



IRVING - LAS COLINAS
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Preserving Public-Private Partnerships in the Chamber Industry *Governmental Affairs Strategic Plan*

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

- Develop, strategize and implement a grassroots effort to defeat harmful legislation being considered during the 85th Texas Legislative Session targeted at Chambers of Commerce receiving public funding.

GOALS

- Educating and enlisting support from Chambers of Commerce and other organizations impacted by HB 793 and SB 408
- Coordinate advocacy efforts through letter, email, personal outreach, testifying during hearings and engaging the business community in the effort
- Providing strong, factual evidence on the impacts of the Texas Public Information Act on nonprofit organizations to our target audience
- Emphasize the desire for transparency while protecting the customers interests
- Educating lawmakers about the success of the public-private partnership model and why it is desirable for both Cities and customers
- Ultimately amending or defeating harmful legislation, maintaining the status quo and protection for public-private partnerships

AUDIENCES

- Texas Legislators
- Texas Chambers of Commerce
- Economic Development Councils
- Non Profits
- Media

OVERALL MESSAGING

- Texas House Bill 793 (HB 793) and Senate Bill 408 (SB 408) directly target Chamber of Commerce's that receive public funding, whether through membership or through a contract for services such as economic development or tourism, known as public-private partnerships. It would deem these Chambers a "governmental body" and required to abide by the Texas Public Information Act, responding to open records requests.
- The legislation opens up proprietary information as "public information".
- Places Chambers, a private, non-profit organization, under the onerous provisions of the Texas Public Information Act.
- The high cost of complying with Texas' complex open records statutes detracts from the Chamber's ability to fulfill its mission serving its membership and aiding in the economic growth and prosperity of its community.

- Cities have designated public information staff paid by taxpayers to respond to open records. Utilizing additional taxpayer dollars for Chamber's to also respond to open records is a duplication and inefficient use of funding.
- The Texas Supreme Court currently protects proprietary information involving a private entity contracting with a public entity.
- In 2015 similar legislation to HB 793 and SB 408 passed and was in place for four months before the Texas Supreme Court upheld Chambers with public-private partnerships are not a governmental body under the Public Information Act.
- Chambers are not against transparency and are extremely transparent in the work done – reporting publically, delivering on dozens of deliverable tasks or key performance indicators, providing an annual budget, undergoing audits and presenting the findings to Chamber Board of Directors and the client (City).

PROCESS, TOOLS & TACTICS

- Collect information on Texas Chambers that receive some form of public funding or have public-private partnerships with their City in order to activate a broader network.
- Research additional entities impacted by legislation (nonprofits, hospitals, water districts, etc.)
- Enlist the help of the business community stakeholders, member-investors, to share the impact of this legislation
- Target conversations with Presidents of ally organizations to discuss legislation and advocacy plans
- Schedule conference call with impacted entities to discuss advocacy strategy and provide weekly updates via conference call
- Activate the use of political action committees (PAC)
- Distribute example advocacy letters and contact information for legislators
- Draft and distribute informational/educational one-pager
- Schedule and coordinate visit to Austin to meet one-on-one with legislators and follow-up visits, phone calls, emails and letters
- Coordinate testimony for hearings
- Draft and propose amendments to provide exemption for entities