



Texas Association of School Boards
P.O. Box 400 • Austin, Texas 78767-0400 • 512.467.0222

Serving Texas Schools Since 1949

Getting Ready for Session (suggested tasks and timeline for boards)

The 80th Legislature will convene in Austin on January 9, 2007. What then happens in Austin from January to June will inevitably affect your school district and your decisions as a school board member. Is your board ready to promote the interests of your students during the legislative session?

Below are suggested tasks and timelines to help your board *impact* and *monitor* the legislative process to ensure that the laws that pass will *help* your district educate its students:

A. Early December: Determine the district's legislative priorities

In anticipation of the upcoming legislative session, the board should focus on what needs to be accomplished legislatively on behalf of the district. The district may create its own legislative agenda and/or help promote the TASB Advocacy Agenda which reflects the legislative priorities of Texas' school districts. TASB's Advocacy Agenda is available at www.gr.tasb.org, along with an explanation of the process through which the Agenda was developed.

B. Early December: Create Legislative Subcommittee

The board should decide whether all members want to be active advocates during the session or whether to designate a "legislative subcommittee" composed of board members who would be willing to:

- a. *Contact legislators* about the local impact of pending legislation throughout the session
- b. *Testify before the legislature* on behalf of the district (as necessary)
- c. *Ensure that other board members are aware* of pending or passed legislation and regulatory rules. TASB provides daily and weekly legislative updates to school board members who register to be part of TASB's "School Board Advocacy Network" (SBAN). SBAN membership is free and any board member can enroll online at www.gr.tasb.org.

C. Early December: Learn about the "hot" issues

Board members may want to learn about the issues that will likely be addressed in legislation during the session. Issue papers provide background information and explain the pro/con arguments surrounding the "hot issues." Issue papers are available from many sources, including on the TASB Governmental Relations webpage, www.gr.tasb.org.

D. Early December: Designate the district’s “on-call representatives”

Designate a person or group of persons to be the district’s “on call representatives” during the session to answer questions from legislators and legislative staff about the impact of pending legislation on your district. The “on-call representatives” should include both board members (i.e., the board’s legislative subcommittee) and key district administrators, as legislators need to hear both perspectives.

E. Mid-December: Host a luncheon for your district’s legislators

Schedule a luncheon with the delegation of legislators who represent your school district and/or region. At the luncheon, provide each legislator with contact information for your district’s “on-call representatives.”

F. Early January: Meet with individual legislators

The board or the board’s legislative subcommittee should meet with each of the state legislators who represent your school district and/or region to discuss issues important to your district and/or the local impact of pending legislation.

G. January – May: Bi-weekly legislative briefings

Every two weeks (or more frequently as the session progresses), the board’s legislative subcommittee and key district administrators should discuss the progress of the district’s legislative priorities and/or key legislation and strategize about how to help the district’s legislators move that legislation through the process. Open Meetings Act procedures should be followed, as necessary. TASB GR provides written legislative updates, as well as bill summaries, to help board members monitor the progress of legislation that will affect Texas school districts. The legislative updates are e-mailed to all board members who register to be part of the School Board Advocacy Network (SBAN) and are posted on the TASB GR webpage (www.gr.tasb.org).

H. Ongoing Throughout Session: Contact district’s association partners

Throughout the session, the board’s legislative subcommittee should contact TASB GR (1-800-580-4885) and the district’s other association partners regarding the sharing of information and the education of decision-makers and staff.