

NASW Texas Advocacy Guide

2026



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THANK YOU, NASW-TX MEMBERS!

Hello NASW Texas Members,

I can't tell you how excited I am to announce that the NASW-TX Policy Team is ready to release an updated Advocacy Guide. This is a vital resource for anyone interested in social justice and the impact legislation could have on our profession, clients and communities. I know how challenging it can be to see bills that directly conflict with our values and Code of Ethics, but rather than feeling powerless in the face of these developments, we want you to know NASW-TX is standing up for social work.

From direct testimony to supporting members' speaking at the Capitol, and from lobbying for and against bill to grassroots mobilization, we are committed to ensuring that social workers are represented in the legislative process. Our Code of Ethics requires us to speak up and participate in the political process, and this association is the perfect platform to uplift your voice. But every time we show up to advocate, we do so with the full knowledge that we are backed by thousands of social workers across this state.

Your membership strengthens our work and keeps us accountable, and without you direct support social work would lack a unified presence at the Texas Legislature. Thank you for your membership, and for your belief in both the power of advocacy and social work.

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NASW-TX ADVOCACY

NASW-TX is a professional membership association that advocates for social workers, advances the profession of social work, and promotes effective public policy to ensure human needs are met.

Member Involvement

- [Take Action](#) on NASW-TX Priority Bills
 - Emails, Tweets, and Calls
 - Testify at a Committee Hearing
- Join a committee to influence NASW-TX's advocacy efforts
 - [SOGIE Committee](#)
 - [Women's Rights Committee](#)
 - [REAL Committee](#)
 - [Human Rights](#)
 - [EcoSocial Work Committee](#)
- Get Involved with TPACE
 - [Volunteer](#)
 - [Donate](#)
- Connect with your local Branch!

Lobbying

Each legislative session the NASW-TX Government Relations Director and policy team works with legislators, advocates, and allied professional organizations to advance NASW-TX legislative priorities. The legislative priorities are approved by the Chapter Board of Directors after review and input from the TPACE Trustees and our member driven Equity Committees.

- [2026 NASW-TX Interim Legislative Priorities](#)
- [2025 NASW-TX Champion Bills](#)

Communications

Stay up to date with advocacy efforts:

- Sign Up for [Advocacy Alerts](#)
- Monthly NASW-TX E-News (naswtex.naswtx@socialworkers.org)
- Social Media
 - [Twitter](#)
 - [Facebook / Student Facebook](#)
 - [Instagram](#)
- NASW-TX [Voting Guide](#)
- NASW-TX [News & Press](#)
- NASW [Social Work Speaks](#)
- NASW [Advocacy Webpage](#)
- [Social Work Advocates Magazine](#)

Programs & Events

Attend a local or statewide advocacy event:

- NASW-TX [Social Work Advocacy Day](#): A day full of advocate panels, discussions with legislative staff, rally on the Capitol steps, advocacy presentations and more!
- NASW-TX [Legislative Update Webinars](#)
- NASW-TX Annual Conference
- Local NASW-TX [Branch](#) Activities
 - Letter Writing Campaigns
 - 'Call your Legislator' Phone Banks

Check out all upcoming NASW-TX [events!](#)

NASW-TX LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

How does NASW-TX develop legislative priorities for the session?



We start by reviewing policy priorities from the previous session and the interim, focusing on priority bills that did not pass and issues that still require legislative action.



Then, we work internally to solicit feedback from staff, NASW-TX Texas Political Action for Candidate Election (TPACE) and member driven Equity Committees.



The final legislative priorities are presented to the NASW-TX Board of Trustees for approval, then published and shared with membership.

2026 INTERIM LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

SOCIAL WORK WORKFORCE AND RECRUITMENT

- Explore opportunities to expand license portability through the Interstate Licensure Compact and reciprocity.
- Establish the development of the LMSW Spanish language exam through legislative funding appropriated in SB 1 (89R).

REDUCE BARRIERS TO LICENSURE

- Empower the social work licensing board to make informed decisions on automatic denials for new in and out of state applicants.
- Establish alternatives to examinations for non-clinical applicants

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

- Establish corporate practice of Mental Health to align the ownership of behavioral health practices with other major professions.
- Expand the insurance networks by requiring supervisory billing in private insurance for supervised behavioral health professionals.
- Commission a legislative study exploring insurance reimbursement rates in Texas in comparison to national rates.
- Elevate clinical social workers to 100 percent of the Medicaid reimbursement rate for psychotherapy.
- Allow licensed masters level practitioners to bill Medicaid at 50 percent of the reimbursement rate.
- Invest in the emerging social work workforce through practicum compensation programs.
- Protect the scope of social work practice through the integration of emerging technology such as Artificial Intelligence.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND HUMAN RIGHTS

- Protect the civil rights and liberties of all Texans in regard to ;age; gender; race; color;religion; national origin; disability; sexual orientation; gender identity and expression;or political affiliation.
- Support culturally responsive child welfare policies that prioritize prevention efforts, safety, well-being, and development through trauma-informed practices.
- Support increased access to affordable, quality healthcare, and Medicaid expansion.
- Support policies that promote reproductive health education and oppose efforts that restrict access to reproductive healthcare.
- Oppose efforts to limit teaching and discussions on racial discrimination in schools to promote an inclusive environment that values diversity, equity, and justice.
- Partner with allies to support restorative justice efforts within the education system and eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Support policies that reduce barriers to voting and expand access to registration.
- Advocate for adequate access to student mental health services to build supportive networks that include the family, school professionals, community partners and others.

2025 NASW-TX CHAMPION BILLS



[HB 1727 \(Plesa\)](#)

Defines School Social Work Services in the Education Code.

Advocates for establishing a clear legal definition of school social work services in Texas, emphasizing the role school social workers play in addressing students' mental health and social needs.

[SB 845 \(Zaffirini\) & HB 1630 \(Janie Lopez\)](#)

Adds licensed social workers to the list of eligible professions for home down payment assistance through the Homes for Texas Heroes program.

adding licensed social workers to the eligible professions under Texas's Homes for Texas Heroes program, allowing them access to down-payment assistance for home ownership.

[SB 469 \(Sparks\)](#)

Would allow already trained and licensed master level graduates to bill Medicaid for counseling services.

This bill proposes allowing master-level practitioners who are pursuing their clinical licenses to bill Medicaid at 50%, in order to increase access to psychotherapy.

[HB 4261\(Ward-Johnson\)](#)

Reinstates alternate paths to social work licensure in Texas.

Allows bachelor's and master's-level social workers who fail the licensing exam twice within 12 months by 5 points or less access to licensure through a structured alternative pathway involving a professional portfolio, case analysis, supervised work, self-evaluation, and other requirements, to address exam-related equity issues and reduce workforce barriers.

[SB 153 \(Menendez\)](#)

Creates a program that would compensate social work students for their social work intern practicum placements.

This bill would create a stipend program to pay eligible BSW/MSW students for their required 400-550 hour supervised practicums.

[HB 3503 \(Darby\) & SB 1726 \(Johnson\)](#)

Allows social workers to practice in multiple states without needing separate licenses.

This bill would permit Texas social workers to obtain a multistate license, enabling them to provide services—including via telehealth

[HB 4974 \(Bryant\)](#)

Removes social workers from list of healthcare professionals automatically barred from licensure due to felony convictions.

Proposes removing social workers from the Texas Occupations Code provision that automatically disqualifies individuals with felony convictions from obtaining or retaining a social work license

89TH LEGISLATIVE OVERVIEW

As we look back on the 89th Legislative Session, the National Association of Social Workers – Texas Chapter recognizes both how the Legislature made progress and missed opportunities to advance policies that impact social work practice and the communities we serve. This session we faced a multitude of challenges under a newly elected House Speaker, Dustin Burrows, and more than 34 new members in the Texas House of Representatives. Amid changes in leadership, new committee appointments, and the focus on public education funding, NASW-TX’s government affairs team remained steadfast—advocating for social work priorities, opposing discriminatory legislation, promoting social work values, and defeating measures that negatively impact vulnerable clients.

While we were disappointed some of our priority bills did not make it to the finish line, there were also important victories that will improve access to services and strengthen support for Texans in need. Lawmakers were faced with funding these efforts amid the uncertainty of potential federal policy changes, some of which could interfere with or alter how some bills are ultimately implemented. This complex environment required legislators to weigh immediate needs against the possibility of shifting federal rules and funding streams, resulting in some compromises.

This report is not an exhaustive review of every bill filed or passed, but rather a summary of key legislative actions, budget highlights, and notable gaps relevant to our members and clients. Our goal is to provide a clear overview of policy changes that may affect your work and the individuals, families, and communities you serve.

We are deeply grateful, first to our amazing NASW-Texas members, and second, to social workers across the state, who took the time and the effort to respond to action alerts, contact their legislators, and share their expertise and stories throughout the legislative session—whether with the association or testifying at the capitol. Your grassroots advocacy makes a difference—and continues to strengthen our profession’s voice at the Capitol. Thank you for amplifying NASW-Texas’ legislative work, and for participating in our efforts to transform Texas along social work values and ideals.

Note: This document is meant to be a broad summary of legislative action relevant to social workers and the clients we serve. Not all topics or bills are covered. Further, we included some bills that NASW-TX did not weigh in on for a variety of reasons but felt it was important to include in the legislative summary. Check out our 89th [Legislative Session Bill Tracker](#) here for the rest of the bills we monitored.

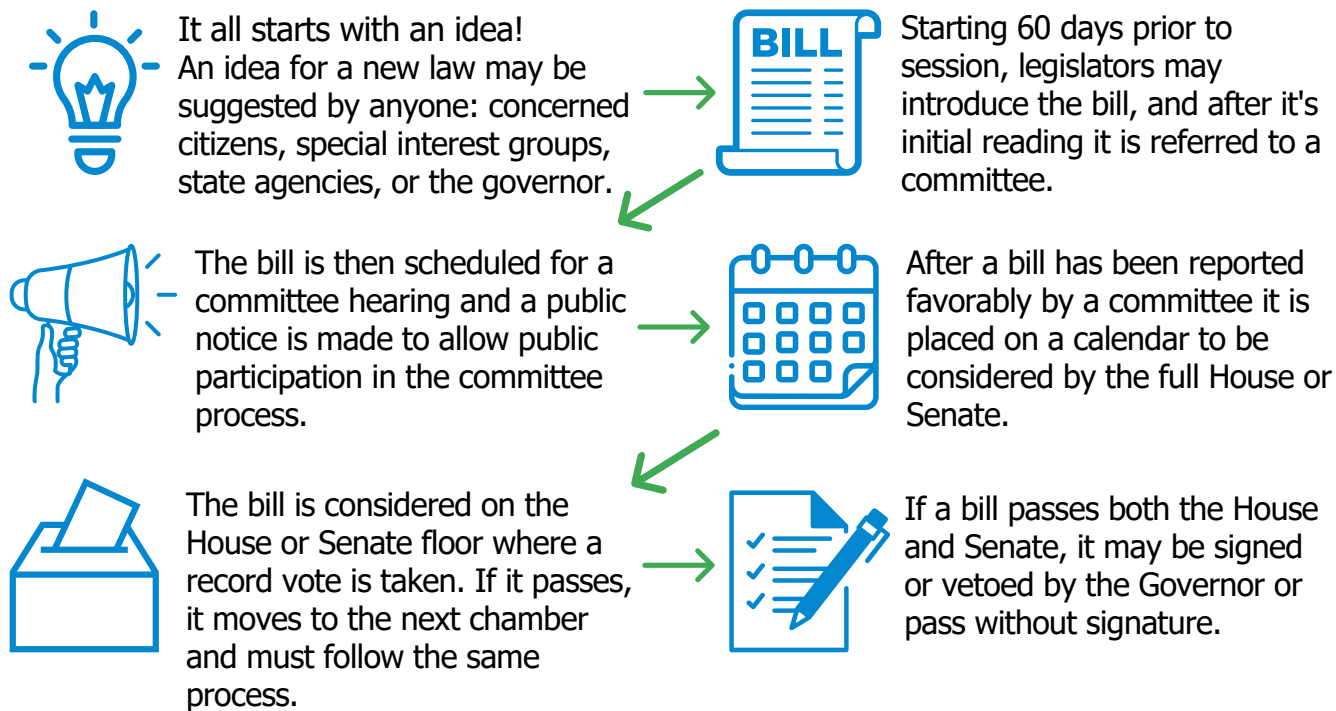
[Read the full 89th Legislative Session Summary Here!](#)

TEXAS STATE LEGISLATIVE 101

Texas meets for the Regular Legislative Session every other year on odd numbered years for 140 days. An average of 10,000 bills are filed each Regular Session with only around 1,000 passing. Bills can be vetoed by the Governor even if passed by the Legislature. The Governor can also call Special Sessions of the Texas legislature, which last up to 30 days each. The off time from a legislative session is called “the interim”.

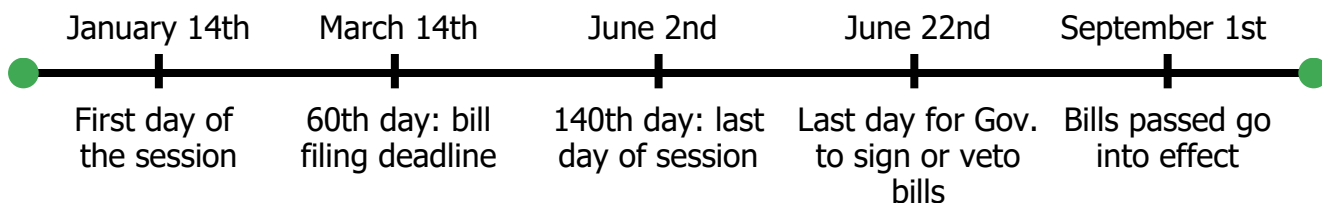
The Texas Legislature is divided by two chambers: the Senate and the House. The Texas House has 150 members elected to two-year terms. The Speaker of the House is elected by a vote of the House members to be the presiding officer. The Texas Senate has 31 members elected to four-year terms, and the Lieutenant Governor is the presiding officer.

How a bill becomes a law in Texas:



Legislative Session Timeline 2025:

(Exact dates vary per session year)



ADVOCACY ACTION STEPS



Get Connected

Sign up for advocacy alerts via [NASW-TX VoterVoice](https://bit.ly/NASWTXActionCenter) (bit.ly/NASWTXActionCenter) Follow our [advocacy Twitter](#) account (@naswtx_advocacy) for live Capitol updates, action alerts, and more.



Find Your Legislators

Who Represents Me?



Send an Email or Letter

Create a letter or email. Here is an example template to get started:
 "Hi, my name is ____, and I'm a constituent. As a social worker, I am very supportive of your efforts related to [[your issue here](#)] because it impacts my clients by _____. I have seen firsthand how this would impact our community by _____. I am asking Rep/Senator _____ to _____."

*If you use an email or letter template someone else created, it's important to add a few unique sentences you write yourself. The more personalized, the better. Emails or letters that look like they came from a constituent get more attention and have a greater impact than something that is cookie-cutter.



Advocacy Phone Calls

If you have an advocacy ask for your legislator or elected official it can be effective to call their office to tell a staffer about your ask. Once you have the office information, call and ask for the staffer that is working on the issue area you are concerned about. Using an Elevator Speech, share your ask clearly. Be ready to answer any questions they may have. Ask if you can email them any materials you have, including your contact info.

Example script:

"Hi, my name is ____, and I'm a constituent. As a social worker, I am very concerned about House Bill 123 because it would negatively impact people in my community by _____. I am asking Rep/Senator _____ to vote against House Bill 123."

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE VISITS

Before the Meeting

Call their office to schedule the meeting. Sample call script:

"Hi, my name is _____ and I am a constituent in your district, as well as a [social work student/social work professional]. Can I please set up a brief visit with the legislator or their staff to discuss policy issues important to social workers?"

Prepare for the meeting by creating an "Elevator Pitch"

An Elevator Speech is a quick, clear, and concise summary of the issue you are hoping to address and how you would like to address it. Example:

Intro: I am a constituent in your district as well as a [social work student/social work professional]. I would like to talk to you about the importance of school social work.

The Ask: I am asking you to support legislation adding a "school social work services" definition to the Texas Education Code.

The Why: Currently, there is no definition in the Texas Education Code for school social work services. Many Texas school children are faced with significant obstacles to learning such as bullying, child abuse, substance abuse, suicide, teen pregnancy, and domestic violence. School social workers are uniquely trained to provide social work services that identify and address these complex problems and meet the needs of the whole child and the parents. Adding social work services to schools and school districts allows teaches and administrators to focus their work yet still provide valuable assistance and support to students.

During the Meeting

How to conduct a legislative office visit:

- Introduce yourself and emphasize that you are a constituent and NASW Member.
- Overview what you would like to discuss and distribute printed handouts. You can use our NASW-TX policy one pagers.
- Share why the issue matters to social workers and you personally.
- Ask if you can count on their boss's support/opposition for the idea/bill.
- Don't forget to grab their business card and thank them for their time!
- Send a thank you email with any additional resources.
(ccnaswtex.naswtx@socialworkers.org if relevant)

Tips for a successful office visit:

- Bring your social work skills to the conversation: advocate for yourself and your cause. Authenticity is KEY!
- Legislative staff need your perspective and expertise more than you think. Bring that expertise to the meeting. Not all staffers know what social workers can do.
- Admit if you don't know the answer to a question if a legislator or staff ask.
- Even if you don't agree with the legislator on all issues, find one item that you can thank them for during the meeting.

LOCAL & STATE RESOURCES

LOCAL ADVOCACY

- Look at the official county or city websites, find who your officials are: Mayor, City Council, etc.
- Look for upcoming opportunities to engage with them: town halls, city council meetings, virtual events, etc.
- Search for existing groups and coalitions, get creative! They may be on Facebook or part of existing social clubs or political groups.
- Do some research! What issues mean the most to you & what organizations or elected officials are working to solve these issues?
- Social workers know their community best, share your thoughts with your elected officials! Start building a relationship before you have an "ask".
- Ask to set up a call or meeting to introduce yourself and share your interests.
- Become an election worker in your county.

LOCAL LEVEL RESOURCES

- [Travis County Government](#)
- [Bexar County Government](#)
- [Harris County Government](#)
- [El Paso County Government](#)
- [Dallas County Government](#)
- [Tarrant County Government](#)

NASW-TX BRANCHES

- [Alamo Area](#)
- [Brazos Valley](#)
- [Capital Area](#)
- [Central Texas](#)
- [Coastal Bend](#)
- [Concho Valley](#)
- [Deep East Texas](#)
- [East Texas](#)
- [Golden Crescent](#)
- [Gulf Coast](#)
- [Heart of Texas](#)
- [Houston](#)
- [Lower Rio Grande Valley](#)

STATE LEVEL RESOURCES

- [Texas Legislature Online](#)
- [Texas House](#)
- [Texas Senate](#)
- [Who Represents Me?](#)
- [Texas Tribune](#)

- [Middle Rio Grande Valley](#)
- [North Central Texas - Dallas](#)
- [North Central Texas- Forth Worth](#)
- [North East Texas](#)
- [Panhandle](#)
- [Permian Basin](#)
- [Red River](#)
- [Rio Grande](#)
- [South East Texas](#)
- [South Plains](#)
- [South Texas](#)
- [Texoma](#)
- [West Central Texas](#)

Join NASW!



Thank you for being an NASW-TX member! If you are not a member, we would love to have you join us so that our advocacy can go farther!

ALLIES AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

HOW DOES NASW-TX IDENTIFY ALLIED PARTNERS?

Input is included from members, and issues at the federal level through the National office are considered as well when a partnership is considered. The Executive Director or the Govt. Relations Director researches the appropriateness and value of potential partnerships and explores cross-linking our websites and ways to inform our membership.

The NASW Texas Board of Directors, Equity Committees, and the Critical Issue Advisories have identified the following organizations as allies with expertise on social justice issues that overlap with NASW TX legislative priorities.

- [ACLU of Texas](#)
- [Child Protection Roundtable](#)
- [Disability Rights Texas](#)
- [Equality Texas](#)
- [Every Texan](#)
- [Healthy Texas Women's Coalition](#)
- [Intercultural Development Research Association \(IDRA\)](#)
- [Mental Health America of Texas - Greater Houston](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) Texas](#)
- [Reform Immigration for Texas Alliance \(RITA\)](#)
- [Texans Care for Children](#)
- [Texas Appleseed](#)
- [Texas Civil Rights Project](#)
- [Texas Council on Family Violence](#)
- [Texas Suicide Prevention Council](#)
- [TexProtects](#)
- [The Arc of Texas](#)
- [The Hogg Foundation on Mental Health](#)

INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH NASW-TX

Contact our Government Relations Director, Bryan Mares at bmares.naswtx@socialworkers.org, for information on how NASW-TX and your organization can become an allied advocacy partner!

