

TEXAS COMMUNITIES & THE 89TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

A recap report by United Ways of Texas



UNITED WAY
United Ways
of Texas

INTRODUCTION

Texas United Ways believe effective state policy is essential to supporting the work of United Ways across local communities. That's why advocacy remains a critical tool for creating lasting, systemic change across Texas. Together, our statewide network of United Ways continues to strive for a future where all Texans thrive.

The Regular Session of the 89th Texas Legislature was challenging and required our network to play defense more than ever before. Despite a wave of policy proposals that impacted many communities, Texas United Ways significantly increased their engagement and presence this session. We hosted our first-ever official 211 Policy Briefing for legislative staffers, and our biennial Day at the Capitol saw record turnout from United Ways across the state.

The 2025 public policy agenda guided our advocacy efforts, reflecting the collective priorities of our diverse network of Texas United Ways in the critical areas of educational opportunity, healthy community, financial security, and community resiliency. This report highlights the legislative session's outcomes related to those priorities, the active participation of local United Ways, and key legislation tracked by United Ways of Texas (UWT).

While the session brought both wins and disappointments, the experience strengthened our network as well as our commitment and strategy for future advocacy in partnership with Texas United Ways to better serve all Texas communities.



**UNITED for a
future where all
Texans thrive.**

OVERVIEW OF THE 89TH REGULAR SESSION

The 2025 Texas legislative session began in January with many new House members and progress was initially slow as the House elected a new Speaker, Dustin Burrows. Over the 140-day regular session that ended on June 2, 2025, lawmakers filed nearly 8,900 bills and joint resolutions and passed around 1,300 bills.

Unlike the previous regular sessions—which ended in walkouts, impeachment proceedings, and other unfinished business—the 89th Regular Session wrapped up without major issues unfolding.

Public education, school finance, teacher compensation, property tax relief, and bail reform were major areas of focus. The Texas Legislature approved a roughly \$338 billion budget for the 2026–2027 biennium, representing a nearly 5% increase in all funds and an 8% increase in state funds compared to the previous biennium. Top Republican leaders in the House, Senate, and Governor’s Office were largely aligned on many priorities, resulting in a productive session for the GOP. At the same time, Democrats spent much of the legislative session playing defense and working to block or narrow several proposals.

While the regular session ended without the drama of previous years, Governor Abbott vetoed a bill banning hemp-derived THC products (SB 3)—a top priority for Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick. Soon after the veto deadline, Governor Greg Abbott called a 30-day special session beginning July 21, directing lawmakers to return to the Capitol to reconsider six bills he vetoed, including SB 3.



ADVOCACY & IMPACT

United Ways of Texas serves as a resource, voice, and partner for our Texas United Way members. During this legislative session, we actively worked to advance critical legislation and secure funding priorities on behalf of our network. At the same time, local United Ways collaborated to advocate for policies that positively impact the communities they serve.

2,300+

bills tracked

covering issues of importance for communities across Texas

140+

cards of support

put in by United Ways of Texas staff for bills being heard in committees

150

attendees at UW Capitol Day

with representation from over 14 local United Ways

100+

legislative actions by United Ways

including contacts made to legislative offices, oral and written testimony, local agendas, calls to action, and sign-on letters

11

statewide collaborative policy groups

with representation from United Ways of Texas

United Ways of Texas thanks our generous sponsors for UW Day at the Capitol — United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County, Arcosa, and United Way of Metropolitan Dallas — for helping make this day of advocacy and connection possible.

OUR PRIORITIES

As a network, we raised our collective voices during the 89th Legislative Session to advocate for the education, financial security, health, and nonprofit sector needs of our communities. While we faced more defensive challenges than in years past, Texas United Ways still made meaningful progress on several 2025 priority issue areas, including:



COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Our network successfully defended the nonprofit sector against several bills that would have affected community-based organizations. United Ways of Texas also led efforts to strengthen information and referral networks, including 211, with our priority bill HB 38 gaining strong support as a key legislative priority for Speaker Burrows.



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Our advocacy focused on strengthening pathways to college and career readiness, working to ensure all Texas students have access to postsecondary opportunities that prepare them for success in the workforce and beyond.



HEALTHY COMMUNITY

In partnership with anti-hunger advocates, United Ways of Texas helped secure improvements to SB 379, which now only restricts the use of SNAP benefits for sweetened beverages and candy—significantly less restrictive than earlier versions of the bill.



FINANCIAL SECURITY

Our network played a key role in securing \$100 million in new funding for child care scholarships for working families, while also advocating for expanded access and improved quality of child care across Texas.