



The North Texas Commission opposes any attempt to limit or prohibit the authority of city, county, and/or education officials to use public funds to communicate with legislators and state agencies, as well as to pay membership dues to organizations that hire lobbyists.

Community advocacy must continue. The rights of citizens and taxpayers to participate in the legislative process should be protected. Local government and community leaders advocate in Austin for policies that bolster local efforts to provide services, meet the needs of their communities, and protect their unique local and regional economy and quality of life. Local taxpayers know best what meets the needs and characteristics of their communities. Any effort to marginalize or silence their right to advocate for their community priorities in the legislative process should be defeated.

The current system allows for transparency and accountability to protect taxpayers. Expenditures for community and education advocacy efforts go through a transparent budgetary process open to the public. If local taxpayers believe local leadership makes the wrong decisions in hiring a lobbying professional or paying dues to an association, they can easily voice their opposition and ultimately act on that at the ballot box.

Professional lobbyists help local leaders and local stakeholders navigate the complicated and time consuming legislative process. It is imperative that our local leaders have an effective voice in discussions on the merits of legislation and state policies that affect their organizations and communities. Their local expertise and diverse voices amplified through the actions of associations and professional advocates is an essential part of developing good public policy.

Silencing local communities and schools threatens the foundation of our state's economic strength.

The unique attributes of each locality and region inform sound economic development policy that sustains job growth and a better quality of life for local communities. A "one size fits all" approach does not work for Texans.

This issue could also impact your local associations and chambers of commerce in their Constitutional right to lobby. All voices should have opportunities to be heard in the political process. Associations help ensure their members, industry or profession carry a collective voice and that lawmakers fully understand the issues and communities they govern. Associations, which spend an average of about five percent of total resources on lobbying and political activity, are repositories of expertise and knowledge and serve as a vital resource for policymakers. In fact, they are often called on by legislators regarding pending legislation or regulatory policy. This function benefits the public interest to help ensure that public policy is directionally correct and beneficial to local taxpayers.

There are some legislators who oppose our position and refer to "taxpayer-funded lobbyists" in broad terms. Many cities contract with outside professionals and join associations to pool funds/resources. This allows for efficient use of funds and is often used to leverage resources. We support our local leaders utilizing a wide range of resources to advocate for our North Texas citizens.