



## Community Censorship Legislation (aka “Taxpayer-Funded Lobbying”)

During the 2019 legislative session, SB 29 passed the Texas Senate and was debated on the House floor, where it failed passage. SB 29 would have prohibited school districts and other political subdivisions from having lobbyists or from being members of associations that have lobbyists. Similar legislation has been filed in the 2021 session by Rep. Mayes Middleton (HB 749) and Sen. Bob Hall (SB 234). Passage of these bills would result in the elimination of Governmental Relations for the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) members and for members of similar organizations, which represent school leaders during legislative sessions, the interims between sessions, and year-round with various regulatory entities such as the Texas Education Agency, Teacher Retirement System, State Board of Education, and State Board for Educator Certification throughout the year.

Thousands of bills are filed every session, and during those months, TASA Governmental Relations staff generally tracks 800 to 1,000 bills that would impact Texas public school employees, districts, and students. It is critical that legislators hear from all interested parties on issues, as it is an essential part of creating good public policy. TASA members are Texans and should have a voice at the Capitol in discussing legislation and state policies when they cannot be there in person to closely monitor hundreds of bills in various stages of the process, or to sit through hundreds of hours of public testimony.

### Why Censoring Public School District Administrators is Bad Public Policy

- Legislators and staff regularly rely on education organizations to assist them in determining the impact of legislation on their school districts, taxpayers, and communities.
- Superintendents and administrators can't be expected to follow and weigh in on all legislation, participate in hearings in Austin, and follow the complex legislative process while running their school districts.
- Many anti-public education groups have full-time representatives at the Capitol; this bill would not prevent them from continuing to represent those groups.
- Local governments and communities shouldn't be excluded from having professional representation at the Capitol. Locally elected officials and superintendents are closest to their constituents, taxpayers, and community members and are directly accountable to them.
- The Legislature often drives costs from the state through unfunded mandates. TASA Governmental Relations staff advocates for local control of local tax dollars and opposes unfunded mandates.
- Lobbyists provide information on issues and legislation, but ultimately it is legislators who cast votes and are responsible for legislation that passes or fails – not lobbyists.
- Why would any legislator want to prohibit information that could inform their decisions?
- If a legislator doesn't want to hear from a particular group or their lobbyists, they can simply refuse to take a meeting with them. Legislators do it all the time. There is no need to censor anyone from having a voice at the Texas Capitol.
- This bill would disproportionately impact mid-size and small or rural districts that can't afford staff of their own to monitor all of the bills that would impact their districts.
- Texas is a large and geographically diverse state. The farther away from Austin a school district is located, the greater their need to have professional organization representatives in Austin to help them due to the challenges and expense of travel.