide a stable funding base for the public education system.

## Health

- Expand Medicaid under the provisions of the Affordable Care Act.
- Legislate and implement 12-month continuous eligibility for Medicaid and SNAP.
- Oppose legislation that would validate or provide support for harmful health practices that seek to discriminate, particularly in marginalized or vulnerable populations, or prevent practitioners from implementing evidence-based health care.
- Offer incentives for local governments to provide mental health crisis intervention training to law enforcement, first responders, and community-based organizations.
- Restore the “protection of the health and welfare of Texas’ citizens” to the mission statement of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

## Hunger and Poverty

- Streamline and simplify application and enrollment systems for safety-net programs.
- Eliminate predatory practices in the financial marketplace.
- Support expansion of financial services to financially underserved communities.
- Strengthen and modernize Texas’ unemployment insurance system.
- Enact—or permit local governments to establish—a higher minimum wage, tipped-wage standards, equal pay, and worker protection standards like sick leave requirements.
- Strengthen incentives for development of safe, affordable, sustainable housing.

# Climate Justice

## Energy and Utilities

- Require Texas’ electric reliability plans to include strong consumer-directed energy conservation measures, structured to provide accountability in their savings to the grid and to consumers.
- Update the state’s clean energy goals to reflect advances in Texas’ clean energy production and to protect existing clean energy achievements.
- Permit local governments to provide free wireless internet in their jurisdictions.
- Direct state agencies with utility ratemaking authority to set utility rates that account for subsidies for low-income ratepayers and create positive incentives for consumer-side efficiency and conservation.

## Water

- Affirm and strengthen the state's locally driven water planning process.
- Prioritize water conservation planning and support water conservation initiatives in the regional water planning process.
- Fund the Texas Water Development Board and the Texas Water Plan to meet the strategic water needs of our state.
- Oppose legislation encouraging or enabling water to become a speculative commodity.
- Account for both human and non-human considerations in the regional planning process and water ratemaking processes.

## **Resilience**

- Strengthen communication and collaboration between government agencies and faith and community-based organizations to improve effective response to all hazards.
- Direct state agencies to estimate and plan for costs attributable to climate change, such as those associated with natural disasters.
- Increase funding for environmental enforcement.
- Increase funding and support for local mental health trauma-response systems.
- Update the state's appropriations pattern to provide for rapid funding of disaster mitigation.

# **Anti-Discrimination and Systemic Racism**

## **Freedoms of Expression and Information**

- Oppose legislation that would have an adverse impact on any individual or group based on that individual or group's inherent human characteristics including but not limited to race, religion, national origin, alienage, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, or genetic information.
- Oppose legislation that would prefer or disadvantage one faith or set of faith tenets relative to other faiths or no faith at all.
- Oppose legislation that would force any individual to act against their conscience without a compelling state interest.
- Oppose legislation that would permit adherents of any faith from harming non-adherents as an expression of faith.
- Oppose legislation that would limit the right to protest or peaceably assemble.
- Enact strong protections for journalists from arrest, including citizens who record police interactions with the public.
- Update the Open Meetings Act to account for remote work during prolonged emergencies.

- Create transparent and accountable open-records responses by expanding the requirement to put government contracts online and create penalties for government agencies that do not respond to public information requests.

### **Voting Rights**

- Oppose any measure that could reasonably be expected to reduce electoral participation by qualified voters.
- Establish a commission to study methods for increasing voter participation and investigate voter suppression.
- Direct the Secretary of State to implement a campaign to increase Texas' voter participation to at least the national average by 2022.
- Extend the length of the state's early voting period.
- Implement online voter registration like driver's license renewal.
- Mandate "any location" voting for all counties.
- Modernize vote by mail by expanding ballot tracking to domestic voters; eliminating the need for an excuse; allow the ballot to be hand-delivered to the county any time; switch the ballot receipt deadline to a postmark date; provide voters an opportunity to cure a rejected ballot; and pay the postage.
- Require school districts to report on their implementation of laws encouraging high school seniors to register to vote.
- Protect communities of interest by allowing voters to exert local-control through the ordinary political process and enacting a nonpartisan redistricting commission.

### **Law Enforcement**

- Implement community-based policing.
- Ban no-knock warrants.
- Regulate the use of force by law enforcement including the use of strangleholds and other restraints in the prone position
- Create requirements for de-escalation during arrests.
- Create a statewide database for tracking misconduct like we have for school teachers.
- Create civilian oversight review boards with subpoena powers
- Legislate a duty to intervene.
- Invest in rigorous and sustained police training, including funding for the utilization of non-police professionals in situations such as mental health interventions.
- Create a penalty for the deactivation of body cameras and dashboard cameras.
- Restrict police officer indemnification and pensions in excessive force cases.
- Prohibit state law enforcement agencies from accepting surplus military equipment.

- Provide incentives for local law enforcement agencies to reject surplus military equipment.
- Offer incentives for local governments to invest in medical and social strategies as part of a comprehensive approach to public safety.

## Human Rights

### Immigration, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers

- Support state policies that create an environment of care, welcome, and justice for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- Enforce strict accountability for entities that provide shelter or services to migrating people, including enacting legislation to the fullest extent of the state's police powers to ensure that no individual suffers from abuse or neglect, and that state licensing standards are met in federally operated immigration facilities..
- Require conformity with all state laws and quality standards related to access to services justice, and child welfare as applied to migrating people.
- Reject proposals to co-opt health, education, or human service providers or faith communities into immigration enforcement.
- Enact a tax on for-profit entities under contract with the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement that operate licensed or unlicensed detention centers in the state of Texas.

### Prisoners

- Maintain the state's commitment to criminal justice reform, including evidence-based programs that reduce recidivism, promote successful re-entry, and disrupt the "school to prison pipeline."
- End the use of the death penalty in Texas.
- Protect death row inmate's free exercise rights by requiring TDCJ to provide a chaplain from the faith of the condemned person's choosing to be present in the room with the condemned throughout the execution.
- End the use of private prisons and private contracts for prison management in Texas.
- Continue requiring reforms at TDCJ to meet the unique needs of incarcerated women

### Vulnerable Individuals

- Adopt and fund reforms to implement federal court requirements for the state's child welfare system, and prohibit the Office of the Attorney General from expending funds litigating *M.D. v. Abbott*..

- Monitor and prohibit state funds from being used to discriminate by state contractors, protect the free exercise rights of individuals in the state's custody, and restore the children's bill of rights to protect a child's free exercise of religion.
- Foster local and regional partnership approaches to assure that services and supports for survivors of family violence and human trafficking are accessible in all parts of the state.
- Support and strengthen programs that increase access and agency for Texans with disabilities.
- Strengthen and enforce transparency and accountability for long-term care facilities.
- Fund a living wage for direct care workers in long term care facilities.

## Find Us

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