

TEXAS AFL★CIO

FAIR SHOT *for* TEXAS WORKERS

10 PRO-WORKER PRIORITIES FOR THE 89TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

During the 89th Legislative Session, we will fight to increase worker protections, wages, and benefits; make health care affordable and accessible; boost pay for educators and support staff; and address the climate crisis while creating good paying union jobs. **We fight for a fair shot for Texas workers, and we expect you to as well.**



1. INCREASE WAGES & EXPAND WORKPLACE BENEFITS

One job should be enough to make ends meet. The state must raise the minimum wage for all Texans and increase pay for public employees, end wage theft and worker misclassification, protect and improve public pensions, make sure every Texas worker is covered by Workers' Compensation, and expand access to health coverage and other benefits. **We urge the Texas Legislature to help Texas' workers live with dignity.**

2. PROTECT WORKERS ON THE JOB

Texas is the most deadly state in the country for construction workers. **We urge the Legislature to pass a statewide heat protection law to ensure that work breaks are permitted when the temperature reaches extreme levels.**

Texas also remains the only state in the nation that does not require businesses, including the construction industry, to carry Workers' Compensation Insurance. This has resulted in countless workers being unable to receive needed medical care, and families unable to receive financial benefits in the event of work-related death. **We urge the Legislature to require this coverage for Texas workers, especially construction workers who build our state.**

3. EXPAND PAID LEAVE FOR TEXAS FAMILIES

All workers, regardless of the type of job or income, should have the ability to take earned paid leave in order to care for themselves or a loved one. However, an estimated 40% of workers in Texas lack paid sick leave — with women and low-income workers carrying the heaviest burden. The lack of paid leave forces many Texans to exit the labor force to care for their families or their own health. Providing leave would reduce turnover among employers of all sizes and boost the state economy. **We urge the Legislature to expand paid leave policies and increase funding and options in childcare and elder care to support working Texans.**

4. PROTECT ALL WORKERS, NO MATTER THEIR STATUS

Whether they were born here or moved to make America home, we know that Texas workers are some of the hardest workers in the country. We can make sure all workers are safe and can make ends meet. **We urge the Legislature to stop the attacks on immigrant workers and focus on policies that protect all workers, regardless of immigration status.**

5. SUPPORT OUR SCHOOLS & TEACHERS

Texas public school teachers earn ~\$9,000 less annually than the national average, and salaries for paraprofessionals and instructional aides are not keeping up with inflation. As a result, our state is facing an educational staff shortage and retention crisis in our public schools. The chronic underfunding of classrooms and increased pressure placed on educators from state-mandated requirements have added more stress. **We urge the Legislature to increase teacher and staff pay and add critically-needed funding for our neighborhood schools. We also strongly oppose efforts to divert taxpayer money away from public schools through vouchers or other schemes.**

6. REDUCE STATE EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

According to a 2024 report by the State Auditor, the state employee turnover rate was 18.7% in FY2023, a decrease from the previous year's 22.7%. This reduction comes after the Legislature, in an attempt to address high turnover rates, approved a much overdue, modest pay raise for state employees. The number of people leaving state service is still far too high, and according to the State Auditor's report, the high turnover is a result of low pay and lack of benefits. **To ensure that Texans have access to services they rely on, we urge the Legislature to provide an additional across-the-board pay raise to all state employees, including higher education workers, while enhancing benefits, such as returning ERS pensions to a traditional defined benefit pension.**

7. SUPPORT PUBLIC SECTOR RETIREES

TRS and ERS retirees — our state's former teachers, school district staff, and university and agency employees — dedicated their lives to serving our communities. In 2023, the overdue Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) was passed for TRS retirees. This COLA increase was essential, but did not include more recent retirees and was only the minimum needed to keep up with inflation. About 75% of ERS retirees haven't seen a COLA in 20 years. More must be done to help these retired public employees keep up with rising costs. **We urge the Legislature to provide all public sector retirees a COLA and to pass more robust COLAs for ERS and TRS retirees.**

8. FIX THE UNEMPLOYMENT SYSTEM

Our state ranks near the bottom nationally in the rate of those who are eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Texas' outdated unemployment insurance system needs its arbitrary eligibility requirements and criteria revamped. We support measures that would expand, rather than restrict, the number of working Texans who qualify for unemployment insurance benefits. **We urge the Legislature to oppose attempts to tie the length of benefits to statewide unemployment rates, which will unfairly penalize countless unemployed Texans.**

9. CREATE JOBS IN CLEAN ENERGY

Texas leads the nation in clean energy production. By continuing its growth, our state will not only address the climate crisis and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, but also provide opportunities to create family- and community-sustaining careers. **We urge the Legislature to support these growing clean energy industries and the creation of high-quality, good paying union jobs in the clean energy industry.**

10. INVEST IN DEPARTMENT OF LABOR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

The federal government is sending billions of our tax dollars back to Texas to build new and update existing infrastructure across the state. To make sure these projects are completed, we need to grow existing high-quality apprenticeship programs to train skilled workers. **We urge the Legislature to increase its existing state support of Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Programs in order to train more workers, and to oppose attempts to weaken these training programs and apprenticeship standards.**

THE TEXAS AFL-CIO ADVOCATES FOR AN AGENDA THAT **LIFTS UP AND IMPROVES THE LIVES OF TEXAS WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.**



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