

City of Austin, Texas

State Legislative Agenda

88TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE

Condensed Version

For Full Version: austintexas.gov/department/intergovernmental-relations-office

2023



MAYOR & COUNCIL



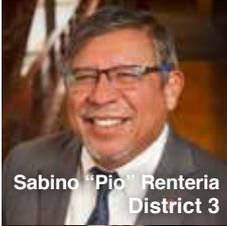
Steve Adler
Mayor



Natasha Harper-Madison
District 1



Vanessa Fuentes
District 2



Sabino "Pio" Renteria
District 3



Jose "Chito" Vela
District 4



Ann Kitchen
District 5



Mackenzie Kelly
District 6



Leslie Pool
District 7



Paige Ellis
District 8



Kathie Tovo
District 9



Alison Alter
District 10

BRIE L. FRANCO

Intergovernmental Relations Officer

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Spencer Cronk
City Manager



AUSTIN AT A GLANCE

GENERAL LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

The City of Austin's 88th State Legislative Agenda reflects the City's priorities established by City Council. The City has adopted legislative priorities wherein City staff and its professional Intergovernmental Relations Team is directed and authorized to protect those interests.



Public Safety



Sustainability and Resiliency



Prosperity of Residents



Equity for All Residents



Efficient and Cost-Effective Government



Protect Principle of Home Rule and Right of Self-Governance

CITY OF AUSTIN VISION:

Austin is a beacon of sustainability, social equity, and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its community members, and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all (from Imagine Austin).



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The City of Austin is proud to coordinate with local partners to advocate for initiatives that advance the health, safety, and vitality of the community to the extent partner initiatives do not conflict with the City's Agenda. Those partners include but are not limited to:

- Travis County
- Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Austin Transit Partnership
- Austin Independent School District
- The University of Texas at Austin
- The Housing Authority of Austin
- Central Health
- City Boards, Commissions and Task Forces
- Austin Chamber of Commerce
- Small Local Businesses
- Local Major employers
- Local Nonprofits
- Downtown Austin Alliance
- Visit Austin
- Capital Area Council of Governments
- Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Local Neighborhood Associations
- Austin-area Chambers of Commerce
- Austin-area Independent School Districts



COUNCIL/MANAGER

10 Geographic Council Districts / Mayor at-Large



POPULATION:
~1M
(as of JULY 2021)

4th Most Populous City in Texas

11th Largest in the Nation

116 

People Move to Austin Daily

24 Million 
Visitors Annually

#1 Best Large City for US Job Markets (April 2022)



42,000 small businesses in Austin

FASTEST Growing Large City in the US

2.7% Average Unemployment Rate compared to National Average of **4.6%**

BOOMING AUSTIN ECONOMY

OVER NEXT 10 YEARS

Future job growth projected to increase

47%

compared to the national average increase of

33%



WHAT SETS AUSTIN APART: City Services & Amenities

The City of Austin is committed to providing its citizens with world-class services and amenities. The City pursues this commitment with community, public safety, development, infrastructure and transportation, and utility and other enterprise services. The following are FY 2020-21 data for some of these City-provided services and amenities, though this list is far from comprehensive.



22 LIBRARY LOCATIONS



330 PARKS
172 PLAYGROUNDS
70 MIXED-USE FIELDS



34 SWIMMING POOLS
11 SPLASH PADS



7,005 MILES OF WATER/
WASTEWATER MAINS



175.5 ARTERIAL MILES
WITH BICYCLE LANE/
SHARED-USE PATH



19,874 ACRES OF
GREEN SPACE



13 DOG PARKS



98% SHELTERED COMPANION
ANIMAL LIVE RESCUE RATE



6,418 FIRE INCIDENTS
DISPATCHED



FUNDED BASIC SOCIAL SERVICE
NEEDS SUCH AS HEALTHCARE,
HOUSING, AND MORE FOR
50,844 INDIVIDUALS



371,681 PATROL INCIDENT
RESPONSES



68,757 PATIENT GROUND
TRANSPORTS



\$270M IN STATE AND
LOCAL FUNDS DISTRIBUTED
FOR COVID RELIEF



PROJECTED **11.5M**
EMPLACEMENTS



LARGEST NO KILL
ANIMAL SHELTER IN US



\$7.4M IN UTILITY BILL
RELIEF PROVIDED BY CITY
DURING PANDEMIC

88TH LEGISLATURE: PRIORITIES AFFECTING CITIES

The City of Austin recognizes that the Texas Legislature has identified the following issues as legislative priorities for the 88th Legislative Session and directs the City Manager to use his staff and the City's Intergovernmental Relations team to:

- Oppose legislation that attempts to diminish the City's ability to govern its residents' investment in municipally-owned utilities or that negatively impacts the current status of Austin Energy, including City Council's authority to set rates.
- Oppose legislation that negatively affects the City's financial ability to act in the best interests of Austin's residents or reduces the City's ability to achieve a AAA credit rating, including but not limited to:
 - Imposing a limitation on city expenditures, a more restrictive revenue cap of any type, or an exclusion of new property in the effective rate calculations; or
 - Lowering the homestead appraisal cap or expanding the appraisal cap to non-homestead properties.
- Protect Austin residents' right to govern themselves and work with their City government to adopt and enforce ordinances that address the health, safety, and public welfare of the community, including but not limited to, the ability to regulate earned sick leave, payday and auto title lending, and fair chance hiring.
 - Preserve property value for Austin taxpayers by protecting the City's authority to promote good land use through land use and zoning regulations, building codes, planning requirements, impact fees, building permit or registration fees, annexation, floodplain regulations, or eminent domain.
- Protect Austin's civil rights ordinances and oppose legislation that attempts to diminish the City's ability to protect Austinites' employment, housing, public accommodation, and other civil rights that would threaten Austin's welcoming environment to businesses, conventions, and events and would tarnish Austin's status as an inclusive community for all.
- Support legislation that strengthens the financial soundness and health of the City's Retirement Systems.
- Oppose legislation that prohibits or restricts the City's current ability to petition the Legislature and its elected representatives on behalf of its residents.



Signal Technicians at Parmer and Samsung Blvd



Vy-Ngo, *Blue*, The People's Gallery: Austin City Hall



Texas State Capitol Building



George Washington Carver Museum



Bartholomew Pool



Asian American Resource Center



ATX sign by Ion Art

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The City of Austin believes that developing new economic sectors through partnerships between the business community, city government, and institutions will help employ a diverse workforce and expand opportunities for young and old. To ensure the City's economic strength, it is critical to preserve Austin's mix of large and small businesses, local entrepreneurs, major employers, clean industries, educational institutions, and government jobs.

The City will:

- Support legislation and funding that improves the City's ability to attract economic development, promote tourism, and provide economic opportunities for Austin's creative sector.
- Support legislation and funding to strengthen the resilience of the creative and hospitality industries, including live music and art venues, restaurants, and bars.
- Support legislation and funding that improves the quality of education for successful pathways to high school graduation, college, and careers.
- Support legislation and funding that provides Austin students and residents with career pathway opportunities, including work relief programs, job training, and apprenticeship programs.
- Support legislation and funding that provides high-risk workers with public health and safety protections, support, and education related to a pandemic response or other health emergency.
- Support legislation and funding to promote reliable and affordable access to the internet and related technologies and to increase digital inclusion in Texas, including efforts to provide digital literacy and technology training.
- Support legislation and measures that will reinforce the City's efforts to strengthen communities' financial resilience and boost the local economy, including resiliency and equity initiatives that provide for unmet needs.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The City of Austin believes in investing in effective programs and strategies to ensure the safety of Austin residents and visitors.

The City will:

- Support continued funding and support of Police, Fire, and EMS operations, and oppose legislation that restricts their ability to effectively serve and protect the Austin community.
- Support legislation increasing funding for child safety programs, school safety, and crossing guards.
- Support legislation that reduces gun violence in coordination with local law enforcement, including legislation to limit or prevent access to firearms by domestic abusers or individuals who pose a risk of harm to themselves or others, regulate and prevent access to bump stocks, promote safe storage



AIPP *Kindness Doesn't Cost Anything* by Laura Hajar
Manchaca Austin Fire Station 20/EMS Station 2 (Medic 2)



APD Bike Patrol

for firearms, raise the minimum age of purchase from 18 to 21 for semi-automatic, assault style rifles, allow local jurisdictions to regulate the sale or public carry of semi-automatic, assault style rifles, prohibit the sale or possession of ammunition magazines capable of carrying more than 10 rounds, and increase penalties for illegally allowing minors unsupervised access to firearms. Oppose legislation that would deregulate gun silencers/suppressors.

- Support legislation and funding to local governments that would expand and improve existing efforts to address the opioid epidemic and reduce overdoses and overdose deaths, including measures to decriminalize and increase access to drug testing products; stop the illicit trafficking of fentanyl, carfentanil, oxycodone, and other opioids; and provide for greater cooperation at the regional, state, and federal levels with regard to policy discussions on the issue of opioid abuse. Support efforts to protect individuals who request medical assistance related to an overdose and oppose legislation that increases arrests and the severity of criminal punishment related to experiencing or reporting an overdose.
- Oppose legislation that restricts the City's flexibility to effectively mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters, including flooding, wildfires, extreme temperatures, and public health disasters.
- Support legislation that reduces risk to lives and property from flooding and wildfires.
- Support legislative efforts to continue support for sexual assault victims, including the continuation of the Texas Sexual Assault Survivors Task Force and the clearing of rape kit backlogs.
- Support legislation to end human trafficking, including efforts to prevent and recognize human trafficking and to provide support for victims of the act.
- Support legislation and funding to allow qualified medical and mental health professionals to safely perform related duties currently restricted to law enforcement officers, including the authority to detain and transfer an individual believed to have a mental illness and who is a substantial risk of serious harm to themselves or others.
- Oppose legislation that negatively affects the City's ability to maintain public confidence, trust, and support in the fairness and integrity of the Austin Police Department.

- Support legislation to reduce the improper or excessive use of force by police, enhance bias, crisis intervention, and de-escalation training, expand civilian oversight of police departments, and improve relations between police and those they serve.
- Support legislation that requires the use of de-escalation techniques and other alternative techniques to use of force whenever possible.
- Support legislation and funding to reduce or eliminate arrests or incarceration for low-level, non-violent offenses and ban arrests for offenses that are only punishable by fines.
- Support legislation that would increase investigations, transparency, and public reporting of:
 - Improper or excessive use of force and use of deadly force;
 - Officer misconduct, complaints, and resulting disciplinary consequences;
 - Racial profiling data and other racial disparity and equity data; and
 - Body camera footage.
- Support legislation and funding to improve background checks and screening of incoming police cadets and active officers being considered for promotion, including measures to increase access to officer misconduct records from other jurisdictions.
- Support legislation that would improve a jurisdiction's ability to investigate officer misconduct, enforce disciplinary actions, or prosecute officer misconduct.

HEALTH AND PROSPERITY

The City of Austin, through Austin Public Health, provides public health education and outreach, preventative health services, disease prevention, and emergency preparedness health services to protect and optimize the community's health and well-being. Austin Public Health also works to address issues of health equity and disparities, to plan for and respond to public health emergency preparedness, outbreaks related to disease, foodborne illness, exposures to environmental hazards, and natural disasters.

The City will:

- Support adequate funding for public health care programs, including Women's Preventative Health and Family Planning Services, chronic disease prevention, behavioral health and substance abuse programs, to support the uninsured and underinsured residents of Austin and all local and regional health care programs.
- Support legislation and funding to strengthen the resilience of public health care programs and healthcare systems.
- Support legislation that advances workplace equity for family building support; increases the number of people with access to health insurance that covers infertility medical treatment, specifically IVF and fertility



Covid-19 Vaccine Clinic



Caraway Elementary Garden- Bright Green Future Grant

preservation; and protects the right of people to make reproductive health decisions for their own bodies and their families.

- Support legislation to provide an exemption of feminine hygiene products and child and adult diapers from the sales and use tax.
- Support legislation and funding that creates equitable access to and availability of affordable, safe, quality child care and education for all families of children aged birth to five; affordable, safe, quality after-school programming; and evidence-based home visiting programs for families with young children.
- Support legislation that improves access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food.
- Support legislation and funding to improve disease and laboratory reporting and strengthen epidemiological responses to public health conditions or threats.
- Support legislation and funding for programs that would increase access and resources for sobriety and recovery resources for youth.
- Support legislation and funding to dismantle systemic racism, including efforts to address public health disparities due to racial inequities.

HOMELESSNESS & MENTAL HEALTH

The City of Austin believes it can reduce economic disparities by understanding and addressing root causes, leveraging public-private partnerships, and supporting children and adults toward long-term success.

The City will:

- Support legislation and funding to provide social services for individuals experiencing homelessness, mental health disorders, and/or substance use disorders.

EQUITY & AFFORDABILITY

The City of Austin strives to make the City a place where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible for all current and future Austinites.

The City will:

- Support legislation that promotes equity for residents of Austin including pay-equity, education-equity, housing-equity, and health-equity.
- Support legislation and funding that will bolster the City's efforts to stabilize and sustain neighborhoods, preserve and expand the supply of housing that is affordable, expand economic opportunities, meet critical social needs, and fund other critical needs in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.
- Support legislation that allows cities to implement mandatory inclusionary zoning programs.
- Support legislation that prohibits predatory practices that pressure families to sell their homes.
- Support legislation and funding that aligns employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services to housing that is affordable and accessible to transit.
- Support legislation that affirms civil and human rights, and ensures that those targeted on the basis of race, nationality, religion, or immigration status can turn to government without fear of recrimination.

WATER & WASTEWATER, ENVIRONMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY

The City of Austin endeavors to promote healthy and equitable communities and economic prosperity through the protection and preservation of the region's air, land, and water and Austin's natural resources and open spaces, including policies that address the causes of the climate crisis as well as mitigation strategies.

The City will:

- Oppose any legislation that would restrict the City's ability to protect the floodplain.
- Support legislation that provides financial assistance for high priority security, resilience, and sustainability-related water and wastewater projects, drainage infrastructure, repair and replacement of aging



According to the 2022 Affordability Metrics Report that compares water rates across the Country, Austin Water has kept rates for water and wastewater among the lowest in the country for the 12th consecutive year.



Winter Storm Uri, Public Works water distribution

infrastructure, and the improvement and maintenance of water and wastewater infrastructure.

- Support higher water conservation standards for plumbing fixtures, irrigation, landscape practices, and sustainable water reuse, and protect the City's authority to establish conservation standards.
- Support legislation that would increase oversight of proposed pipeline developments or otherwise provide greater protections for owners of conservation lands or easements.
- Support legislation and funding for local and regional air quality planning, research, and monitoring in areas with air quality issues across the state.
- Support legislation and funding that increases the resilience of communities in the face of climate and environmental, economic, and/or social shocks and stressors.
- Support legislation that would support the development and increased usage of alternative building materials in both private and public construction.

PUBLIC PENSION SYSTEMS

The City of Austin sponsors three pensions systems: Austin Police Retirement System, Austin Fire Fighters Relief and Retirement Fund and City of Austin Employees' Retirement System. The City works closely and collaboratively with our partners at these systems to develop long-term strategies and options for ensuring their financial health.

The City will:

- Support legislation that maintains joint state and local authority over City of Austin employee retirement plans.
- Oppose legislation that would negatively affect the City's public pension systems.

TRANSPORTATION & AVIATION

Transportation congestion consistently ranks as a major concern to Austinites. Addressing this concern requires the City of Austin and its partners to look for solutions that improve and expand transportation options to serve and connect

centers and corridors, and to create human-scaled and inviting places.

The City will:

- Support legislation and funding for transportation and technology projects and initiatives dedicated to improving regional mobility; for increasing partnerships between local and state agencies to ensure improvements are well integrated and the regional mobility system is improved as a whole; and to maintaining, expanding, and improving transportation infrastructure and local transportation options.
- Support increased state funding for transportation projects and regional partnerships or legislation that creates local funding options for transportation projects.
- Support legislation that would allow a city to lower the prima facie speed limit from 30 mph to 25 mph or less, or that would reduce requirements for local jurisdictions related to lowering the prima facie speed limit.
- Support legislation that in accordance with federal law provides local governments and airport authorities with sufficient resources to provide for a safe and efficient aviation system and allows airports to be as self-sustaining as possible.
- Support legislation that allows Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) or other regional partners to improve and expand the public transportation system to connect Downtown Austin to the region.
- Support legislation and funding that would strengthen the City's ability to improve traffic safety and to reach its goal of achieving zero serious injuries or deaths.
- Support legislation and funding that improve the ability of the City to manage traffic congestion through transportation demand management

To support the estimated 30 million annual passengers the Austin International Airport (AUS) will host by 2030, the ~\$4 billion Airport Expansion and Development program will increase capacity at AUS by using a strategic approach, including optimizing the Barbara Jordan Terminal and enabling future expansion with new utility and airfield infrastructure.



programming, infrastructure, and land use strategies.

- Support all project delivery & funding tools for local/regional transportation agencies to access private capital by preserving the ability to issue revenue bonds secured by user fees. Allow local metropolitan planning organizations to decide if managed lanes work for specific projects.
- Support the City's ability to increase the share of Austin residents who work at home instead of commuting to work.
- Support the City's ability to design complete communities where land use encourages convenient transportation options and all modes are integrated into the transportation network.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

The City of Austin believes in protecting the City's ability to manage and control public rights-of-way and publicly owned land, to receive fair market compensation for use of public rights-of-way, and to require private companies to pay for the costs of relocating their facilities and infrastructure.

The City will:

- Support the City's ability to require proportional traffic mitigation or infrastructure improvement requirements from developments as part of the site development process.
- Oppose legislation that limits the City's ability to regulate and enforce the City's building codes, land use and zoning regulations, floodplain regulations, and registration or license requirements to the standards adopted by the City in order to address the health, safety, and public welfare of the community within the City's limits and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

TAX REFORM & DEBT ISSUANCE

The City of Austin believes in promoting strong partnerships between the City and State for the benefit of all Texans. However, unlike other states, Texas provides no general-purpose state aid to cities to help pay for streets, public



Intersection improvements at St. Johns Ave and N. Lamar Blvd



East MLK speed change sign installation

safety, or other city services. The City of Austin supports policies that allow city officials to provide critical services for the protection, safety, and welfare of its residents while preserving Austin's ability to manage our growth, our budgets, and address the issues that matter most to our residents.

The City will:

- Support legislation that provides local options for revenue expansion and diversification and creates a tax and revenue system that promotes equity, responsiveness, and the authority for local officials to act in the best interest of residents.
- Support legislation that would require mandatory disclosure of real estate sales prices or substantially improves the real estate appraisal process, including the appeals process.
- Support legislation that simplifies and accurately notifies taxpayers of the impacts of the City's adopted property tax rate.
- Support legislation that provides meaningful property tax relief to Austin residents by preserving and expanding the state homestead exemption, including but not limited to:
 - Allowing for a percentage-based homestead exemption subject to a cap on the maximum value exempted; or
 - Allowing for a local-option flat-tax exemption to ad valorem taxes.
- Oppose legislation that places Austin's taxpayers with the burden of paying for State mandates and collecting revenues for the State.
- Support legislation that protects or enhances municipal revenues and the flexibility to use such revenues.
- Oppose legislation that restricts the ability of the City to issue debt or that would cause confusing and onerous public notification requirements.
- Support legislation that would allow for a reduction, cap, or exemption to water drainage fees for persons age 65 or older or disabled.
- Support legislation and funding that ensures sustainable funding for public schools.

TRANSPARENT AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT

- Support legislation that reduces the costs of providing services by authorizing public notices on the Internet or through electronic service.
- Oppose legislation that erodes municipal sovereign immunity.
- Maintain the ability of Austin to acquire property for uses that benefit its residents and protect local taxpayers from paying additional compensation to individuals and businesses.
- Oppose legislation that limits or prohibits the City's current ability to communicate or advocate with legislators or limits or prohibits the authority of the Texas Municipal League to use any funds to communicate with legislators.



Waterloo Park



Austin Public Library - Yarborough Branch

- Oppose legislation that would increase state regulation of local ballot language or the initiative or referendum process.

QUALITY OF LIFE

The City of Austin is focused on maintaining Austin as a vibrant place to live, work, learn, and thrive.

The City will:

- Support funding for the Texas State Park System, the Texas Recreation & Parks Account Local Park Grant Program, and any program or funding that directly benefits parks, recreation, open space, trails, and tourism.
- Support legislation and funding that increases accessibility to public facilities and transit for individuals with disabilities.
- Support increases in state aid for public libraries.
- Oppose legislation and reduction of funding that limits the City's ability to provide knowledge and education to the Austin community through technology and books.
- Support legislation that positively affects the mission and service delivery of municipal animal shelters, animal health, and any other animal related regulations to save the lives of shelter pets, to work with rescue agencies and non-profits, and to model best practices for shelter pets and wildlife.

VOTING & ELECTIONS

The City of Austin supports funding, legislative or executive action that promotes and protects voting rights and access to voting, as well as greater inclusion and civic empowerment.

The City will:

- Support legislative or executive action that promotes and protects voting rights and access to voting, as well as greater inclusion and civic empowerment, including, modernizing and increasing access to voter registration, expanding access to polling places, extending the early voting period, and improving standards for polling places and poll worker training, protecting and strengthening the ability of employees to vote during early

election periods and on election days, including recognizing voting days as state holidays, increasing state funding for voter education and elections administration, processes, and security, creating a Civic Engagement Board to increase democratic participation and engagement particularly among underrepresented communities, increasing outreach and distribution of elections and voter registration information to eligible Texans who are not currently registered to vote, providing for civics education and voter registration information in jails and for individuals returning from incarceration upon completion of probation, restoring voting rights and the right to stand as a candidate for formerly incarcerated individuals, improving accommodations for voters with disabilities and protecting the rights and access of Texas voters serving in the military, providing for no-excuse absentee voting that would allow voting-by-mail for all eligible voters, especially during a declared state of emergency, eliminating partisan and racially discriminatory redistricting, and repealing punitive and restrictive identification requirements to access the ballot.

Photography credits (from left to right on each page):

Page 8: Signal Technicians at Parmer and Samsung Blvd, Photo by Victoria Pallanes. *Blue* by Vy-Ngo, Art in Public Places, The People's Gallery: Austin City Hall. George Washington Carver Museum and Bartholomew Pool, Parks and Recreation Department. Asian American Resource Center, Youth weaving lessons. Parks and Recreation Department. ATX sign by Ion Art.

Page 10: *Kindness Doesn't Cost Anything* by Laura Hajar, Art in Public Places, Manchaca Austin Fire Station 20/EMS Station 2 (Medic 2). Photo by Philip Rogers. APD Bike Patrol, Austin Police Department.

Page 12: Covid-19 Vaccine Clinic, Austin Public Health. Caraway Elementary Garden-Bright Green Future Grant, Office of Sustainability.

Page 13: Albert H. Ullrich Water Treatment Plant, Austin Water.

Page 14: Winter Storm Uri water distribution, Public Works Department.

Page 15: Airport expansion rendering: Barbara Jordan Terminal, Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.

Page 16: Intersection improvements at St. Johns Ave and N. Lamar Blvd and East MLK speed change sign installation, Austin Transportation Department

Page 18: Waterloo Park, Parks and Recreation Department. Yarborough Branch, Austin Public Library.

Back Cover: Longhorn Dam Shared Use Path 4, Shared Mobility Services, Austin Transportation Department. Rainbow Crosswalk at 4th and Colorado Streets, Creative Crosswalks, Austin Transportation Department. Mayfield Park, Historic Austin Parks, Parks and Recreation Department. Stevie Ray Vaughan Statue, Lady Bird Lake, Photo by Victoria Pallanes. Austin Cave Festival, Watershed Protection Department. Bydee Lamar Rundberg Artbox, Austin Transportation Department.



Longhorn Dam Shared Use Path 4



Rainbow Crosswalk at 4th and Colorado Streets



Mayfield Park



Stevie Ray Vaughan Statue, Lady Bird Lake



Austin Cave Festival



Bydee Lamar Rundberg Artbox



INTERGOVERNMENTAL
RELATIONS OFFICE