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And they're off! The Texas Legislature is officially underway, and the Texas Recreation and Park Society is working hard to keep our seat at the table and to keep membership informed of what is going on at the Capitol. As an organization made up mostly of municipal and county agencies, the impacts of the Legislature cannot be overstated. Each session, several key bills impact our industry whether positive or negative, and it is vital that our voice is heard in these matters.

TRAPS Walk the Halls

About 80 TRAPS members and Parks & Recreation advocates convened in Austin on January 26 to take part in "Walk the Halls" at the Capitol. Groups were formed by home district and packets of information pertaining to TRAPS and our Public Policy Platform were taken to each of the 181 offices of the Texas Legislature (31 Senate & 150 House).

The Legislative Committee would like to extend a HUGE thank you to all that traveled to Austin for this event, taking a day out of their busy schedules to advocate for our industry. The conversations that were had in the office of each legislator will surely impact the way that elected officials and their staff think about impacts when it comes to parks and recreation services. But this is not the end of the road, we must be diligent in having our voice heard throughout the 140-day session.

Texas Land & Water Conservation Fund Bill

On January 25, the TRAPS Board of Directors voted in favor of joining a coalition of organizations advocating for the creation of a Texas Land & Water Conservation Fund. Texas is one of only 14 states without a fund dedicated to land and water conservation and this bill, which will be filed in the coming weeks, would create a constitutional amendment that allocates 4% of the net oil production tax annually (up to \$200 million) to this fund. The fund would provide a significant, long-term state funding source for enhanced conservation efforts across Texas, to include allocating up to 25% of these funds for public land access projects (i.e., Local Parks Grant).

More information on this initiative will be available soon so that TRAPS members can advocate for this game-changing piece of legislation.

Bill Watch

See the Bill Watch on the Legislation & Advocacy page of the TRAPS website. If there is a bill that your agency is interested in, please contact Jeff Achee at jachee@harkerheights.gov.

For our legislative efforts to succeed, we will need the entire parks and recreation community. That includes your staff, parks board members, council members, citizens, friends, family, and anyone else that loves their parks. For more information on the legislative process and how to get involved, visit the TRAPS Legislation and Advocacy page.

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