AGENDA ITEM CA11

Travel Approval Form

Department: Auditor's Office

Event Name: 2026 TAC Legislative Conference

Location: Austin, TX

Event Dates: 8/25/26 - 8/28/26

Purpose:

- ☑ Required Continuing Education/Certification
- ☐ Job Training
- ☐ Other: _____

Name of Attendees:

Steve Watson

Court Decision:

This section to be completed by County Judge's Office



6.22.2026

Required Documents Checklist:

✶✶ **Same-Day Travel - Commissioners Court Approval is not required** ✶✶

Overnight Travel

- ☑ Travel Approval Form
- ☑ Registration Information or Confirmation
- ☑ Itinerary, Agenda, or Breakdown
- ☑ Hotel Information, Confirmation, or Hotel Reservation Request Form

For Out of State Travel, please also include:

- ☐ Cost Estimation Breakdown for Trip with Airfare, Rental Car, Meals, Hotel, Etc.
- ☐ Narrative as to why the Out of State Travel is necessary

Signature of Elected Official/Department Head:

Approved in CC on 9/11/2023

TEXAS
ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES

2026 TAC Legislative Conference

August 26, 2026 - August 28, 2026 multi-day

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Fairmont Austin Hotel
101 Red River St.
Austin, TX 78701

Contact Deanna Auert or Rachel Kucera at (800) 456-5974.

Contact Us

Registration

OVERVIEW HOTEL AGENDA CONTINUING EDUCATION STATE LEGISLATORS SPONSORSHIP AND VENDORS

The 2026 Texas Association of Counties Legislative Conference is essential to preparing for the 90th Texas Legislature, which convenes Jan. 12, 2027. Connect with colleagues from across the state, engage with legislators and gain valuable insights from policy experts as you explore the top issues important to your county and constituents.

Attend in person or online with TAC's flexible hybrid format. Participate in discussions, earn continuing education hours and network from wherever you are.

TAC's Legislative Conference offers county officials and staff unique opportunities to become more involved and informed in the legislative process. Learn how lawmakers view key county issues and share your perspective on how those issues affect local communities.

Registration Fees

Registration Type	Early Bird	After Aug. 6
In-person county official or staff	$275	$350
In-person county official or staff half-day fee (Wednesday and Friday only)	$75	$125

Registration Type	Early Bird	After Aug. 6
In-person county official or staff single-day fee (Thursday only)	$205	$255
In-person government/non-member (half day, single day or full attendance)	$330	$380
In-person corporate (half day, single day or full attendance)	$480	$530
In-person guest fee	$100	$100
Virtual registration	$200	$275
All access pass (in-person and virtual access/county official or staff only)	$375	$450

NOTE: All attendees (in person and online) must register by July 11 to receive conference giveaway.

Payment: Please make checks payable to Texas Association of Counties.

Virtual Registration

Registered virtual attendees will receive a personalized participation link via email a few days before the conference begins.
Note: Confirmation emails will come from Events@Accelevents.com to the email address that was used to register for the event.

Conference Cancellation

All cancellation and refund requests must be received in writing (fax or email accepted). Refunds requested before Aug. 6 are subject to a $10 processing fee. Refunds after Aug. 6 are subject to an administrative fee equal to 50% of the registration fee. No refund requests will be honored after Aug. 29. Please email Rachel Kucera to cancel your conference registration.

Special Services

For accessibility accommodations, please contact Deanna Auert or Rachel Kucera at (800) 456-5974.

THANK YOU TO OUR CONFERENCE SPONSORS!

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Wednesday, Aug. 26

8 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Registration and Information Desk Hours

Level 5 Foyer

8 a.m. - 2 p.m.: TAC Board of Directors Breakfast, Meeting and Lunch

Noon - 2 p.m.: Meet and Greet with Exhibitors

Congressional Ballroom, Level 3

Noon - 2 p.m.: Access Event Platform and Information Desk

(live online only)

12:45 - 1:45 p.m.: Private Meeting: Core Legislative Group – Courthouse to Statehouse

Moderator: Kirsten Mills, Legislative Consultant - Texas Association of County & Districts Clerks' Association, Texas Association of Counties
Join us for this Core Legislative Group-exclusive session to hear from a legislator who began their career in the county courthouse. They will discuss how working in county government influenced their views and shaped their priorities at the Texas Capitol. You'll learn how county and state governments work together and how local issues can shape policies that affect communities across the state.
Not a Core Legislative Group (CLG) member? Contact clg@county.org for information about the Core Legislative Group.

2 - 4:30 p.m.: Opening General Session

Manchester Ballroom, Level 5
Welcome and Introductions

Presiding: Hon. Cindy Yeatts Brown, Denton County Treasurer and President, Texas Association of Counties
Hon. Susan M. Redford, Executive Director, TAC

Preparation for the 90th Legislative Session: Tell Your Story
Moderator: Caroline Love, Director of Legislative Services, TAC
Speaker: S.C. Gwynne, award-winning journalist, Pulitzer Prize finalist, and bestselling historian
Join New York Times bestselling author S.C. Gwynne to learn how to tell your county's story. He has worked on cover stories about NASA, the King Ranch, Southwest Airlines and White House adviser Karl Rove. With extensive writing experience, including books on American history and features for Texas Monthly, Gwynne offers practical tools to help you reach your audience.

4:30 - 6 p.m.: Exhibit Hall Welcome Reception

Congressional Ballroom, Level 3

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Thursday, Aug. 27

7 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.: Registration and Information Desk Hours

Level 5 Foyer

7 - 7:50 a.m.: Morning Coffee and Continental Breakfast

Palm Park, Level 7

7 - 8 a.m.: Access Event Platform and Information Desk

(live online only)

8 - 9:05 a.m.: Legislative Discussion Sessions (1-5)

8 - 9:05 a.m.: From Pennies to Policy: Operational Impacts on Texas Counties

Moderator: Davis Hairston, Legislative Consultant - Tax Assessor-Collectors Association of Texas, TAC
Recent legislative and policy changes are creating new operational challenges for Texas tax offices and counties. This panel brings together tax assessors to discuss three emerging issues affecting county offices: cash tax payments and declining coin circulation, new vehicle registration ID requirements, and the effects of HB 9 on business inventory tax structures. Panelists will provide practical insights, followed by an open Q&A with attendees.

8 - 9:05 a.m.: Natural Disasters in Texas: Practical Preparedness, Response, and Recovery for Counties

Moderator: Pete Winckler, Legislative Consultant - Texas Association of County Auditors, TAC
Across its vast and varied landscape, Texas must confront nearly every form of natural disaster — from droughts to floods and wildfires to winter storms. Preparing your county for what lies ahead is challenging — but essential. Gain practical insights from county and state leaders to help inform the tough decisions you face before, during and after disasters.

8 - 9:05 a.m.: Death Inquests in Texas: Bridging the Gap Between JPs and Medical Examiners

Moderator: Jama Pantel, Justice of the Peace & Constables Association of Texas, TAC
Death investigations in Texas rely heavily on justices of the peace, particularly in counties without medical examiner offices. This session will explore the current statutory framework governing death inquests, the role justices of the peace play across the state, and the growing conversation around expanding medical examiner capacity.

8 - 9:05 a.m.: Miles of Opportunity: Reauthorization, Federal Investment, and the Road Ahead for Texas Counties

Moderator: William Chapman, Legislative Consultant – Federal Issues, TAC
Texas counties maintain more road miles than any other state. With surface transportation reauthorization on the horizon, the federal programs that fund that infrastructure are entering a pivotal moment. NACo's chief government affairs officer joins TAC to walk through the national landscape, including what reauthorization means for county roads and bridges, how federal funding formulas affect local allocations, and where Texas counties fit into the broader conversation.

8 - 9:05 a.m.: Radio Interoperability: Ensuring Communications for All Responders

Moderators: Jason Kirksey, Legislative Consultant - Sheriffs' Association of Texas, TAC
Jack Austin, Policy Analyst, TAC
Recent disasters throughout the state have brought to the forefront the issue of interoperability among first responders. Interoperability is critical because it ensures that systems, agencies and technologies can communicate seamlessly during routine operations and high-stakes emergencies. This panel brings together first responders from diverse agencies to share insights, challenges and strategies for improving interoperability in the field.

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.: Exhibit Hall Hours

Congressional Ballroom, Level 3
Open during lunch, noon-1:30 p.m.

9:05 - 9:30 a.m.: Break With Exhibitors

Congressional Ballroom, Level 3

9:30 - 10:35 a.m.: Legislative Discussion Sessions (repeat 1-5)

1. From Pennies to Policy: Operational Impacts on Texas Counties

2. Natural Disasters in Texas: Practical Preparedness, Response, and Recovery for Counties

3. Death Inquests in Texas: Bridging the Gap Between JPs and Medical Examiners

4. Miles of Opportunity: Reauthorization, Federal Investment, and the Road Ahead for Texas Counties

5. Radio Interoperability: Ensuring Communications for All Responders

10:35 - 10:55 a.m.: Break With Exhibitors

Congressional Ballroom, Level 3

10:55 a.m. - noon: Legislative Discussion Sessions

10:55 a.m. - noon: 90th Legislative Session Preview: A Conversation on the Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee

Moderator: Stefan Silveira, Legislative Consultant - County Judges and Commissioners Association, TAC
Join Chairman Charles Perry for a timely discussion on the work of the Texas Senate Committee on Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs. This conversation will highlight key insights from recent interim hearings and outline the committee's legislative priorities before the 90th legislative session.

10:55 a.m. - noon: The State of Elections

Moderator: Kirsten Mills, Legislative Consultant - Texas Association of County & Districts Clerks' Association, TAC
This panel examines how policy translates into real-world implementation, with a focus on the key challenges and priorities as Texas counties prepare for the upcoming legislative session.

10:55 a.m. - noon: Power Without Authority: How Counties Can Shape Development

Moderator: Elizabeth Choate, Senior Legislative Consultant - Texas District and County Attorneys, TAC
Counties are navigating rapid growth in data centers, solar projects and the resulting effects on resources, property rights and communities. Panelists will examine available policy tools to promote responsible development. Plus, a look at what may be coming next at the Legislature.

10:55 a.m. - noon: Counting on You: Strategies for Maximizing Federal Allocations in 2030

Moderators: William Chapman, Legislative Consultant – Federal Issues, TAC
Wendy Cook, Legislative Data Analyst, TAC
How do federal census programs directly affect Texas communities? What is the formula used for funding? How can counties engage with these programs to maximize census-guided funding outcomes and grant opportunities for their residents? Join representatives from the Texas Demographic Center and Texas Census Institute to learn about the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) and the county-level population estimates that are used for federal formula allocations. Highly recommended for county judges, county commissioners, and any other county officials who want to understand how participation in the census helps Texas counties.

10:55 a.m. - noon: The Gold Standard: How County Judges, Auditors and Treasurers Can Work Together To Safeguard Local Money

Moderator: Amy Bruno, Legislative Consultant - County Treasurers' Association of Texas, TAC
Taxpayers want and expect their county officials to be good stewards of county finances. To accomplish this, county judges, auditors and treasurers must work cooperatively and collaboratively. Join panelists as they discuss their roles in the money management process, what works for their county, and strategies for improving collaboration and communication around county finances. This panel is of interest to county judges, auditors, treasurers, and any county official wanting to understand the roles of each of these officials and learn how their responsibilities interact.

Noon - 1:30 p.m.: Networking Lunch

Palm Park, Level

1:30 - 2:35 p.m.: Legislative Discussion Sessions (repeat 6-10)

6. 90th Legislative Session Preview: A Conversation on the Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee

7. The State of Elections

8. Power Without Authority: How Counties Can Shape Development

9. Counting on You: Strategies for Maximizing Federal Allocations in 2030

10. The Gold Standard: How County Judges, Auditors and Treasurers Can Work Together To Safeguard Local Money

2:35 - 3 p.m.: Ice Cream Social Break With Exhibitors

Congressional Ballroom, Level 3

3 - 4:30 p.m.: Meeting of County Affiliate Organizations

Affiliate organizations host a 1.5-hour meeting to discuss legislative issues or association business during the conference. These meetings will not be livestreamed. For more information, please contact your TAC Legislative Consultant or affiliate representative.

4:30 - 6 p.m.: Legislative Reception

This social event is open to all registered attendees and is an opportunity to celebrate all county officials who have volunteered their time and expertise to advocate on behalf of counties. Thank you for your efforts!
Sponsored by: Core Legislative Group

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Registration

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Friday, Aug. 28

8 - 10:30 a.m.: Registration and Information Desk

Level 5 Foyer

8 - 9 a.m.: Access Event Platform and Information Desk

(live online only)

8:30 - 9 a.m.: Breakfast

Manchester Ballroom, Level 5

9 - 10:30 a.m.: Closing General Session

Manchester Ballroom, Level 5
Welcome and Introductions
Presiding: Hon. Randy Riggs, McLennan County Tax Assessor-Collector and President-Elect, Texas Association of Counties

State Decisions, Local Impacts: The County Impact of State Property Tax Policy
Moderators: Caroline Love, Director of Legislative Services, TAC
Stefan Silveira, Legislative Consultant - County Judges and Commissioners Association, TAC
Panelists will explore how state-level property tax decisions shape the ability of counties to fund and deliver essential services such as public safety, infrastructure, and road maintenance. Panelists will also examine opportunities for better alignment between state policy goals and the on-the-ground realities counties face, with a focus on sustainable, effective solutions for Texas communities.

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Fairmont Austin
101 Red River St.
Austin, TX 78701
(512) 600-2000

Room rate: $225 single/double, plus applicable tax
Check-in: 3 p.m. | Checkout: Noon

Important notes:

- Your registration confirmation email will include a link to reserve your hotel room*. Emails will be sent to the address on your registration form.
- Conference registration is required to reserve a room in the hotel conference block. The hotel will not accept call-in reservations.
- Reservations made without conference registration are subject to cancellation or higher room rate.
- Book before Aug. 6 or before the room block is full; after that, rates and availability are not guaranteed.
- Please contact the hotel directly to cancel reservations.
- **PLEASE NOTE:** If the credit card used for your reservation will not be present at check-in, you will need to fill out a credit card authorization form at least 72 hours before arrival. Contact the hotel directly to receive the form, (512) 600-2000.

*The Fairmont Austin offers the conference rate for three days before Aug. 26 and three days after Aug. 28.

Parking at Fairmont Austin

(Prices shown include a 25% discount for attendees; prices subject to change.)

	Valet Parking	Self-Parking
0-3 Hours	$36; $10 per hour after	$18.75; $7.50 per hour after
Daily – Overnight	$68	$41.25
Oversized vehicles	$75	

Internet Access at Fairmont Austin

Wi-Fi will be available in conference meeting spaces. A password will be provided at the event.

High-speed internet access in guest rooms and all areas of the hotel is complimentary for members of Accor's Live Limitless loyalty program. Membership is free!

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