

West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association 2020 Resolutions

The following resolutions were passed by the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association representing 118 counties in the State of Texas on August 20, 2020, during the Association's Annual Business Meeting.

1. Thanks to State and Local Associations and Friends of County Government

WHEREAS, the members of the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association wish to acknowledge the expertise of and thank the staff of: James Allison of Allison, Bass & Magee, LLP; the Texas Association of Counties and Executive Director Susan Redford; the Texas Association of Regional Councils and Executive Director Ginny Lewis; the V.G. Young Institute of County Government, a part of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and Executive Director Dr. Peter McGill; the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agents' professional associations; *County Progress* Magazine and Editor Julie Anderson; and the many other state and local associations and people who have all been so helpful to county government;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Association thanks all of these individuals and their staffs for their past, present, and future help on behalf of county government.

2. Memorial to Deceased Officials and Special Friends

WHEREAS, the following highly regarded members and friends of the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association are deceased; and

WHEREAS, the Association desires to pay appropriate respect to these members and friends; and

WHEREAS, since our last conference, the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association has mourned the passing of:

Former Yoakum County Commissioner Chris Blundell

Former Ector County Judge Joe Connally

Former Menard County Judge and County Commissioner Richard Cordes

Former Kerr County Commissioner R.D. Cunningham

Jeff Davis County Judge Kerith Sproul Hurley

Former Shackelford County Commissioner R.P. Mitchell

Former Castro County Commissioner Dan Schmucker

Former Floyd County Judge Choise Smith

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association members pause for a moment of silence and meditation to honor the memory of these respected individuals.

3. Opposition to Unfunded Mandates

WHEREAS, Texas counties are responsible for the operation and management of many and various governmental programs as required or authorized by state law; and

WHEREAS, some county government programs are fully or partially supported with funds disbursed by the State of Texas pursuant to the state appropriations process; and

WHEREAS, the State of Texas, acting through the Texas Legislature or through a state agency or executive order, may enact laws or promulgate rules that have the effect of imposing mandatory financial obligations upon Texas counties; and

WHEREAS, the State of Texas, through the Texas Legislature or through a state agency or executive order, mandates that counties implement certain governmental programs or perform certain duties and obligations including financial commitments by a county to expend county funds in connection therewith; and

WHEREAS, every unfunded mandate results in a mandatory increase in property taxes; and

WHEREAS, during each regular session of the Texas Legislature, all state funds that support county programs are reviewed through the state appropriation process and by other state budgetary review systems; and

WHEREAS, the aforementioned review process may result in a reduction, or cessation, of state financial support of county government programs causing an unforeseeable disruption and reduction of the county budget and operations; and

WHEREAS, Texas counties cannot achieve reliable financial planning and the necessary bond ratings sufficient to support county-related obligations when the state mandates a new program that is not fully funded or under conditions where the state reduces or fully withdraws prior funding and disbursement for county government programs;

NOW, THEREFORE, the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association and its current member counties do hereby resolve that for the foregoing reasons, it is in the best interests of Texas counties and their taxpayers to support and favor the passage of legislation in the form of an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Texas that would expressly prohibit the imposition of a mandatory governmental program on Texas counties, whether by an act of the Texas Legislature or a state agency or by executive order, unless the State of Texas has fully funded and disbursed all necessary funds to enable Texas counties to operate said governmental program.

4. Support for Local Decision-Making and Opposition to Revenue Caps

WHEREAS, 54 percent of the average taxpayer's property tax burden is due to school taxes while only 16 percent is due to county taxes; and

WHEREAS, revenue caps diminish local decision-making and tie the hands of county officials and limit their ability to provide essential services to address the needs and emergencies of their citizens; and

WHEREAS, county government is already struggling to meet the demands of underfunded and unfunded state mandates such as indigent health care and indigent defense and federal mandates such as the Help America Vote Act and the Clean Air Act; and

WHEREAS, the demands on county budgets continue to increase including health care, motor fuel, road materials, and all other products and services purchased by counties; and

WHEREAS, artificial revenue caps result in a shift of taxes from fluctuating properties, such as volatile mineral values, to those remaining relatively stable in value, such as residential properties; and

WHEREAS, revenue caps will result in a severe impact on county services; and

WHEREAS, it is inequitable for the Texas Legislature to impose additional revenue caps on local governments without alternative funding sources and unfunded mandate relief;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association does hereby express its opposition to limits in the past legislative session to local decision-making and does hereby oppose any further unreasonable revenue caps upon Texas counties, and the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association expresses its deep appreciation to all legislators who oppose these unsound measures.

5. County Local Option Revenue Sources

WHEREAS, county revenue sources are extremely limited; and

WHEREAS, under current statutes, counties are forced to rely upon property taxes to fund necessary services; and

WHEREAS, county taxpayers should have the option to adopt a local sales tax, a local severance tax, a local motor fuel tax, an increase in local vehicle registration fees, and other revenue sources to reduce property taxes;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association requests that the Legislature amend the tax statutes to allow the adoption of a county local option sales tax, a local option severance tax, a local option motor fuel tax, an increase in local vehicle registration fees, and other revenue sources for the reduction of property taxes without imposing any additional revenue caps.

6. Indigent Health Care

WHEREAS, revisions have been proposed regarding the Texas system of indigent health care; and

WHEREAS, some revisions propose an assessment upon counties to support a regional indigent health care system; and

WHEREAS, such assessment would constitute an unfunded mandate, requiring property tax increases in those counties; and

WHEREAS, such regional systems would not be efficient or responsive to local taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the present Section 1115 Waiver provides voluntary opportunities to participate in health care innovation projects;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association opposes any attempt to impose a mandatory assessment upon Texas counties to fund a regional or statewide health care system and instead supports the continuation of the voluntary Section 1115 grants.

7. State Funds for Indigent Criminal Defense

WHEREAS, the right to assistance by legal counsel is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution; and

WHEREAS, the State of Texas is required to implement this right and provide legal counsel to indigent criminal defendants; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Fair Defense Act, adopted by the Texas Legislature in 2001, implements this right and requires certain procedures and attorney appointments; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Legislature has failed to provide sufficient funding to offset the additional costs of the Fair Defense Act and has shifted this cost to county taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, county expenditures for indigent criminal defense have increased over 200 percent since the adoption of the Fair Defense Act; and

WHEREAS, the state funding is totally inadequate, providing approximately 12 percent of the indigent defense costs; and

WHEREAS, indigent criminal defense is a state responsibility that should be adequately funded on a statewide basis, not a burden overwhelmingly borne by local property taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Legislature has failed to appropriate current funds that are committed by statute to the Indigent Defense Fund;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association does hereby request that the Texas Legislature fully fund the cost of indigent criminal defense, which has cost local taxpayers over \$3.2 billion from 2001 through 2019, and immediately release all funds in the Indigent Defense Fund for distribution.

8. Juvenile Probation Funding

WHEREAS, the supervision of juvenile offenders is a responsibility of the State of Texas; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Legislature has consistently failed to appropriate sufficient funding to meet this responsibility; and

WHEREAS, Texas counties have increasingly met this burden by funding juvenile probation services and facilities; and

WHEREAS, Texas counties and their local taxpayers are now providing over 75 percent of the costs of juvenile probation; and

WHEREAS, current state funding formulas will continue to shift additional costs to county taxpayers unless addressed by the State of Texas;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association does hereby request that the Texas Legislature fully fund the costs of supervision of juvenile offenders, including the costs for juvenile probation services.

9. Mental Health Patients

WHEREAS, Texas counties are being forced to hold mentally incompetent prisoners for up to six months while awaiting court-ordered transfer to a state mental facility for treatment; and

WHEREAS, each of these pre-trial inmates costs the local taxpayer approximately \$9,000 during this period of incarceration; and

WHEREAS, the county jail is not an appropriate facility for the mentally ill, and these prisoners pose a high risk of injury to themselves, the jail staff, and other prisoners; and

WHEREAS, a State District Court in Travis County ordered the Department of Health Services to receive these prisoners within 21 days of a judge's order; and

WHEREAS, instead of accepting its responsibility, the state appealed this order; and

WHEREAS, this delay by the state is increasing the cost to our taxpayers and continuing this improper practice;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association hereby requests that the State of Texas implement additional funding for mental health services and implement the state mental health plan to ensure the efficient and effective use of these resources, and accept all mentally incompetent inmates within 21 days of their court-ordered transfer.

10. Opposition to Diversion of Dedicated Funds

WHEREAS, the Legislature has committed certain funds for dedicated purposes; and
WHEREAS, unfortunately these funds have been improperly withheld from these needed functions and used to balance the general state budget; and

WHEREAS, the state leadership has proposed to end this diversion of funds;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association expresses its opposition to any state diversion of dedicated funds.

11. Emergency Services Program

WHEREAS, citizens of Texas desire access to 9-1-1 emergency services in an efficient manner, as evidenced by approval of the monthly fee on business and residential phone bills; and

WHEREAS, the 9-1-1 emergency services dispatch and response depend on equipment which must function reliably on a continuous basis; and

WHEREAS, older equipment reaches a point of being high maintenance and becomes unreliable; and

WHEREAS, technology continues to improve, necessitating upgrading hardware and software for reverse 9-1-1 services and other needs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association urges our state legislators to provide full funding to the Emergency 9-1-1 Services Program for maintenance and improvement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that funds generated by the 9-1-1 surcharge will not be used by the Legislature as money set aside to balance the state budget; and

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that any such funds set aside be fully appropriated for the Emergency 9-1-1 Services Program.

12. Opposition to Granting Powers to Municipal Utility Districts and Special Utility Districts

WHEREAS, Texas is one of the fastest-growing states in the Union; and

WHEREAS, city government and county government should have appropriate authority to regulate growth in their respective counties and cities; and

WHEREAS, special water districts and private water corporations have the means to furnish water and provide for growth in rural areas of the counties; and

WHEREAS, municipal utility districts and special utility districts have been improperly used by certain developers to avoid compliance with county and city infrastructure plans;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association opposes the granting of additional powers to municipal utility districts, special utility districts, and any special districts, and requests that the approval of the county be required before any further districts are created.

13. Support for County Road Grant Fund

WHEREAS, constitutional amendments have been approved by the voters to increase dedicated funding for public roadways; and

WHEREAS, these constitutional amendments provide additional funding to be used only for constructing, maintaining, and acquiring right of way for public roadways other than toll roads; and

WHEREAS, these constitutional amendments provide needed support for public highways without increasing taxes; and

WHEREAS, the county road system is eligible for assistance from this funding; and

WHEREAS, county roads are being devastated by overweight trucks to enhance the production of oil and gas; and

WHEREAS, the oil and gas severance tax should be equitably shared with counties to repair this damage; and

WHEREAS, the Economic Stabilization (Rainy Day) Fund has reached record levels through deposits from the oil and gas severance tax; and

WHEREAS, the appropriations from this Fund can be utilized to fund the repair and rehabilitation of county roads;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association does hereby express appreciation for the additional funding appropriated to support the county road grant program and request expedited distribution of the \$250 million appropriated in the 86th Texas Legislature's S.B. 500 and H.B. 1.

14. Uranium Mining Regulation

WHEREAS, uranium mining creates a special hazard for local groundwater; and

WHEREAS, uranium mining places a high demand upon local groundwater resources; and

WHEREAS, groundwater pollution by uranium mining cannot be recovered or rehabilitated and creates a permanent loss of groundwater; and

WHEREAS, county and groundwater conservation districts have very limited power to regulate uranium mining under current law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association requests that state law be amended to require a due process permit proceeding and approval by the local Commissioners Court and groundwater conservation district before any permit is granted for uranium mining.

15. Sludge Waste and Biosolid Disposal

WHEREAS, human waste and other toxic materials are contained in municipal, domestic, and commercial sludge and biosolids; and

WHEREAS, this sludge and biosolid waste contains harmful bacteria, viruses, and chemicals that may contaminate local water supplies; and

WHEREAS, the current rules of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality are inadequate to protect the water supply and adjacent landowners from the improper disposal of sludge and biosolid waste; and

WHEREAS, disposal of these materials should be a matter of local regulation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association hereby requests that no permits be issued for the disposal of sludge and biosolid waste without the approval of the Commissioners Court and that the Texas Legislature clearly authorize local control of all sludge and biosolid waste permits.

16. Fireworks Regulations

WHEREAS, counties currently have limited authority to regulate fireworks; and

WHEREAS, due to the continued danger of drought and the concern for public safety, such regulations are necessary to protect life and property;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association is opposed to any legislative action that would remove or limit current county authority to regulate fireworks.

17. Oil and Gas Waste Disposal Facilities

WHEREAS, the Texas oil and gas industry is a vital part of our economy; and

WHEREAS, this industry requires the use of disposal facilities, such as waste injection wells, to operate in an efficient manner; and

WHEREAS, the operation of these disposal facilities can pose a substantial risk to the groundwater supply; and

WHEREAS, protection of the groundwater is also essential to the economy and health and safety of Texas citizens; and

WHEREAS, adequate information should be provided to Texas counties and their citizens to ensure the safe operation of oil and gas waste facilities and protection of the groundwater;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association does hereby request that the Texas Legislature and the Texas Railroad Commission require that Texas counties, their citizens, and groundwater conservation districts be provided all available information concerning proposed oil and gas waste facilities in their area and a full opportunity to participate in the evaluation of any application for additional facilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Texas Railroad Commission be required to evaluate and consider the full local infrastructure impact and effect on local communities before voting on any such permit.

18. Rural Public Transit

WHEREAS, 37 Rural Transit Districts serve all the counties throughout Texas; and

WHEREAS, Rural Transit Districts provide access to needed goods and services, jobs, and medical services throughout the rural counties of Texas; and

WHEREAS, Rural Transit Districts traveled 36,056,467 miles and provided 4,624,135 one-way trips to the citizens of rural Texas in 2018; and

WHEREAS, on average, bus fleets for Rural Transit Districts are at 130 percent of their established lifecycle; and

WHEREAS, funding opportunities for large federal and state grants have historically left qualified rural projects underfunded; and

WHEREAS, without increased funding, in order to meet increasing service demands and costs in rural areas, services to those most in need in rural Texas will suffer;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association expresses its support for a meaningful increase in funding for Rural Transit Districts

19. Opposition to Rules Adopted by the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles That Decrease County Revenues, Increase County Costs, and Reduce Local Control and Local Services

WHEREAS, the county tax assessor-collector is charged with collecting vehicle registration fees which provide for certain legislatively authorized revenues to offset costs associated with collecting and dispersing these fees for the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles; and

WHEREAS, the 83rd State Legislature created the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles Fund, authorized the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles to establish certain fees by board rule, authorized the board to direct certain fees to the fund, and allowed for county revenues to be set by board rule; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles has adopted rules setting title transfer and registration processing and handling fees for its own funding and has further adopted fees and changes for the county tax assessor-collectors and the various deputy classification types; and

WHEREAS, the county tax assessor-collector may deputize full-service title companies to provide titling and registration services and limited service companies to provide registration services, which increases access and locations for these services by citizens; and

WHEREAS, the rules adopted by the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles will decrease county revenues, increase county cost, and reduce local control and local services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association opposes the rules as adopted by the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles amending Title 43 of the Texas Administrative Code Chapter 217.

20. Full Funding of DPS Labs

WHEREAS, the State of Texas through the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) provides for the testing of controlled and illegal substances for criminal cases; and

WHEREAS, while the service is valuable to the prosecutorial process, it is not timely as most tests require six-nine months before results are rendered; and

WHEREAS, many alleged and formerly convicted violators must be released after 90 days with the high probability that they will reoffend and further endanger the public and further burden law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, the recent reduction in state funding will reduce the effectiveness of the DPS labs and result in further delays in the administration of justice;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association requests full funding, staffing, and equipping of the DPS labs to return results in the required legal time to serve justice.

21. County Homestead Exemption

WHEREAS, the current constitutional provisions limit the ability of counties to a percentage of the appraised value of homesteads; and

WHEREAS, the current limitations prevent the adoption of a homestead exemption to provide greater benefit to lower-priced properties; and

WHEREAS, additional discretion should be granted to counties to determine the homestead exemption;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association requests that a constitutional amendment be adopted to allow counties to grant discretionary homestead exemptions based upon a dollar amount of the taxable value of the property.

22. Texas Department of Criminal Justice Inmates

WHEREAS, currently counties are required to hold inmates who have been committed to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) for up to 45 days; and

WHEREAS, TDCJ has failed to timely accept its inmates during the current COVID-19 epidemic, forcing this additional expense on county taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, counties are required to hold parolees who are awaiting a revocation hearing before the TDCJ Parole Board; and

WHEREAS, TDCJ does not provide adequate transportation of its inmates from county jails to its facilities; and

WHEREAS, the cost to county taxpayers for the failure of the State of Texas to meet its responsibilities for state inmates is approximately \$100 million per year;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association requests that the State of Texas fully reimburse counties for all costs incurred for the confinement and transport of TDCJ inmates.

23. Optional County Road and Bridge Fee

WHEREAS, the current maximum county optional road and bridge fee has been frozen at \$10 since 1991; and

WHEREAS, the cost of construction and maintenance of the county road system has increased tremendously in recent years; and

WHEREAS, as the population of Texas continues to grow, the need for efficient county transportation systems will increase;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association requests that the maximum county optional road and bridge fee be raised to \$20 per vehicle.

24. Voting Machine Costs

WHEREAS, the Federal Help America Vote Act requires that counties provide an electronic voting system at each voting location; and

WHEREAS, the current voting systems have serious security and maintenance issues; and

WHEREAS, replacement of these systems will require a great expenditure of public funds; and

WHEREAS, the purchase, programming of, and maintenance of these systems are state and federal responsibilities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association requests full funding from the federal and state government for the replacement of all voting systems, programming, and maintenance.

25. Limitations on Registered Sex Offenders in Counties

WHEREAS, home rule municipalities have the authority by ordinance to provide for the public safety of their citizens to restrict a registered sex offender from going in, on, or within a specified distance of a child safety zone in the municipality; and

WHEREAS, general law municipalities now have the authority with the passage of HB 1111, enacted by the 85th Texas Legislature, effective September 1, 2017, to provide for the public safety of their citizens to restrict a registered sex offender from going in, on, or within a specified distance of a child safety zone in the municipality; and

WHEREAS, Texas counties should also be able to provide for the public safety of their citizens living outside the boundaries of any municipality by restricting a registered sex offender from going in, on, or within a specified distance of a child safety zone in the county; and

WHEREAS, no current statute authorizes a Texas county to enact an ordinance or order establishing a “Child Safety Zone” and restricting a registered sex offender from going in, on, or within a specified distance of a child safety zone in the county; and

WHEREAS, legislation is necessary to authorize counties to enact an ordinance or order to provide public safety for its citizens by placing limitations on registered sex offenders in the county;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association respectfully requests that the Texas Legislature pass legislation providing Texas counties the authority to enact an ordinance or order regarding limitations on registered sex offenders in counties.

26. Opposition to Effort to Prohibit County Lobbying

WHEREAS, certain legislative bills filed in the 86th Texas Legislature would have prohibited the use of county funds to retain lobbyists to influence legislation, pay dues to associations that influence legislation, and to reimburse county officials for influencing legislation; and

WHEREAS, any bills which would prohibit the use of county funds would effectively silence the voice of local officials and prevent effective communication and representation of their citizens and taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, county officials require the ability to express their positions and information through associations; and

WHEREAS, the inability to retain experienced representation before the federal and state legislative bodies and agencies would place our communities at a distinct

disadvantage in efforts to obtain and retain federal and state projects and military bases; and

WHEREAS, smaller counties especially need to be able to combine their resources to effectively present their unique issues to state and federal government; and

WHEREAS, requiring elected officials to personally expend personal resources to present the views of their citizens would impose an extreme hardship upon these public servants; and

WHEREAS, such prohibition would stifle the basic tenets of democracy and open government;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association does hereby express its opposition to any legislation that attempts to silence the combined voices of the county officials of this state and does hereby express appreciation for the defeat of the 86th Texas Legislature's S.B. 29.

West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association
2020 Resolutions Committee

Hutchinson County Judge Cindy Irwin – Chairman

Schleicher County Judge Charles Bradley

Armstrong County Commissioner Adam Ensey

Wichita County Judge Woodrow Gossom Jr.

Oldham County Commissioner Roger Morris

Garza County Judge Lee Norman

Taylor County Commissioner Chuck Statler

In addition to the above-adopted resolutions, the West Texas County Judges and Commissioners Association Resolutions Committee requests that the following items be recommended for future study and consideration.

1. State funding to meet county cost of transport, autopsy, and disposition of dead bodies.
2. Maintain local control and recovery of cost of reproduction of clerk's digitized records and e-filing.
3. Require vehicles to reduce speed and/or yield a traffic lane to county road and bridge vehicles and equipment.
4. Require Commissioners Court representation on Regional Water Planning Groups.
5. Request legislation to require state reimbursement for court-appointed attorneys in child protective services cases.
6. Restore full funding for the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Grant Program.
7. State funding for all state special elections.
8. Additional funding for sales tax support on fireworks dedicated for local use.
9. More local authority on the regulation of fireworks.
10. Additional county authority over vehicle inspection and licensing procedures.
11. Local retention of asset forfeiture funds.

12. Prohibit abuse of the Public Information Act by excessive and burdensome requests.
13. Support and restore county authority to regulate all county buildings and property.
14. Support an exemption from state motor fuel taxes for county equipment and vehicles.
15. Support full state funding for lost revenue from disabled veterans and surviving spouses exemption.
16. Review of the equity of ad valorem tax exemptions, tax rate calculation, and the property appraisal process to facilitate a more equitable tax system.
17. Increase the fees for out-of-county mental health hearings and include an allowance for payment of court reporters and interpreters.
18. Allow the county to retain the child protection and family preservation fees for distribution to family and child agencies unless the city requests its distribution.
19. Allow for the return of the 2 percent fireworks sales tax to the county to distribute to its volunteer fire departments.
20. Broaden the use of the Texas Forest Service insurance fund to assist Volunteer Fire Departments with equipment and buildings.
21. Prohibit the inclusion of optional road and bridge and other elective taxes and interest and sinking fund taxes in Tax Increment Financing agreements and projects.