

# Forced Annexation in Texas

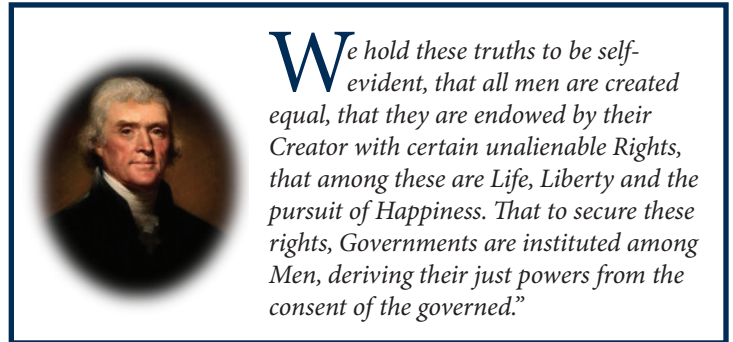
## CURRENT LAW

- Texas law allows cities to expand their boundaries and annex outlying areas, without giving the affected property owners a right to vote on the issue. At its core, annexation is undemocratic and un-Texan.
- Annexation allows cities to impose new regulations, higher taxes, and sizable debt obligations on affected property owners without their consent.

## PROBLEMS

### *Morally*

- America was founded on the idea that citizens have a right to representation; particularly if the government is imposing taxes. When the King of Great Britain denied the colonies representation in the Legislature, Thomas Jefferson described the right to representation as “inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.”
- Involuntary annexation provides no mechanism by which properties being annexed may approve or disapprove via a vote or petition—meaning that the property owners are subject to taxation involuntarily.
- Citizens who prefer a smaller government and fewer central services live outside the city limits for a reason. Forcing citizens to become a part of a city denies them the ability to vote with their feet.



### *Fiscally*

- Cities incorrectly view annexation as the best way to expand their tax base and capture additional revenue. In a 2014 [Wall Street Journal](#) article, Rice University urban planning expert Stephen Klineberg said, “the suburbs... [are] where the money is,” and noted that annexation allows cities to “use that tax revenue to develop the urban core.”
- If cities are truly interested in expanding their tax base—rather than simply extending their control—they can attract new businesses and residents by creating a more competitive economic environment, reducing burdensome regulations, lowering property taxes, and repealing occupational licensing ordinances.
- Cities often underestimate how much it will cost to expand their services to annexed areas, which can mean higher-than-projected taxes for new residents or a dilution of services to current residents.
- Researchers Mary Edwards and Yu Xiao reported in the *Urban Affairs Review* that cities are typically required to take out debt and issue bonds to finance the costs of annexation.
- Already accumulated debt obligations become the responsibility of those annexed without their consent.

### *Socially*

- Annexation is rarely about improving services for residents and businesses in poor, low-income areas—or in any areas. Instead, most annexations are value plays, seeking to bring in the wealthiest properties that will expand the tax base the most.
- Expansion of the tax base is usually discriminatory, with cities maximizing the value they get from annexation by carefully choosing the properties they annex. To maximize tax value, the most highly appraised commercial and residential properties are preferred to those that yield a lower taxable value. The net result of this is that poor communities are rarely annexed, particularly if other options exist for municipal boundary growth.

## SOLUTION

- It's simple: Texans should be given a chance to vote on whether or not they want to be annexed into a city.

For more information on annexation reform, please see: [Ending Forced Annexation in Texas](#). ★

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