

Closing

United Ways understand that community voices are critical to building a stronger Texas and that together, our collective voices can drive powerful changes for our respective communities, regions, and ultimately for our state. The 88th Regular Session was challenging and ended with much uncertainty. Despite this, our network was successful in advancing some important issues thanks to the incredible advocacy of local United Ways and their networks. Together, our Texas United Way network of leaders, board members, donors, volunteers, and partner agencies raised their voices to bring attention to education, financial stability, health, and the nonprofit sector.

Lawmakers are already back in a second special session to address property tax relief and are expected to meet again later this year to address public education funding and school vouchers. Texas United Ways will continue to elevate the priorities of their communities and will partner with others to solve community challenges through policy change and systems-level impact.

The passage of key bills and budget items is just the first step in ensuring transformative change. United Ways of Texas will actively engage in the implementation of new legislation to ensure that all Texas communities are supported. We will share opportunities for input in rulemaking related to the bills passed with our network and will also soon start work on raising issues for interim legislative charges.



Take Action

Now is a great time to determine how your United Way plans to engage in advocacy and policy in the future. We invite every Texas United Way to have a strategic conversation on engaging in advocacy and policy with their leadership. This is the first and most critical step toward engaging in systems-level change. It is important to establish guidelines around your United Way's advocacy work and local policy agenda so that your local network of leadership staff, board members, and volunteers have consistent guidelines, parameters, and expectations regarding advocacy engagement. Many of our local United Ways have already developed their advocacy agendas, with some having partnered on regional agendas. We encourage more local United Ways in our state to establish mission-driven advocacy priorities to achieve systemic changes at all levels and look forward to supporting each of you throughout that process.

New to United Way advocacy? Here are some ways to engage with your elected officials and other leaders to drive systemic changes in your community:

- Work with UWT staff to schedule advocacy training for local United Way leadership, staff, and partner agencies to determine local and state advocacy priorities, goals, and strategies.
- Work with UWT staff to help your United Way develop strategies for local engagement that you and your United Way will feel comfortable with as you start to engage in advocacy and policy.
- Thank your elected officials for their hard work and dedication.
- Invite your elected officials to upcoming United Way board, staff, or partner meetings for briefings.
- Hold Town Hall briefings on community issues and invite elected officials to speak. UWT staff can help your United Way craft an event agenda and develop questions for the event that will tie your community priorities to state-level policy opportunities as well as to priorities that are relevant to your elected officials.
- Discuss with your board how your priorities can be moved at the local level. Work with your board and other key United Way volunteers to map out their relationships with elected officials from your community.
- Use social media to build awareness and to educate your community, lawmakers, and elected officials about issues important to your United Way.
- Visit with elected officials and their staff in their district offices; get to know them, their priorities, and their respective stories of why they serve your community.
- Draft your own advocacy agenda highlighting your community's priorities. UWT staff can provide assistance as needed.

Take Action

Already actively engaged in advocacy? Here are some suggestions to strengthen your policy and advocacy work, and for successfully moving your community priorities forward with city and county leadership:

- Share stories, data, and resources with elected officials to illustrate the implications of their decisions. Specifically, use your local [ALICE data](#) or [211 data](#) to help your elected officials see your United Way as a resource and expert on your community.
- Engage in local advocacy. This includes getting the city council and/or county commissioner's court to issue a proclamation for your cause or engaging in the city/county budget process to advance awareness about the issues you care about.
- Raise public awareness about your United Way's priority issues through social media or by writing an op-ed or letter to the editor.
- Do a relationship mapping exercise with your board, affinity groups, or volunteers to better understand their relationships with your elected officials. Determine ways in which you can leverage their relationships on behalf of your United Way priorities.
- Work with your United Way volunteers and affinity groups to determine their priorities. Women United and Young Professional affinity groups are often strong volunteer groups to engage in advocacy.
- Create a public policy task force to guide your work. This can include existing or new volunteers, partner agency experts, and board members with experience in public affairs or existing relationships with elected officials.



About

United Ways of Texas:

As the voluntary state association for local United Ways in Texas, United Ways of Texas (UWT) creates lasting change in people's lives and in Texas communities by leading and collaborating with a trusted and powerful network of local member United Ways. Together, our network of Texas United Ways is working collaboratively towards a future where all Texans thrive.

uwtexas.org

ALICE:

Asset Limited, Income Constrained (ALICE) is a population of Texans that are employed and yet struggle to afford the basic necessities of housing, food, health care, childcare, technology, and transportation. The Texas ALICE Report provides county-by-county level data and analysis of how many households are unable to make ends meet. The report includes measures, based on present-day income levels and expenses that show how many Texas workers are struggling financially, and why.

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A recap report by United Ways of Texas