



89th Legislative Session UPDATE

February 2025

Carlos Martinez
Jason King

Institutional and Employee Rights and Responsibilities Regarding Legislative Activities

State law

Chapter 556, Texas Gov't Code

STATE EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS. A state employee has the rights of freedom of association and political participation guaranteed by the state and federal constitutions except as provided by Section 556.004.

LEGISLATIVE LOBBYING. (a) A state agency may not use appropriated money to attempt to influence the passage or defeat of a legislative measure.
(b) This section does not prohibit a state officer or employee from using state resources to provide public information or to provide information responsive to a request.

Regents' Rules

On Channel of Communication

The Board of Regents is the only proper channel through which recommendations concerning the administration of the System or any of the institutions, as a whole or in any of its parts, should reach the Legislature or other State agencies or officials.

On Institutional Neutrality

"...Nor is it the role of the UT System or UT institutions to adopt positions based on political or social passions or pressures. Institutions should not, in their official capacity, issue or express positions on issues of the day, however appealing they may be to some members of the university community. This has no bearing, of course, on freedom of speech of individuals in the university community, and only relates to official university statements, functions, ceremonies, and publications.

Legislative Landscape

Texas Senate

20 Republicans

11 Democrats

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has remained President of the Senate since 2014

Lt. Governor's Priorities (select)

Top 25 priority bills have been filed in the Texas Senate, including:

- Providing School Choice
- Requiring Local Law Enforcement to Assist the Federal Government's Deportation Efforts
- Placing the Ten Commandments in School
- Protecting the Freedom to Pray in School
- Establishing a Parental Bill of Rights in Public Education
- Guarding Against Inappropriate Books in Public Schools
- Texas DOGE – Improving Government Efficiency
- Stopping Foreign Adversaries' Land Grabs
- Stopping Drag Time Story Hour
- Educating Texas Students on the Horrors of Communism

Senate Priority Bills 26 through 40 ... coming soon.

Senate Education Committee

Brandon Creighton, Chair

Other expected priority bills (from interim charges)

Higher Education - "Faculty Senates": Review and analyze the structures and governance in higher education, focusing on the role of "faculty senates," and like groups, in representing faculty interests to higher education institution administrations. Make recommendations to establish guidelines for the role and representation of faculty by "faculty senates, and like groups, at higher education institutions in Texas.

Monitor the Ban on Discriminatory DEI Policies: Examine the implementation of Senate Bill 17, 88th Legislature, which bans discriminatory "DEI" initiatives at institutions of public higher education. Review and report on the progress each institution has made in aligning university policies and procedures with the provisions of Senate Bill 17, ensuring Texas college campuses foster equal opportunity and reward individual merit and achievement.

Faculty Tenure Revisions: Monitor the implementation of Senate Bill 18, 88th Legislature, relating to the tenure and employment of faculty members at certain public institutions of higher education. Review and report on each institution's progress toward policies and procedures aligned with the provisions set forth in Senate Bill 18.

Combating Antisemitism on Texas College Campuses: Review campus policies to prevent antisemitism. Study the oversight Texas institutions of higher education have over the formation and operations of student organizations, including access to campus facilities and use of campus property. Make recommendations to prevent antisemitism on college campuses, while protecting First Amendment rights.

Campus Free Speech: Examine the procedures of Texas public institutions of higher education designed to protect the First Amendment free speech rights of faculty, staff, and students. Monitor and report on compliance Senate Bill 18, 86th Legislature, and make recommendations for any needed reforms.

Stopping DEI to Strengthen the Texas Workforce: Examine programs and certificates at higher education institutions that maintain discriminatory diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies. Expose how these programs and their curriculum are damaging and not aligned with state workforce demands. Make recommendations for any needed reforms to ensure universities are appropriately educating students to meet workforce needs.

Core Curriculum Course Accessibility: Review student access to core curriculum courses at Texas institutions of higher education. Examine the availability of these courses both online and in-person, as well as any issues that would prevent or reduce in-person access. Make recommendations for any needed reforms to ensure that all students have equal in-person access to core courses.

Legislative Landscape

Texas House

88 Republicans

66 Democrats

Dustin Burrows was elected speaker of the Texas House with 49 Democrats and 36 Republicans

House Higher Education Committee

Terry Wilson, Chair

Speaker's Priorities

Speaker Burrows was elected a few weeks ago, and while referencing several policy issues in his acceptance speech, he has yet to identify specific legislative priorities.

Notably most of House Bills 1-150 remain reserved, presumably for future priority legislation. Look for priority bills to be filed soon.

The Speaker has indicated support for:

- School voucher legislation

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One UTSA Circle
San Antonio, TX, 78249
utsa.edu