



National Council of Jewish Women
Texas State Policy Advocacy

Texas State Budget – Education and Health and Human Services Funding

National Council of Jewish Women believes that:

- Human services must be coordinated, comprehensive, accessible and sufficiently funded.
- A democratic society must provide for the needs of those unable to provide for themselves.
- An educated and informed public is fundamental to a democratic society.

National Council of Jewish Women works to advance the well-being of children and families. We endorse and resolve to work for:

- Equitable fiscal and tax policies that ensure sufficient revenues for basic human needs and economic security.
- Comprehensive services and policies that enable all children to succeed in school.

We urge the Legislature to:

- Extend Medicaid to low income adults as provided under the Affordable Care Act;
- Restore state general revenue spending to pre-recessionary levels;
- Use designated funds, such as dedicated tax revenues, for the purpose for which they were intended;
- Take advantage of available Rainy Day Fund balances and keep the promise to restore areas of the 2011 budget that were underfunded last session;
- Modernize the state revenue system to reflect 21st century economy, while meeting the expectations for demographic and climatic changes.

The Texas state budget provides the funding to fulfill the commitments Texas makes to its citizens in its laws and constitution. Thus, the state budget is the primary policy statement the Legislature makes, and the clearest indication of the state's true priorities.

Last legislative session, the biennial budget saw severe cuts to education (\$5.4B). Cuts to public education resulted in increased class sizes, cuts to Pre-K and reductions in academic, arts education and extracurricular opportunities. Statewide over 10,000 teaching positions were lost despite increases in new student enrollment over the last four years. ⁽¹⁾

The 2011 session also saw a deliberate and significant underfunding of health and human services (HHS). As a result, the state will run out of Medicaid funds six months before the end of the biennium if legislators do not take immediate action and appropriate extra money. In addition, there were funding cuts to provider reimbursement rates and assorted non-Medicaid HHS programs.

This session, Texas has the opportunity under the Affordable Care Act to extend Medicaid coverage to low income adults. The federal government would pay for 90% of the cost for newly covered individuals.⁽²⁾ Texas' uninsured rate, which is the highest in the nation, would see a significant drop and the state spending would be offset by savings in health care costs and a boosted economy due to hundreds of thousands of added jobs.⁽³⁾

Texas is projected to have \$101.4 billion available for general-purpose spending during the 2014-15 biennium. Additionally, \$11.8 billion will be available in the Rainy Day Fund.⁽⁴⁾ We have the opportunity to restore the cuts made to education, and do more to restore funds to help children and struggling families. We urge the legislature to be forward thinking, and be planning for significantly increased population by investing in our education and health care systems.

Both SBI and HBI as introduced do not do enough to address the educational and HHS needs for a growing state. Instead, both SBI and HBI as introduced would artificially constrain spending on vital state needs while allowing tax collections to accumulate in a savings account that many lawmakers appear reluctant to spend, even for legitimate needs.

1. <http://childrenatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Full-Report-Doing-More-With-Less-Public-Education-in-a-New-Fiscal-Reality.pdf>
2. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured," November 2012
3. Billy Hamilton Consulting, "Why Texas Should Extend Medicaid Coverage to Low-Income Adults," Texas Impact and Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. January 2013
4. <http://www.window.state.tx.us/news2013/130107-BRE.html>

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