



Tarrant County Judge
B. Glen Whitley

Tarrant County: Our North Texas Home

86th Texas Legislative Session

Tarrant County Legislative Priorities

Local governments strive to provide the best services possible to their citizens. With the start of the 86th Texas Legislature, it is especially important for local governments to keep a close eye on potential legislation which could have a positive or negative impact on the citizens they serve.

During a recent meeting, your Tarrant County Commissioners approved our legislative priorities for the 86th Legislative Session. Here are the issues we will be watching closely and working together with state lawmakers to come up with solutions which are in everyone's best interest.

Property Taxes

The Governor has declared this as an emergency item for the legislative session. However, solutions state lawmakers are considering could negatively impact cities, counties, and our school districts. The lowering of the revenue cap could affect our ability to provide essential services such as keeping important records, building roads, maintaining the courts and jails and many other services essential to our citizens.

A related priority for the state is to evaluate school funding. School finance reform done right is property tax relief. The state should return to paying their half of the partnership between local property taxpayers and the state. As we await the filing of this bill, everyone should reach out and let their representatives know they want the state to be an equal partner in the funding of our public education system.

Unfunded Mandates

Unfunded or underfunded mandates are those programs which the legislature has told local government to implement but they forgot to send the check along to pay for them. Some examples include indigent defense and state prisoners held in county jails awaiting pickup.

Mental Health

Improvements in mental health services continue to be a major priority for Tarrant County and the nation as a whole. Tarrant County supports mental healthcare programs which enhance crisis response and diversion options, funding for crisis centers, jail diversion programs and expansion of mental health programs in schools.

Appraisal Reform

Tied to property tax relief is appraisal reform. Some of these reforms include overhauls in the appraisal review process and providing more transparency and real time information to tax payers regarding their proposed property values. Creating specialty appeals panels for certain properties could improve the current system. Another consideration might be changing the method of selecting members of the Appraisal Board.

What can you do?

Talk to your legislators! Let them know you would like the state to be a 50/50 partner with you in public education, respect our representative democracy and allow local elected officials to make quality of life decisions, such as police, fire, roads and seniors, and support reforms in both mental health and property appraisal.

I continue to look forward to working with you and the state to help Tarrant County continue to be a great place to live, work and raise our families.

**Online Tools To Keep Up With
The 86th Texas Legislature**

Texas Legislature Online

<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>

Legislative Reference Library

www.lrl.state.tx.us/

<https://legiscan.com/TX>



In Remembrance

The Honorable Dionne Phillips Bagsby

In January, Tarrant County lost a prominent leader and trailblazer in our community. Dionne Phillips Bagsby was elected as Tarrant County Commissioner for Precinct 1 in 1989. As the first woman and first minority member of the Tarrant County Commissioners Court, Commissioner Bagsby’s commitment to the lives of the citizens was her passion. She worked tirelessly as an advocate for women and children and improving the lives for all people in need.

One of her first priorities was creating new policies to include women and minorities in the appointments to county boards. This led to Erma Johnson Hadley to serve as Chair of the JPS Hospital Board of Managers.

She was instrumental improving the quality and access to healthcare. Some of her many accomplishments include a county-wide immunization program and obtaining grant dollars for the benefit of services for women. The Presbyterian Night Shelter women’s building, YWCA, Circle T Girl Scout Council, the Women’s Center, and women’s shelters are all the result of her leadership and advocacy. I was proud to work with her on the creation of the Tarrant County Youth Recovery Campus.

After retiring as County Commissioner, Dionne continued her commitment to the community by serving on numerous boards such as United Way of Tarrant County, Jubilee Theatre, Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber Young Leadership Development Program and many, many more.

Commissioner Bagsby retired in 2005. The precinct one

sub-courthouse is named in her honor. Upon her retirement the 79th Texas Legislature honored her with a resolution recognizing her dedication to the community having served with integrity and excellence. Other awards and recognitions for her service to the community are too numerous to list. Most recently, Commissioner Bagsby was awarded the Legacy Award from the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce in recognition of her 45 years of service to the community.

Commissioner Bagsby always encouraged citizens and leaders to serve their community saying “there is always work to be done.” She often quoted Luke 12:48 “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required.”

Commissioner Dionne Phillips Bagsby will truly be missed but always remembered for her lifelong dedication to the community and her ability to bring people together for the good of the community.



Judge Whitley with Commissioner Bagsby at the precinct one sub-courthouse rededication in her honor.

Tarrant County Legislative Delegation

Texas House

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