

Testimony

Linda Curtis, Independent Texas PAC

Texas Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, August 15, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Linda Curtis. I live in Bastrop and I'm the Director of Independent Texans, a general purpose political action committee founded in 2001. I have managed a number of petition drives in Texas, starting in the early 90s.

I am here to kindly ask committee members to look at the impediments that some municipalities have put forth to preclude the use of referenda. In Austin, the city's own website states:

"Austin's city charter requires that a referendum petition must be submitted 'prior to the effective date of any ordinance which is subject to referendum.' Because most ordinances that are passed by the City Council have an immediate effective date, this requirement can generally not be met."

In 2008, the city of Austin gave a \$2.3 billion deal for biomass – the wood chip burner in Nacogdoches – two weeks vetting. Since then, the city of paying over \$50M per year for 20 years for nothing – no energy – and the city cannot exit the contract.

San Antonio's charter says that:

"The electors shall have power to approve or reject at the polls any ordinance passed by the council save one appropriating money, levying taxes, or fixing public utility rates, or any ordinance submitted by the council of its own initiative to a vote of the electors;"

No offense to Senator Mendoza or any of the committee members, but what this means to me is that citizens cannot challenge the \$75 million that the city of San Antonio wants to spend on a baseball stadium. There is also the matter of the \$3.2 billion Vista Ridge water deal. In my view, this should have been put to a vote of the citizens and I warned the San Antonio Council not to make the same mistake Austin made on the biomass.

Referenda is the people's check and balance on their municipal government. Help us get it back and protect it. And for those who believe in real local control, this is it. Unleash petitioners and you will see some very positive behavioral changes in the city councils.