

A photograph of the Texas State Capitol building in Austin, Texas, featuring its iconic dome and classical architecture. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text is centered over the lower half of the image.

# Texas Legislative Issues 2025

## Budget Priorities & Education Savings Accounts



Hobby School of Public Affairs  
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON



**Texas Legislative Issues 2025**  
**Budget Priorities & Education Savings Accounts**  
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The Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston conducted an online survey of Texans age 18 and older to assess their preferences and opinions about legislation being considered by the Texas Legislature during the 2025 regular session along with other salient political issues. The survey was fielded between January 13 - 21, 2025, in English and Spanish, via a YouGov panel of Texas adults. Representative of the Texas adult population, the analysis population of 1,200, with a margin of error of +/- 2.83%, was matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race/ethnicity and education.

The Texas Legislative Issues 2025 study includes six reports. This first report examines Texans' top priorities for using the state's \$24 billion budget surplus and their positions on Education Savings Account (ESA) and sales tax exemption legislation. The remaining five reports will examine Texans' opinions on proposed legislation in the policy areas of abortion, elections, gambling, gun control and marijuana, as well as assess their attitudes on immigration and border security, the 2024 presidential election, and the 2026 Republican U.S. Senate primary.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Texans were asked to identify their top three priorities for using the state's current \$24 billion dollar budget surplus, with at least one-fifth listing the proposals below among their top three.

- 50% want to prioritize property tax relief for residential homeowners.
- 40% want to prioritize pay raises for public school teachers.
- 34% want to prioritize expanding access to Medicaid.
- 31% want to prioritize investment in public school buildings and infrastructure.
- 30% want to prioritize more investment in the Texas Energy Fund.
- 27% want to prioritize investment in water infrastructure projects.
- 25% want to prioritize the creation of a Rural Hospital Fund.
- 21% want to prioritize saving at least \$7 billion of the surplus.

59% of Republicans, but only 42% of Democrats, believe property tax relief for residential homeowners should be a top three priority for the use of the state budget surplus.

45% of Democrats, but only 23% of Republicans, believe expanding access to Medicaid should be a top three priority for the use of the state budget surplus.

67% of Texans support Education Savings Account (ESA) legislation that would benefit all parents, with 31% strongly supporting this legislative proposal.

72% of Texans support Education Savings Account (ESA) legislation that would only benefit low-income parents, with 41% strongly supporting this legislative proposal.

Support for ESA legislation benefiting all parents is highest among Latino Republicans (70%) and white Republicans (70%) and lowest among Latino Democrats (61%) and white Democrats (52%), with Black Democrats (66%) in between.

Support for ESA legislation benefiting only low-income parents is highest among Black Democrats (82%) and Latino Republicans (76%) and lowest among white Republicans (68%) and white Democrats (67%), with Latino Democrats (70%) in between.

Texans living in rural and semi-rural counties are neither significantly more nor less likely than Texans living elsewhere in the state to support or oppose ESA legislation.

77% of Texans support legislation which would for three years reimburse ISDs with fewer than 5,000 students for any funds they lose due to students leaving as a result of the passage of ESA legislation, with 29% strongly supporting this proposal.

40% of Texans want the Texas state government to spend more during the next two years on border security than the state has spent on average during the previous four years, while 25% want it to spend less and 35% want it to spend the same amount.

56% of Republicans, but only 25% of Democrats, want Texas to spend more on border security.

39% of Democrats, but only 14% of Republicans, want Texas to spend less on border security.

89% of Texans support legislation which would exempt school textbooks costing less than \$100 from the state sales tax, with 58% strongly supporting this bill.

85% of Texans support legislation which would temporarily exempt HVAC systems for single-family homes from the state sales tax, with 43% strongly supporting this bill.

77% of Texans support legislation which would exempt pet food from the state sales tax, with 40% strongly supporting this bill.

75% of Texans support legislation which would exempt firearm safety equipment from the state sales tax, with 41% strongly supporting this bill.

## **SURVEY POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS**

White Texans account for 45% of this survey population, Latino Texans for 36%, Black Texans for 12%, and others for 7%. Women represent 51% of this population and men 49%. Regarding generations, 26% of this population belongs to the combined Silent Generation (born between 1928-1945) and Baby Boomer (1946-1964) cohort, 26% to Generation X (Gen-X) (1965-1980), 29% to the Millennial (1981-1996) generation, and 19% to Generation Z (Gen-Z) (1997-2012). The highest level of educational attainment of 32% of the population is a four-year college degree or a post-graduate degree, of 28% of the population is a two-year college degree or some college, and of 40% of the population is a high school degree or less. The annual household income of 41% of the population is less than \$50,000, that of 33% is between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and that of 26% of the population is greater than \$100,000 (these numbers do not include the 12% of the population who declined to report their family income). Republicans account for 44% of this population, Democrats for 36% and Independents for 17%, with 3% unsure of their partisan identification.

## **POPULARITY OF PROPOSALS FOR USING THE STATE'S \$24 BILLION DOLLAR BUDGET SURPLUS**

The survey respondents were asked:

*“Texas is expected to have a budget surplus of approximately \$24 billion dollars. There have been multiple proposals for what to do with this surplus. Please rank the proposals you think the Texas Legislature should make the top priority, the second most important priority, and the third most important priority for the use of this surplus.”*

The 12 proposals randomly presented to the respondents included the following:

- Property tax relief for residential homeowners.
- Property tax relief for businesses.
- Other tax relief for businesses.
- Additional funding for the “Texas Energy Fund” to support the construction and operation of more natural gas-powered electricity generating facilities.
- Create a “Nuclear Energy Fund” to support the construction of nuclear power plants.
- Investment in water infrastructure projects.
- Public school teacher pay raises.
- Investment in public school buildings and infrastructure.
- Create a “Rural Hospital Fund” to support the operation of hospitals in rural areas.
- Increase the number of Texas prisons with air conditioning.
- Expand access to Medicaid for all adults with incomes up to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$21,000 for an individual in 2024).
- Save at least \$7 billion rather than spend it.

Figure 1 provides the proportion of Texans who listed the proposal as their top priority for the use of the state’s \$24 billion dollar budget surplus. For one-fourth (25%) of these Texans, property tax relief for residential homeowners is the top priority, followed by public school teacher pay raises (16%), expanding access to Medicaid (11%) and providing additional funding for the Texas Energy Fund (10%), all of which enjoy double digit support. The remaining proposals were the top priority for less than 10% of Texans, ranging from highs of 9% for investment in public school buildings and infrastructure and of 7% for investment in water infrastructure, to lows of 1% for increasing the number of Texas prisons with air conditioning and providing property tax relief or other tax relief for businesses (2% each). Only 6% responded that the top priority for the use of this budget surplus should be saving at least \$7 billion of it.

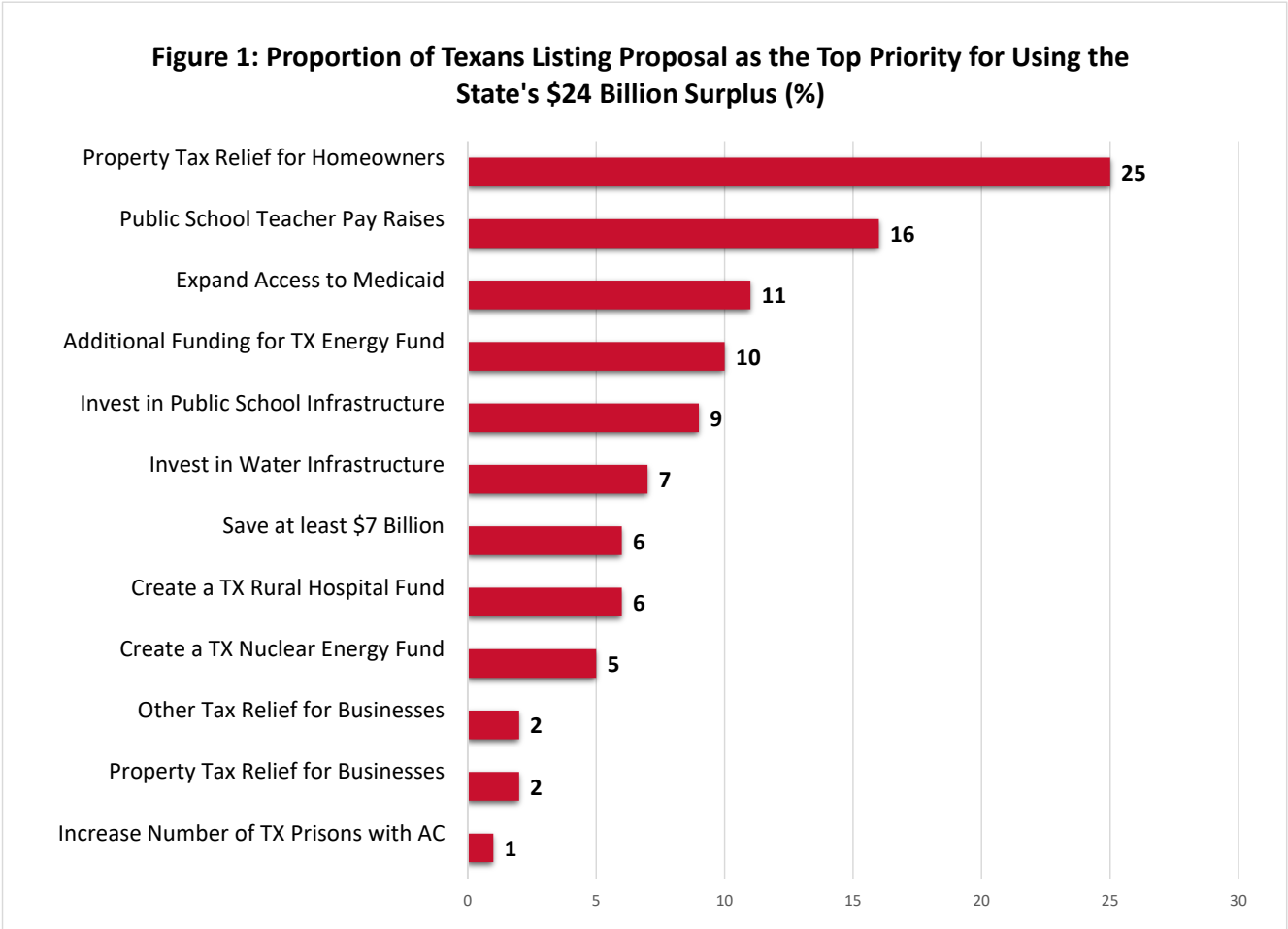


Figure 2 provides the proportion of Texans who listed the proposal as one of their top three priorities for the use of the state’s \$24 billion dollar budget surplus. One-half (50%) of these Texans chose property tax relief for residential homeowners as a top three priority, followed by 40% who selected public school teacher pay raises and approximately one-third who prioritized expanding access to Medicaid (34%), investing in public school buildings and infrastructure (31%) and providing additional funding to the Texas Energy Fund to support the construction and operation of more natural gas-powered electricity generating facilities (30%). Another set of proposals were located among the top three priorities by between approximately one-fourth and one-fifth of Texans, ranging from investing in water infrastructure projects (27%) and creating a Texas Rural Hospital Fund (25%) to the 21% who believe that the state should save, rather than spend, at least \$7 billion dollars of this surplus. Fewer than one in six Texans placed the remaining four proposals among their top three priorities, with 15% prioritizing the creation of a Texas Nuclear Energy Fund, 10% property tax relief for businesses, 9% increasing the number of Texas prisons with air conditioning, and 7% prioritizing other tax relief for businesses.

**Figure 2: Proportion of Texans Listing Proposal as a Top 3 Priority for Using the State's \$24 Billion Surplus (%)**

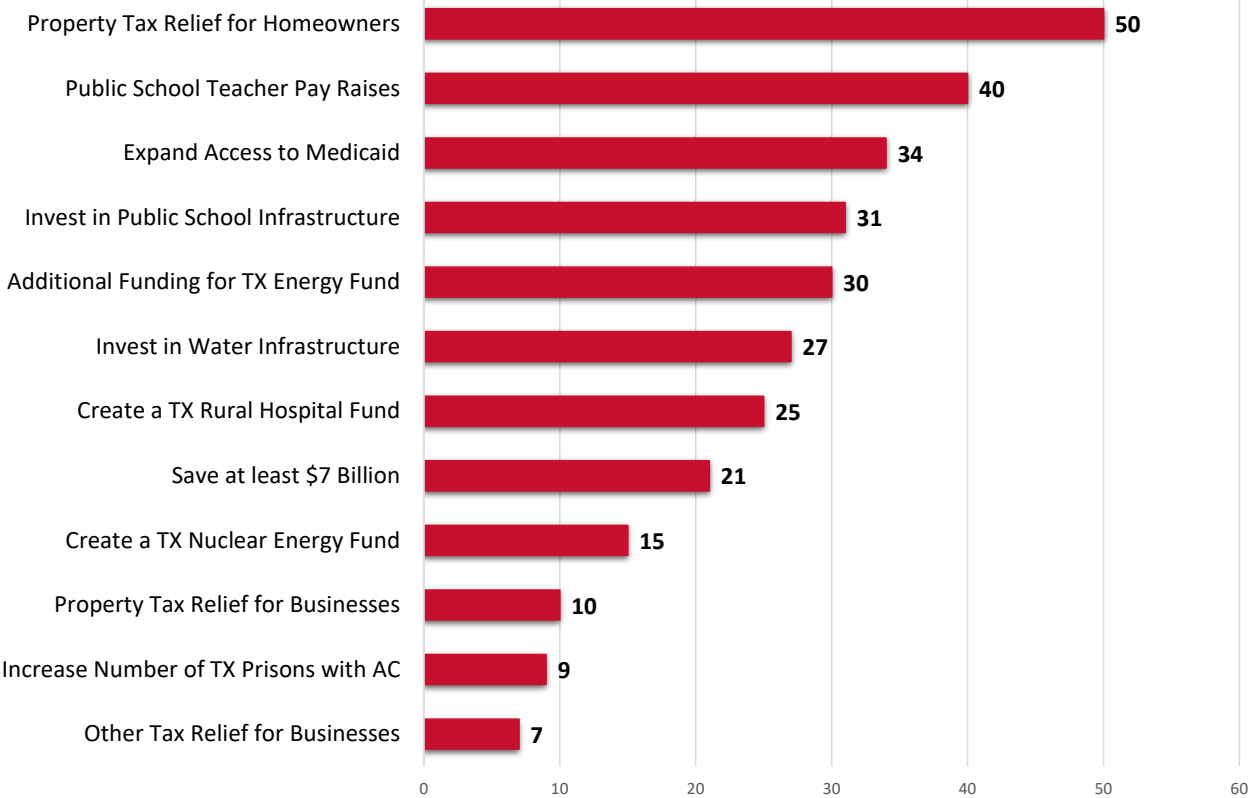


Table 1 provides the proportion of Texans who listed the six most popular budget use proposals among their top priorities, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment, family income, partisanship, and region of residence.

**Table 1. Proportion of Texans Listing the Six Most Popular Budget Surplus Use Proposals Among Their Top Three Across Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)**

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Property Tax Relief for Homeowners	Public School Teacher Pay Raises	Expand Access to Medicaid	Invest in Public School Infrastructure	Additional Funding for TX Energy Fund	Invest in Water Infrastructure
Overall		50	40	34	31	30	27
Gender	Women	48	43	36	31	29	24
	Men	53	38	32	31	30	29
Ethnicity/Race	White	54	40	29	30	32	27
	Latino	50	41	38	30	29	26
	Black	36	43	35	34	31	21
Generation	Silent/Boomer	66	44	28	23	36	30
	Generation X	62	44	33	21	29	25
	Millennial	42	36	36	38	28	29
	Generation Z	25	37	43	45	28	21
Education	High School	51	41	39	29	29	24
	Some College/2 Year Degree	53	42	29	34	27	25
	4 Year Degree/PostGrad	48	39	34	30	33	31
Income	Lower Income	46	39	47	32	27	26
	Middle Income	62	37	29	31	28	28
	Higher Income	44	44	24	30	34	28
Partisanship	Democratic	42	46	45	36	23	30
	Independent	46	34	40	23	37	26
	Republican	59	38	23	29	32	24
Region	Major Urban Counties	44	38	35	32	31	28
	Suburban Counties	66	46	31	30	25	25
	Regional Hub Counties	51	49	35	33	29	22
	Rural & Semi-Rural Counties	57	35	36	26	30	27

While there are multiple salient socio-demographic sub-group differences in the prioritization of property tax relief for homeowners and of expanding access to Medicaid, similar sub-group differences are either largely or entirely absent in regard to the prioritization of the proposals to provide pay raises to public school teachers, invest in public school infrastructure, provide additional funding for the Texas Energy Fund, and invest in water infrastructure projects.

Property tax relief for homeowners is significantly more likely to be a top three priority for the use of the budget surplus among white (54%) and Latino (50%) Texans than among Black Texans (36%). It is also significantly more likely to be a top priority among older Texans belonging to the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort (66%) and Generation X (62%) than among the younger Millennial (42%) and Gen-Z (25%) Texans. In addition, Republicans (59%) are significantly more likely than Democrats (42%) to prioritize property tax relief for homeowners, just as residents of the suburban counties (66%) surrounding the major urban counties are significantly more likely to prioritize property tax relief for homeowners than are residents of the neighboring major urban counties (44%).

Expanding access to Medicaid is significantly more likely to be a top three priority for the use of the budget surplus among lower income Texans (47%) than among either middle income (29%) or higher income (24%) Texans. Democrats (45%) are also significantly more likely than Republicans (23%) to list expanding access to Medicaid as one of their top three priorities.

By and large there are not any noteworthy sub-group differences in the prioritization of the other four proposals for the use of the \$24 billion dollar budget surplus, with one exception. Gen-Z Texans (45%) are significantly more likely than the oldest Texans belonging to the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort (23%) and Generation X (21%) to prioritize using the budget surplus to support investment in public school buildings and infrastructure.

Table 2 provides the proportion of Texans who listed the six least popular budget use proposals among their top priorities, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment, family income, partisanship, and region of residence.

**Table 2. Proportion of Texans Listing the Six Least Popular Budget Surplus Use Proposals Among Their Top Three Across Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)**

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Create a Rural Hospital Fund	Save At Least \$7 Billion	Create a TX Nuclear Energy Fund	Property Tax for Businesses	Increase Number of TX Prisons with AC	Other Tax Relief for Businesses
Overall		25	21	15	10	9	7
Gender	Women	30	23	11	9	10	6
	Men	20	19	19	11	8	9
Ethnicity/Race	White	24	27	16	7	9	6
	Latino	26	26	16	11	9	8
	Black	35	15	8	18	11	11
Generation	Silent/Boomer	17	27	15	3	9	3
	Generation X	19	25	18	11	9	6
	Millennial	27	17	12	15	10	11
	Generation Z	41	17	15	12	8	8
Education	High School	26	18	15	11	11	7
	Some College/2 Year Degree	29	27	13	7	9	5
	4 Year Degree/PostGrad	21	21	15	12	7	9
Income	Lower Income	26	20	12	8	10	6
	Middle Income	23	21	17	8	9	7
	Higher Income	25	21	19	15	9	9
Partisanship	Democratic	27	13	11	7	11	7
	Independent	28	20	15	15	9	8
	Republican	23	29	17	11	8	7
Region	Major Urban Counties	26	21	15	12	9	9
	Suburban Counties	17	20	19	7	10	2
	Regional Hub Counties	20	24	10	8	11	8
	Rural & Semi-Rural Counties	37	19	14	8	7	4

While there are several salient socio-demographic sub-group differences in the prioritization of the creation of a Rural Hospital Fund and the saving of at least \$7 billion dollars of the budget surplus, similar sub-group differences are absent in regard to the prioritization of the creation of a Texas Nuclear Energy Fund, property tax relief for businesses, increasing the number of Texas prisons with air conditioning and providing other tax relief for businesses.

Women (30%) are significantly more likely than men (20%) to prioritize the creation of a Rural Hospital Fund, just as members of Generation Z (41%) are significantly more likely than members of the two oldest generational cohorts, the Silent Generation/Baby Boomers (17%) and Generation X (19%), to support the creation of this fund to support the operation of rural hospitals. Finally, residents of rural and semi-rural counties (37%) are significantly more likely than residents elsewhere in the state to have the creation of a Rural Hospital Fund among their top three priorities for the use of the state’s current \$24 billion dollar surplus.



## FOUR LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS TO EXEMPT ITEMS FROM THE STATE SALES TAX

The survey respondents were asked:

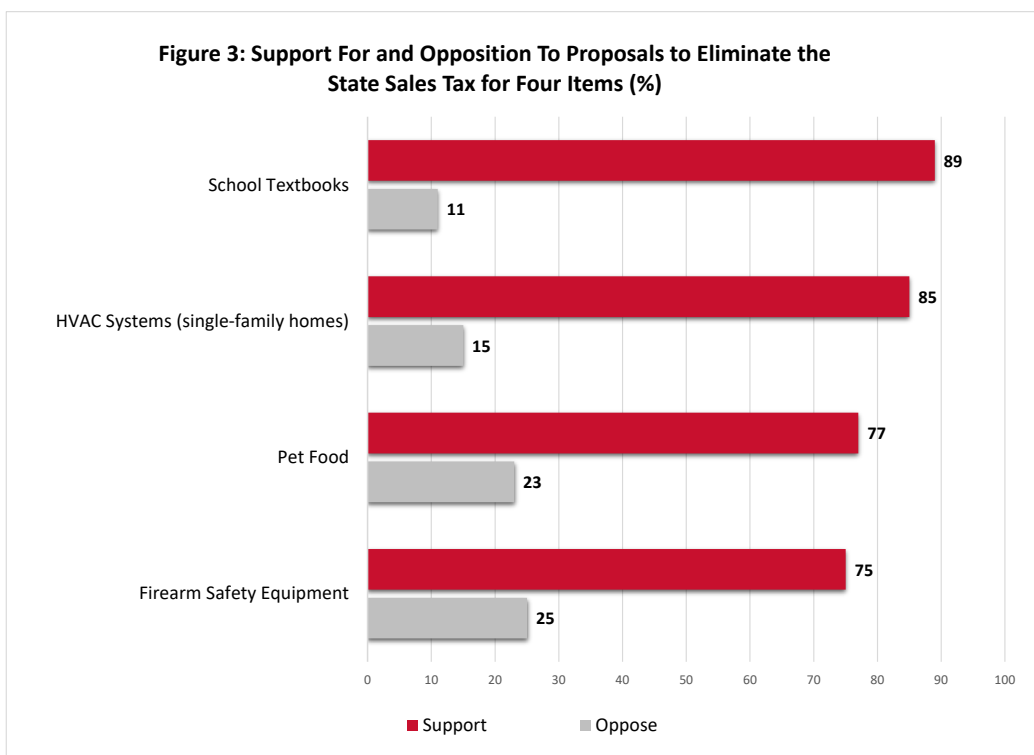
*Legislation has been submitted in the Texas Legislature that if passed would result in the elimination of the state sales tax for certain items. Do you support or oppose legislation that would exempt purchases of these items from the state sales tax:*

- A heating and/or air conditioning system for a primary single-family residency (for 18 months only).
- Firearm safety equipment (e.g., trigger lock, gun safe).
- Pet food intended for consumption by domesticated animals such as cats and dogs.
- School textbooks with a sales price of less than \$100 for use by a student in a public or private elementary or secondary school or institution of higher education.

Table 3 provides the proportion of Texans who strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose and strongly oppose these four bills, while Figure 3 provides the combined proportion of Texans who support (strongly and somewhat) and oppose (strongly and somewhat) the legislation.

**Table 3. Support For and Opposition To Four Proposals to Eliminate the Sales Tax (%)**

Item for Which Sales Tax Would be Eliminated	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
School Textbooks	58	31	7	4
HVAC Systems (single-family homes)	43	42	11	4
Firearm Safety Equipment	41	34	12	13
Pet Food	40	37	15	8



Almost nine out ten (89%) Texans support legislation which would exempt school textbooks (costing less than \$100) from paying the state sales tax, with 58% of Texans strongly supporting this legislation. Similarly, 85% of Texans support legislation which would temporarily exempt residential homeowners from having to pay state sales tax on the purchase of a heating and/or air conditioning (HVAC) system for their primary single-family residence, with 43% of Texans strongly supporting this legislation. Three out of four Texans support legislation which would provide a sales tax exemption for firearm safety equipment (75%) and pet food (77%), with 41% and 40%, respectively, strongly supporting this legislation.

Opposition to these four sales tax exemption bills ranges from a high of 25% for firearm safety equipment to a low of 11% for school textbooks, with strong opposition in the single digits for all but one of the legislative proposals, with 13% of Texans strongly opposing a sales tax exemption for firearm safety equipment.

Table 4 provides the proportion of Texans who support the four proposals for sales tax exemptions, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment, family income, partisanship, and region of residence.

**Table 4. Support For the Four Tax Exemption Reform Proposals Across Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)**

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Tax Exemption Item			
		School Textbooks	HVAC Systems	Pet Food	Firearm Safety
Overall		89	85	77	75
Gender	Women	90	87	81	79
	Men	88	84	72	72
Ethnicity/Race	White	88	85	76	77
	Latino	89	88	79	76
	Black	92	81	74	69
Generation	Silent/Boomer	78	82	69	79
	Generation X	89	85	77	73
	Millennial	90	86	77	76
	Generation Z	90	91	86	72
Education	High School	89	86	78	78
	Some College/2 Year Degree	90	85	76	76
	4 Year Degree/PostGrad	87	85	78	72
Income	Lower Income	86	86	78	76
	Middle Income	91	85	77	73
	Higher Income	90	85	74	76
Partisanship	Democratic	91	90	84	70
	Independent	87	80	74	74
	Republican	88	84	73	81
Region	Major Urban Counties	90	87	77	76
	Suburban Counties	87	83	73	72
	Regional Hub Counties	90	89	80	78
	Rural & Semi-Rural Counties	88	79	76	74

By and large there is a strong consensus across the socio-demographic sub-groups in support of these four bills to exempt school textbooks, HVAC systems, pet food and firearm safety equipment, with only four noteworthy exceptions where salient sub-group differences are present. First, Texans belonging to the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort are significantly less likely than younger Texans to support a tax exemption for school textbooks (78%) and pet food (69%). Second, Democrats (84%) are significantly more likely than Republicans (73%) to support a sales tax exemption for pet food, while,

conversely, Republicans (81%) are significantly more likely than Democrats (70%) to support a sales tax exemption for firearm safety equipment. While these differences are salient, it is important to note that in no instance is support for the four proposals among any of the 22 socio-demographic sub-groups less than two-thirds of the sub-group population.

### THE TEXAS BUDGET AND STATE EXPENDITURES ON BORDER SECURITY

The survey respondents were asked:

*During the past four years, the state of Texas has annually spent between \$2 and \$3 billion dollars of Texas taxpayer money on border security efforts. Regardless of whether you supported or opposed this expenditure while Joe Biden was president, now that Donald Trump will be president do you think that during the next two years Texas should: spend more on border security, spend less on border security, or spend the same amount on border security.*

(Note: the response options for spending more and spending less were rotated).

Figure 4 provides the distribution of the preferences of these Texans for state spending on border security during the next two years. Two-fifths (40%) want the state of Texas to spend more on border security in the next biennium than it did during the previous four years, 25% want the state to spend less, while 35% want spending to remain in the same \$2 to \$3 billion annual range where it has been on average over the course of the past four years.

**Figure 4: Proportion of Texans Who Want to Spend More, Less or the Same Amount Over the Next Two Years on Border Security as was Spent Annually (\$2 to \$3 Billion) by the State of Texas Over the Past Four Years (%)**

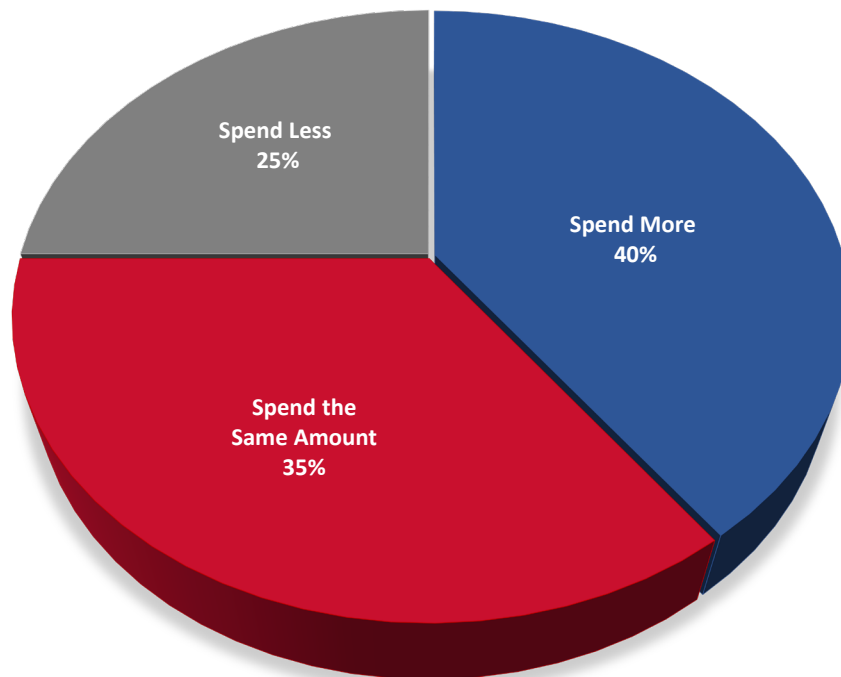


Table 5 provides the proportion of Texans who favor spending more, spending the same amount and spending less on border security in the state’s 2026-27 biennial budget, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment, family income, partisanship, and region of residence.

**Table 5. Proportion of Texans Who Want to Spend More, Less or the Same Amount on Border Security Across Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)**

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Spend More	Spend the Same	Spend Less
Overall		40	35	25
Gender	Women	41	35	24
	Men	40	34	26
Ethnicity/Race	White	44	36	20
	Latino	39	32	29
	Black	33	39	28
Generation	Silent/Boomer	46	33	21
	Generation X	40	36	24
	Millennial	38	33	28
	Generation Z	34	40	27
Education	High School	42	33	25
	Some College/2 Year Degree	37	37	26
	4 Year Degree/PostGrad	40	36	24
Income	Lower Income	40	24	36
	Middle Income	36	35	29
	Higher Income	45	33	22
Partisanship	Democratic	25	36	39
	Independent	34	44	22
	Republican	56	30	14
Region	Major Urban Counties	39	33	28
	Suburban Counties	33	43	24
	Regional Hub Counties	50	31	19
	Rural & Semi-Rural Counties	47	35	17

Overall, there are not any noteworthy gender, ethnicity/race, generation, education, income or regional differences in the preferences of Texans regarding how much money the state should allocate for border security in this year’s biennial budget legislation. In sharp contrast, there are significant partisan differences related to this budget allocation, with 56% of Republicans (but only 25% of Democrats) wanting the state to spend more on border security than it has spent over the past four years, and 39% of Democrats (but only 14% of Republicans) wanting the state to spend less on border security than during the two previous biennia.

## EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNT (ESA) LEGISLATION

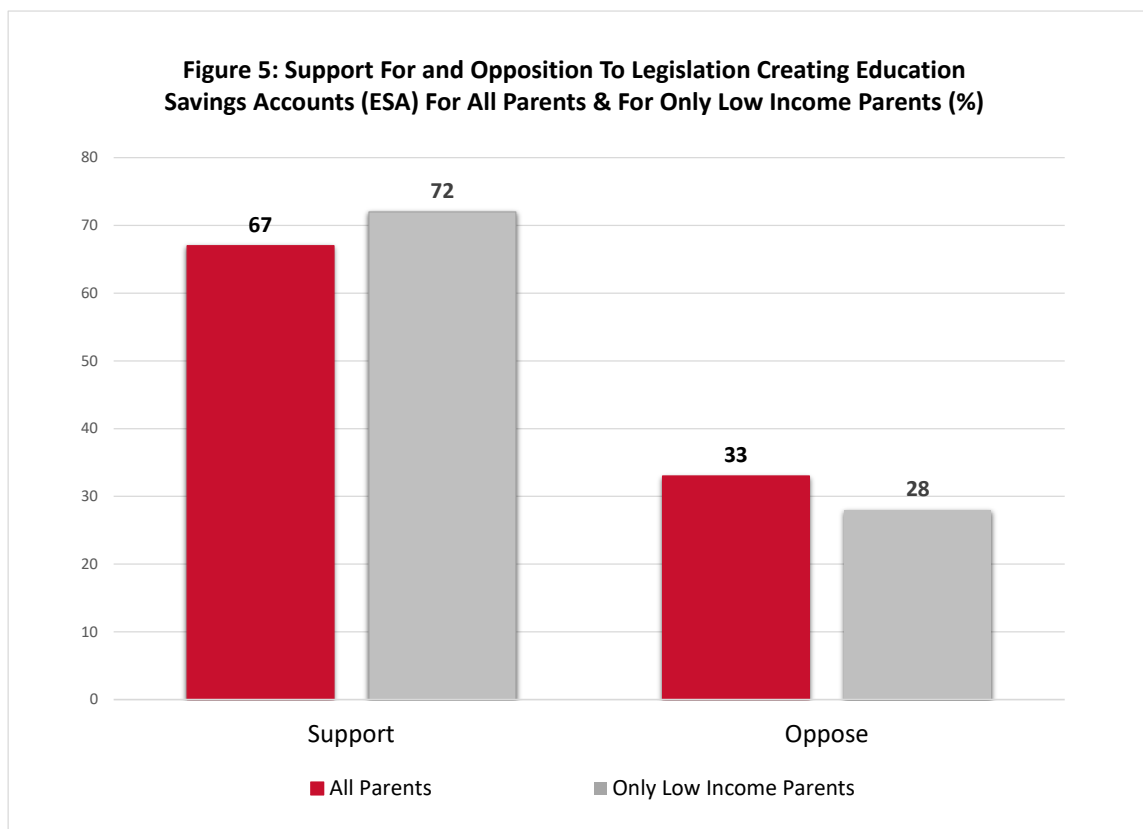
The survey respondents were asked:

*An "education savings account", or "ESA", in K-12 education establishes a state government-funded bank account for parents who opt to not send their children to public schools, with restricted, but multiple uses for educational purposes. Recent proposals would provide parents who opt out of the public school system up to \$8,000 each year which would otherwise be allocated to a school district. Acceptable uses of an ESA include paying for private school tuition, tutoring, online education programs, and therapies for students with disabilities. Do you support or oppose the adoption of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) in Texas for each of the following groups: All Parents, Only Low-Income Parents (family of four with a yearly income of less than \$50,000).*

Table 6 displays the proportion of Texans who strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose and strongly oppose ESA legislation benefiting all parents and benefiting only low-income parents, while Figure 5 summarizes the proportion supporting (strongly and somewhat) and opposing (strongly and somewhat) the proposed ESA legislation.

**Table 6. Support For and Opposition To Proposed Education Saving Account (ESA) Legislation for All Parents and Only For Low Income Parents (%)**

ESA Beneficiary Population	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
All Parents	31	36	17	16
Only Low Income Parents	41	31	13	15



Two-thirds (67%) of Texans support ESA legislation which would benefit all parents (31% strongly), while 33% oppose it (16% strongly). More than two-thirds (72%) of the respondents support ESA legislation which only benefits low-income parents (41% strongly), while 28% oppose it (15% strongly).

Table 7 provides the proportion of Texans who support ESA legislation benefiting all parents and only low-income parents, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment, family income, partisanship, region of residence, and the presence or absence of children under the age of 18 in the respondent’s home.

**Table 7. Support For and Opposition To ESA Legislation Benefiting All Parents and Low Income Parents Only Across Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)**

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	All Parents	Low Income Parents
Overall		67	72
Gender	Women	64	71
	Men	71	74
Ethnicity/Race	White	65	68
	Latino	68	73
	Black	73	85
Generation	Silent/Boomer	50	58
	Generation X	71	75
	Millennial	73	76
	Generation Z	77	86
Education	High School	66	72
	Some College/2 Year Degree	67	72
	4 Year Degree/PostGrad	69	73
Income	Lower Income	69	76
	Middle Income	66	69
	Higher Income	64	72
Partisanship	Democratic	59	70
	Independent	72	75
	Republican	71	72
Region	Major Urban Counties	67	76
	Suburban Counties	66	67
	Regional Hub Counties	65	69
	Rural & Semi-Rural Counties	71	68
Children Under 18	Present in the Home	77	77
	Not Present in the Home	63	70

There are not any noteworthy gender related differences in support for the ESA legislation benefiting all parents and low-income parents only, with 71% and 74% of men and 64% and 71% of women supporting the two ESA legislative options, respectively.

There are not any noteworthy ethnicity/race related differences in support for the ESA legislation benefiting all parents, with 65% of white Texans, 68% of Latino Texans and 73% of Black Texans favoring this legislation. In contrast, Black Texans (85%) are significantly more likely than Latino (73%) and white (68%) Texans to support ESA legislation targeted to benefit only low-income Texans, although it is important to note that more than two-thirds of both Latino and white Texans support this more limited ESA legislation. Of note, the proportion of white and Latino Texans who support ESAs for only low-income parents is respectively three and five percentage points greater than the proportion who support ESAs for all parents, less than half the size of the comparable difference for Black Texans of 12 percentage points.

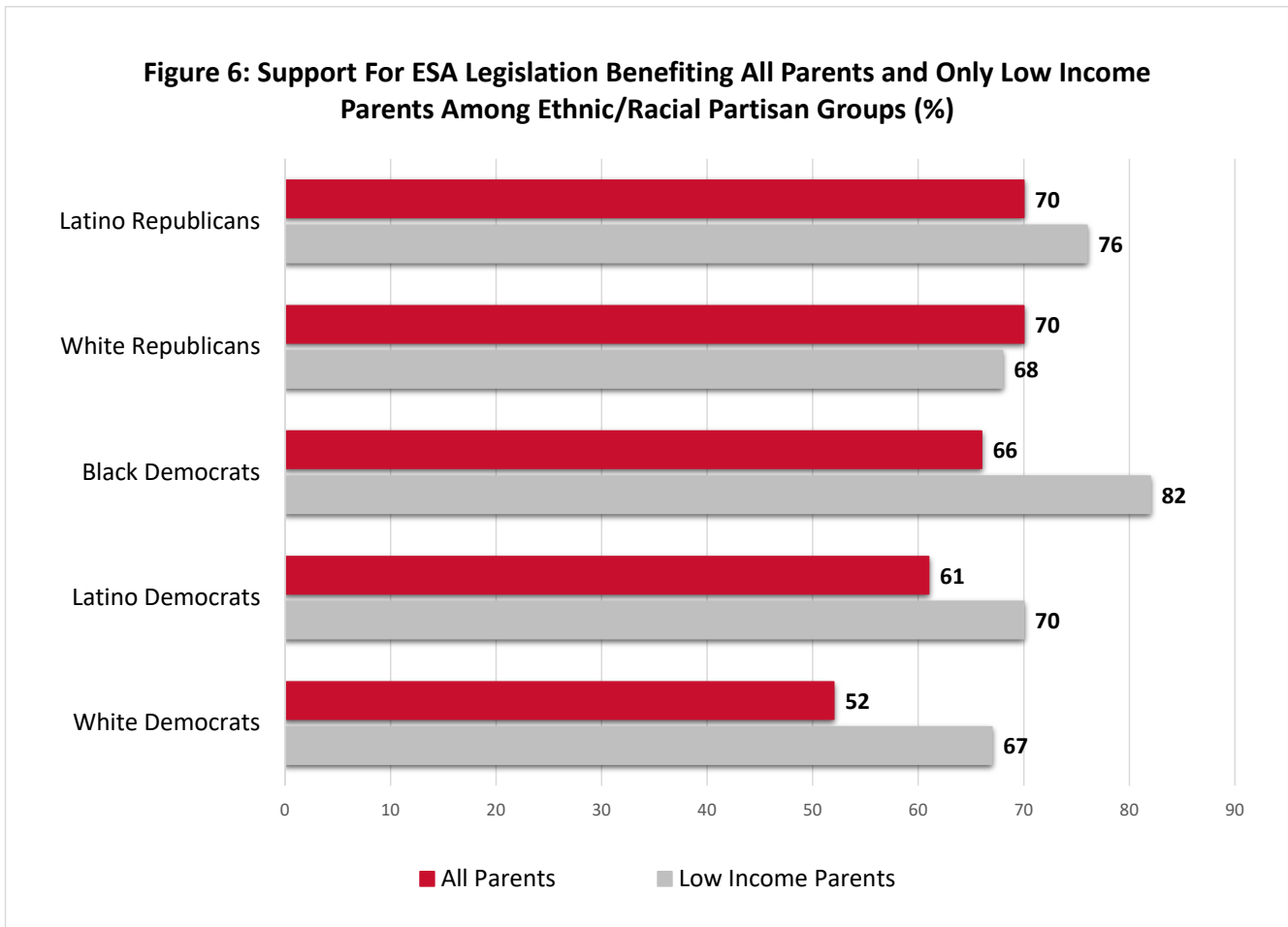
Members of the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort (50% and 58%) are significantly less likely than Gen-Xers (71% and 75%), Millennials (73% and 76%) and Gen-Zs (77% and 86%) to support ESA legislation benefiting all parents and only low-income parents, respectively, with no salient differences among the three youngest generations in regard to their support for this legislation.

There are no noteworthy differences in support for either ESA proposal based on educational attainment or on family income. Similarly, there are not any noteworthy differences in support for either ESA proposal based on region of residence, with, for instance, Texans who live in rural and semi-rural counties not significantly more or less likely to support the ESA proposals than Texans living elsewhere in the state. For example, more than two-thirds of Texans living in rural and semi-rural counties support ESA legislation benefiting all parents (71%) and low-income parents only (68%), compared to respective levels of support in the major urban counties of 67% and 76%.

The 32% of Texans who have one or more children under the age of 18 present in their home are significantly more likely than Texans without children under the age of 18 in their home to support the ESA legislation benefiting all parents (77% vs. 63%), while the difference in the level of support between these two sub-groups is not significant in regard to the proposed ESA legislation benefiting low-income parents only (77% vs. 70%).

Republicans (71%) are significantly more likely than Democrats (59%) to support ESA legislation benefiting all parents. In contrast, the proportion of Republicans supporting ESA legislation which would benefit low-income parents only (72%) is comparable to the proportion of Democrats who support this legislation (70%).

Figure 6 provides the proportion of five ethnic/racial-partisan sub-groups (white Republicans, white Democrats, Latino Democrats, Latino Republicans, Black Democrats) which supports the ESA legislation benefiting all parents and supports the ESA legislation benefiting only low-income parents (the number of Black Republicans was too small for reliable inference).



Support for the ESA legislation benefiting all parents ranges from highs of 70% for Latino and white Republicans to lows of 52% for white Democrats and 61% for Latino Democrats, with Black Democrats in between at 66%, albeit closer to white Republicans (70%) than to white Democrats (52%).

Support for the ESA legislation benefiting only low-income parents ranges from highs of 82% for Black Democrats and 76% for Latino Republicans to lows of 67% for white Democrats and 68% for white Republicans, with Latino Democrats in between at 70%. Of note, while significantly more Black and white Democrats support the more constrained ESA legislation than the more expansive ESA legislation (82% vs. 66% and 67% vs. 52%, respectively), near-identical proportions of white Republicans (68% vs. 70%) support the two proposals.



## ESA LEGISLATION AND SMALL ISD FINANCES

The survey respondents were asked:

*If ESA legislation is adopted in Texas, some rural lawmakers have proposed that, for the first three years following the passage of the legislation, Independent School Districts (ISDs) with fewer than 5,000 students should be reimbursed by the state for any funds they lose due to students in their district opting out of the public school system. Do you support or oppose this proposal to benefit small ISDs?*

Table 8 provides the proportion of these Texans who strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, and strongly oppose the proposal to reimburse small ISDs for three years for any funds they lose due to students in their district opting out of the public school system as a result of the passage of ESA legislation. More than three-fourths (77%) of Texans support this legislation (29% strongly), while 23% oppose it (8% strongly).

**Table 8. Support For and Opposition To Proposal to Hold Small ISD's Harmless For Any Revenue Lost From ESAs for 3 Years (%)**

Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
29	48	15	8

Table 9 provides the proportion of Texans who support this legislation to compensate (for three years) small ISDs for any students they lose due to the adoption of ESA legislation, broken down by gender, ethnicity/race, generation, level of educational attainment, family income, partisanship, and region of residence.

**Table 9. Proportion Supporting Legislation That Would Hold Small ISDs Harmless for Three Years For Any Students Lost to ESAs Across Key Socio-Demographic Groups (%)**

Socio-Demographic	Sub-Group	Percentage
Overall		77
Gender	Women	78
	Men	77
Ethnicity/Race	White	74
	Latino	78
	Black	91
Generation	Silent/Boomer	65
	Generation X	74
	Millennial	82
	Generation Z	92
Education	High School	78
	Some College/2 Year Degree	73
	4 Year Degree/PostGrad	80
Income	Lower Income	78
	Middle Income	73
	Higher Income	83
Partisanship	Democratic	83
	Independent	82
	Republican	71
Region	Major Urban Counties	80
	Suburban Counties	73
	Regional Hub Counties	75
	Rural & Semi-Rural Counties	74

While there are not any noteworthy gender, education, income or regional sub-group differences in support for this proposal, three significant ethnic/racial, generational and partisan differences are present. First, Black Texans (91%) are significantly more likely than Latino (78%) and white (74%) Texans to support this legislation. Second, younger Gen-Z (92%) and Millennial (82%) Texans are significantly more likely than Texans belonging to the Silent Generation/Baby Boomer cohort (65%) to support this legislation, with the difference between Gen-Z (92%) and Generation X (74%) also noteworthy. Third, Democrats (83%) are significantly more likely than Republicans (71%) to support this proposal to provide financial assistance to small ISDs in the event that ESA legislation passes in Texas.

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## **RECOMMENDED CITATION**

University of Houston Hobby School of Public Affairs, January 2025, "Texas Legislative Issues 2025: Budget Priorities & Education Savings Accounts"