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NEW POLL SHOWS TEXAS' FUTURE IS TOP OF MIND FOR VOTERS
Generationally impactful investments gain overwhelming thumbs up

AUSTIN, TX — The future of Texas – and how Texas legislators can continue to address big looming problems – take front and center on what Texas voters agree upon in Texas 2036's sixth Texas Voter Poll – part one of which the nonpartisan, nonprofit policy organization released today.

A surprising finding from the new statewide survey conducted over Feb. 1-6, 2023, found that Texas voters would dedicate the same average percentage – 23.4% of the \$32.7 billion state budget surplus – to property tax relief as they would to increasing public education funding.

Another key finding is that an increasingly high percentage of Texas voters – 89% – tell us now that fixing Texas' aging water infrastructure is a priority worth spending \$5 billion to address. Back in August, at the peak of Texas heat, 84% of Texas voters were in favor of Texas creating a fund to help update the aging water infrastructure.

"This Texas Voter Poll shows how Texas legislators can make this session about the future of our state. With almost nine out of 10 voters expressing support for spending \$5 billion to fix our aging water infrastructure, Texans recognize the need to fix this growing problem," said Margaret Spellings, president and CEO of Texas 2036. "Legislators can provide property tax relief and ensure future access to clean water. They can strengthen the public education and child welfare systems, invest in community colleges so more Texans attain high-paying jobs, and invest in our state's infrastructure, including broadband, parks, and a modern, resilient state government."

The Texas Voter Poll found that:

- **Fixing Water Infrastructure:** 89% of Texas voters support using \$5 billion, or about 15% of the surplus funds, to help Texas communities fix aging water infrastructure that is leading to broken pipes, significant losses of water and even

water boiling notices in some communities. Notably, the intensity of this support was also strong: 63% of Texas voters strongly support using \$5 billion for water infrastructure.

- **Flood Infrastructure:** 84% of Texas voters support using \$2 billion, or about 6% of the surplus, to improve flood prevention infrastructure.
- **State Government Cyber & Technology:** 83% of Texas voters support using \$2 billion, or about 6% of the surplus, to improve the state's technology and cybersecurity. In another question, 80% of Texas voters specifically agreed to the Texas Legislature providing \$80 million to update its information technology at the Department of Family and Protective Services to serve children and families.
- **Community College Education:** 79% of Texas voters support using \$650 million, or about 2% of the surplus, to invest in community college students' outcomes linked to good jobs.
- **State Parks:** 73% of Texas voters support using \$1 billion, or about 3% of the surplus funds to build new state parks and improve existing parks.

Further, when asked about how important it was for Texas to get the maximum amount of federal funds to support broadband expansion across our state, 88% of Texas voters told us it was important.

"This poll offers the public a roadmap for how we can leverage this once-in-a-lifetime state budget surplus to ensure our people thrive in the future," said A.J. Rodriguez, executive vice president of Texas 2036. "For instance, today, more than three million Texas households live without broadband, and five million more have poor, spotty connectivity. Given the historic moment of available federal funds that Texas could match - either by private or governmental entities - Texas voters are very clear that it is vital that we do what we can to maximize federal funding so we can connect as many Texans as possible."

As a test for how future-focused Texas voters are, Texas voters were asked about how important it was for Texas to continue its leadership in space exploration, as Texas has a long history of leading national efforts for space exploration, including NASA facilities as well as private sector operations such as SpaceX. Currently, a budget proposal at the Capitol allocates \$350 million for a new Texas Space Commission. Almost three out of every four Texas voters, or 73% said it was important for Texas legislators to do.

When added up, the water, flood, cyber, state parks, and community college proposals total \$10.65 billion, which is less than a third of the state's general revenue surplus of \$32.7 billion. The average Texas voter also allocated \$7.65 billion each to both property tax relief and increased support for public education.

While much has been written about the unprecedented size of the current state revenue surplus, we can't lose sight of the fact that budget writers have access to additional sources of funding, which themselves are sizable. There's the \$32.7 billion in remaining carryforward general revenue balances remaining minus a to-be-determined amount from the supplemental appropriations bill.

Also, there is an additional \$5.4 billion in federal stimulus funds that can be spent like general revenue, as well as an additional projected \$27.1 billion amount in the Rainy Day Fund at the end of FY2025. The Comptroller's Biennial Revenue Estimate additionally projects FY 2024-25 general revenue net collections of \$155.5 billion to help fund the next budget.

Even with the adoption of recommendations from the base House and Senate budgets, including the planned items for the supplemental budget listed in Article IX, there would be a projected \$43.6 billion left remaining in general revenue available to certify the budget for fiscal years 2024-25, plus Rainy Day fund and federal fund balances. Texas 2036 does not support spending all of this money, with funding stability necessary to account for future economic volatility.

John Hryhorchuk, senior vice president of policy and advocacy of Texas 2036, said, "This budget situation is truly unprecedented, and lawmakers have the envious position of not having to pick between historic property tax relief and generationally impactful investments – they truly can do it all. If the legislature needs to pass constitutional amendments to fund these items, this polling shows that the people of Texas will be ready in November to show their support."

"This legislative session, Texas 2036 has rolled out a blueprint to address the problem of aging, deteriorating water systems," said Jeremy Mazur, senior policy advisor at Texas 2036. "Each year Texans endure thousands of boil water notices, service interruptions from leaking pipes, and pollution from overwhelmed sewer systems. This blueprint prescribes a financial strategy and other policy interventions needed to fix this growing problem."

Support for large, generational investments that will improve the quality of life in Texas has been consistent in recent years. In 2021, Texas 2036 polled voters on options for allocating \$16 billion in federal stimulus funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. In that poll, voters again highlighted strong support for funding investments in water, cybersecurity/IT, flood prevention and state parks. Specifically, the 2021 poll found:

- **Water:** 88% of Texas voters supported using \$3 billion or about 19% of the federal funds for state water projects that improve the cleanliness of drinking water and access to water during drought conditions.
- **Cybersecurity/IT:** 79% of Texas voters supported using 1 billion or about 6% of the federal funds to improve the state's cybersecurity and technology systems.
- **Flood Prevention:** 79% of Texas voters supported using \$1 billion or about 6% of the federal funds to improve flood prevention capabilities.

- **State Parks:** 68% of Texas voters supported using \$1 billion or about 6% of the federal funds to build new state parks and improve existing parks.

Lawmakers will have about \$5 billion of the federal ARPA funds to appropriate this session, and these funds must be obligated by December 2024.

“Our data shows a strong trend over time for Texas voter support across all of these issues since our poll regarding how to spend federal funds in August 2021,” said Holly Heard, vice president of data and analytics at Texas 2036. “If adopted, these state-led initiatives would help shape Texas’ future by ensuring our growing population and economy have access to clean water, a modern state government IT system including strong child welfare improvements and cybersecurity system, and community college courses that lead to high-paying jobs.”

Baselice and Associates conducted the survey, polling 1,000 registered Texas voters on February 1-6, 2023. It has a margin of error of $\pm 3.1\%$. The interviews were conducted via phone (55%), SMS (13%), and online (32%). To view the poll results, visit www.texas2036.org/poll.

To learn more about Texas 2036 work, visit our updated website, which provides up-to-date analysis and insights in our [blog section](#), showcases our [data](#) and [legislative agenda](#), lays out our long-term [Strategic Framework for Texas](#), and provides links to recent [media](#), [resources](#), and [Action Center items](#).

About Texas 2036

Texas 2036 is a nonprofit organization building long-term, data-driven strategies to secure Texas’ prosperity through our state’s bicentennial and beyond. We offer nonpartisan ideas and modern solutions that are grounded in research and data on issues that matter most to all Texans.

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