



April 5, 2021

The Honorable Paul Bettencourt
Chair, Senate Committee on Local Government
P.O. Box 12068, Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

Subject: Opposition to SB 10

Dear Senator Bettencourt:

Few topics in government can have a more negative connotation than lobbying. Particularly when the causes of special interests are improperly elevated for the benefit of a few, or to the detriment of those who are unable to effectively represent alternate ideas. As such, it is easy to understand how a bill like SB 10 could gain traction. Unfortunately, the real impact of this bill's passage would be the silencing of your local government partners whose representation on the issues affecting their municipalities is essential to the effective governance of such a large and diverse state.

While I understand the popularity of this bill's concepts, I am asking you to consider my perspective as a mayor. Please reconsider this bill's provisions.

I understand that it is your opinion that I, as a volunteer mayor, should be able to manage work on state legislation with no assistance from consultants, city attorneys, or trade associations, but that is simply not realistic. The approach of completely restricting the use of city funds to directly or indirectly to interact with the Texas Legislature is so broad that its practical application is to remove us from interacting with our elected officials.

We are also concerned that the bill allows a private cause of action by anyone that suspects a violation has occurred. Beyond the concern of increased legal costs, the overly broad language could subject a city to ongoing challenges for any perceived misstep, even if the city is trying to work through technical issues associated with proposed legislation that will impact its operations.

State and local government work is inextricably linked. To restrict the ability of cities to work with professional associations or city government experts who can maintain a presence in Austin, fully participating in the public policy development process, is dismissive of the value of local governance. Given the number of city-related bills filed and the compressed session duration, it is unrealistic to believe that volunteer elected officials could adequately or completely represent community interests

Office of the Mayor

City of Southlake | 1400 Main Street | Southlake, Texas
76092

(817) 748-8016



Opposition to SB 10

before the legislature. It is so critical that we have a seat at the table, working side-by-side with you...whether we can achieve this personally or through those we choose to represent our positions.

You know how hard we work to create outstanding quality of life. You can surely appreciate that we have expertise in matters pertaining to public safety, infrastructure construction and maintenance, zoning, land use, and others. The positions that we take do not reflect personal interests; rather, they are carefully crafted stances based on our experiences and in service to our constituents, to whom we are accountable.

Very often, powerful and well-funded industry lobbyists work to advance goals that are contrary to community values or priorities. Will these representatives be allowed unimpeded access, while part-time, volunteer councilmembers are relegated to leaving messages with, or having conversations with office staff? Will private sector advocates be given the opportunity to continuously promote industry-prepared bills while local elected officials are required to pay for their own appearances at the capital? Local governments need the ability to develop well-considered positions on these issues and deserve the courtesy of having the same access and opportunities as those who would resist local regulation.

You may be thinking that this bill provides adequate opportunities for local officials to interact with legislators. But in large and small ways, it really doesn't. The bill's lack of clarity and skillfully worded provisions have the affect of silencing us, even if the words don't say it directly.

Finally, the Texas Legislature is interested in restricting the use of local tax dollars for "lobbying" but has no worries about using State of Texas revenue for similar purposes on federal issues. Perhaps the Texas Legislature sees Washington politicians as too far-removed to fully understand the impacts of their decisions on our state's prosperity and success. I will tell you that I think it is vitally important for you to have representatives working on federal issues. This is a sentiment and courtesy I wish you would extend to local governments that desire to work with you on city-related issues.

Thank you for considering our point of view,



Laura Hill
Mayor

Cc: Southlake City Council
Members, Senate Committee on Local Government
Senator Kelly Hancock
Senator Jane Nelson
Senator Beverly Powell
Representative Giovanni Capriglione
Representative Tan Parker

