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LSG Opposes Automatic Roll Back Elections

The Legislative Study Group (LSG) supports local control. **Policies that limit local control, such as automatic roll back elections are bad for Texans.** Lieutenant Governor Patrick has tried to shove these policies through the legislature during the 85th regular and special session. Senate Bill 2 during the regular session and Senate Bill 1 during the special session would create automatic roll back elections that could easily cripple local governments.

SB 1(85(1)) would require local governments to hold an election if the revenue raised is increased above a certain percentage. That percentage is known as the roll back rate. Currently the roll back rate is 8%. If the revenue raised is increased by a percentage greater than the roll back rate, the registered voters of that local government can petition the local government to hold an election on the new rate. If the voters vote against the rate increase the rate is moved back to the roll back rate which is currently 8%.

Additionally, revenue raised by a local government can exceed the roll back rate even in situations where the amount an individual pays in taxes remains the same, because when cities grow, the amount of revenue raised increases because there are more people and companies paying taxes.

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For example Harris County has grown by 470,000 people in the last 6 years.

SB 1(85(1)) as it passed the Senate would lower the roll back rate and require an election to be automatically held without having the citizens petition the local government. The goal of this policy is to suffocate local governments. The concept to suffocate government through arbitrarily limiting their ability to raise revenue was popularized by the economist Grover Norquist. By limiting the revenue a government

body can take in, it forces the body to cut services to the people.

Automatic roll back elections do not provide significant tax relief, however they will limit local control, and create a long list of challenges that will be detrimental to Texans.

Texas local governments-cities, counties, community colleges and hospital districts-provide vital services to their constituents. Locally elected officials decide how to provide these services and how to pay for them, an arrangement that reflects the values and desires of local voters. **SB 1(85(1)) would interfere in the ability of local governments to serve their people**, by preventing them from collecting enough revenue needed to deliver the public safety, health care, education, parks, libraries and other services their communities want and need.

Additionally, requiring automatic roll back elections is unnecessary because Texans can already vote to roll back the revenue increase. Right now, if there is an 8-percent revenue increase from property taxes voters are able to petition for an election to be held on the issue. Furthermore, if the citizens do not agree with the actions of their local government, they can vote them out.

It is important to remember why Texas relies so heavily on property taxes: to fund public schools. In 2011, the Legislature cut \$5.4 billion from public education and has yet to fully restore those cuts.

Texas has no state income tax; therefore it relies heavily on sales and property taxes. The state and local entities split sales taxes, but only local entities receive property taxes. It's unconstitutional for the state to levy property taxes, and state lawmakers do not have the power to set those

rates. **If property taxes are the problem, the solution begins with the funding our public schools. Property tax reform is public school finance reform.**

ABOUT THE LSG:

The Legislative Study Group (LSG) is an official Caucus of the Texas House of Representatives. The LSG is dedicated to advancing good public policy and ensuring that LSG members and associate members have the necessary information to make the most informed and best decisions for Texas families. Since 1993, the LSG has produced detailed bill evaluations for every bill that comes before the full House. [Click here to read more about the LSG.](#)



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