

Texas History: Preserving Your Legislative Legacy

Overview

The Legislature has charged the Legislative Reference Library (LRL) with the preservation of legislative records, including records created or received by the office of a member of the legislature or the lieutenant governor during the official's term of office.

The House and Senate, however, maintain ownership and legal custody of the records whether deposited with the LRL or in an approved depository outside of the LRL.

As needed, the LRL will work with the House and Senate to retrieve documents, and with guidance from the House and Senate, the LRL will handle public information requests and protect privileged or confidential information.

For additional information, please see Government Code, Chapters 306, 324, and 441 (as added or amended by HB 1962, 86R, effective 9/1/19, and HB 4181, 86R, effective 6/4/19).

Legislative Records

A legislative record as defined by Government Code, Section 441.180(6-a), is any record created or received by the office of a member of the legislature or the lieutenant governor during the official's term of office.

Preservation of legislative records lays a foundation for your legislative legacy, provides valuable insights into the development of Texas laws, and is integral to ensuring a rich spectrum of historical documentation for the State of Texas.

As a first step in determining if a legislative record needs to be preserved by the LRL, please review the records retention schedules and policies of the House and Senate.

The following information provides general guidelines on preserving legislative records, but for specific queries, please contact the House or Senate records management officer.

By category

Legislative records that should be preserved include paper or electronic records collected, created, or maintained by legislators' offices in the course of conducting public business during their term of office and can in general be broken into the following categories:

Bill Files (Legislative Working Files)

Legislative bills and supporting materials authored or sponsored by the legislator or of particular importance to the legislator. Materials may include bill drafts, fiscal notes, bill summaries and histories, documentation of committee consideration, routing and tracking forms, correspondence, memoranda, press releases, related subject files, and other relevant documentation.

Casework Files

Records, such as letters, electronic messages, memoranda, etc., passing between the legislators and their constituents.

Committee and Membership Files

Documentation of hearings, meetings, and research of standing committees, interim and joint committees, committees of the whole, and other commissions, boards, or entities on which the legislator serves. Materials may include minutes, agenda, testimony, bill files, research/subject files, reports and studies, correspondence, memoranda, speeches, and press releases.

Correspondence and Emails, Administrative

Substantive letters, emails, and attachments sent or received by the legislator and staff.

District Files

Records concerning or created or maintained in district offices regarding matters of interest to the legislator or of local district importance.

General Office Files

Records may include, when not preserved as separate records elsewhere, audio/visual media, biographical files, office manuals, office policies and procedures, photographs, press releases, reference materials, scheduling documentation, and speeches. Convenience copies of such items as personnel and travel expenditure records are not archival.

Subject Files (Research, Working, or Issue Files)

Records containing background information on subjects of interest to the legislator and may form the basis for proposed legislation or committee work.

At a Glance

Legislative records that should be preserved include:

- Audio/visual media
- Bill files -- legislative bills authored or sponsored by the member or of particular significance to the legislator, and relevant supporting materials
- Biographical files
- Committee membership files
- Correspondence, administrative – substantive letters, memoranda, press releases, electronic messages, and any attachments received or created by the legislator and staff
- District office(s) files, if maintained separately
- Electronic media records
- Legal documents
- News clippings about the legislator or events in which they participated
- Newsletters
- Notes, substantive
- Office policies and procedures — substantive internal memos, manuals, budgets, vouchers, organization charts, job descriptions, etc.
- Photographs of legislators at events, etc.
- Press releases
- Publications produced by your office, excluding routine publications listed below

- Reference materials
- Reports
- Research/subject files
- Scheduling documentation, calendars, appointment books
- Speeches, including substantive drafts and final versions
- Subject/research files

Records that do not need to be preserved include:

- Bill files not authored or sponsored by, or of particular significance to, the legislator
- Billing records
- Campaign files
- Convenience copies, such as payroll or travel expenditure records for which original documentation is submitted and retained elsewhere
- Correspondence, routine —letters regarding tour groups or visitor appointments, etc.
- Daily itineraries, unless information is not maintained as part of the overall scheduling documentation
- Duplicate records (exact)
- Honorary objects, such as plaques or awards
- Invitations
- Media/photo orders
- Office supplies
- Payroll records
- Phone records
- Property records
- Publications* — routine publications not produced by your office, such as journals, session laws, and directories
- Routine business affairs, such as copy requests or general support service functions
- Stationary, blank
- Transitory information, such as routing slips and other documents providing routine, nonsubstantive information used for communication, but not for documentation
- Travel records

**Routine publications may be donated separately to the LRL for possible inclusion in the library's general collection. Contact the LRL at 512-463-1252 for additional information.*

Remember to review the records retention schedule and policies of the House and Senate, and for specific queries or clarification, please contact your records management officer:

Texas House of Representatives
 Rob Morgan
rob.morgan@house.texas.gov
 512-463-1599

Texas Senate
 Nanci Longoria
nanci.longoria@state.texas.gov
 512-463-0100

Staff members of the LRL also are available to assist you:

Legislative Reference Library

lrl.service@lrl.texas.gov

512-463-1252

Director

Mary Camp

mary.camp@lrl.texas.gov

512-463-5911