

# BILL ANALYSES: HOUSE BILLS 309, 1189, 1294, AND SENATE BILL 239

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## ISSUE

Taxpayer-funded lobbying is a common practice in which “[local] governmental entities spend public money to hire registered lobbyists to advocate for and against specific legislative proposals. These pro-government advocacy efforts are routinely at odds with private citizens’ liberties and finances” ([Quintero & Welton, 2023, p. 2](#)). It is estimated that political subdivisions spent as much as \$75 million contracting with lobbyists to advocate for larger budgets, more taxing authority, and greater regulatory control ([Quintero & Welton, 2023, p. 1](#)).

Several members of the 89th Texas Legislature have made it a top priority to end the practice of taxpayer-funded lobbying this year.

## LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

During this session, several identical legislative proposals have been introduced to prohibit political subdivisions from using public monies to hire a Chapter 305 registered lobbyist or to pay a nonprofit advocacy association that employs a Chapter 305 registered lobbyist. In more colloquial terms, these measures seek to ban the practice of taxpayer-funded lobbying.

These identical legislative proposals include House Bills (HBs) 309, 1189, 1294 and Senate Bill (SB) 239. In addition, two substantially similar measures<sup>1</sup> that have also been introduced, but are not covered in this analysis, are HBs 571 and 671.

### Section 1

Amends Chapter 556, Texas Government Code, to add Section 556.0056 to prohibit political subdivisions from spending public funds on:

- Hiring an individual registered as a lobbyist under Chapter 305, Texas Government Code, for legislative advocacy purposes; or
- Paying a nonprofit state association or organization whose primary function is to represent local government interests and hire or contracts with an individual required to register as a lobbyist under Chapter 305.

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<sup>1</sup> Substantially similar measures include HBs 571 and 671.

This section also enables a taxpayer or resident to seek injunctive relief from a political subdivision that engages in prohibited activity. Should the taxpayer or resident prevail, the bill grants the recovery of reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

## **Section 2**

Amends [Section 81.026](#), Local Government Code, to prohibit a county judge or county commissioner from using public funds to serve on the governing body, join a committee, or become a member of an association of counties, including a nonprofit statewide association.

## **Section 3**

Amends [Section 89.002](#), Local Government Code, by adding the clause: "Except as provided by Section 556.0056, Government Code." Further, the proposed language strikes subsection 4, which allowed county officials to direct funding to an association or employee(s) of the association so long as those persons did not directly or indirectly influence or attempt to influence the outcome of any legislation pending before the legislature. Other minor nonsubstantive offered as well.

## **Section 4**

Stipulates that the bill's provisions only apply to public expenditures or payments made on or after its effective date, including funding committed under contract. This section also voids any contract term providing for an expenditure or payment prohibited by the newly created Section 556.0056, if it becomes effective.

## **Section 5**

Limits the application of certain changes to only expenditures made by a county from the county's general fund at the time of or after the effective date.

## **Section 6**

Establishes the effective date as September 1, 2025.

## REFERENCES

HB 309. Introduced. 89th Texas Legislature. Regular. (2025). <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=HB309>

HB 1189. Introduced. 89th Texas Legislature. Regular. (2025). <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=HB1189>

HB 1294. Introduced. 89th Texas Legislature. Regular. (2025). <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=HB1294>

Quintero, J., & Welton, C. (2023). *Breach of faith: How local governments are using your tax dollars against you*. Texas Public Policy Foundation. <https://www.texaspolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023-01-GftP-LocalGovernmentBreachofFaith-QuinteroWelton.pdf>

SB 239. Introduced. 89th Texas Legislature. Regular. (2025). <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=SB239>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Prior to joining TPPF John served in the University system as a Graduate Assistant until he was given the opportunity to teach Principles of American Government. John holds a Master of Arts in Political Science from Texas State University and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Sam Houston State University.

As a proud Eagle Scout John is an avid camper and enjoys spending time in the outdoors as well as at home with his wife.

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