

A GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY CASE STUDY | QUORUM

Gaining Insights into the Legislative Process

How one Texas city monitors important bills and improves engagement with state lawmakers



Thousands of bills pass through state legislatures every session. Local governments need to identify and track the laws that could affect their operations, as well as engage with lawmakers about local interests.

When the Texas legislature convened for its 2023 session, the city of Georgetown was prepared to meet that challenge because it had already deployed Quorum, a government affairs platform with legislative tracking and engagement tools.

“The platform has saved us time and allowed us to do our jobs better — advocate better — while providing every tool we could need in one space,” says Ariel Traub, Georgetown’s intergovernmental relations manager.

The Search for Better Insights

Located about 30 miles from Austin, Georgetown tops the U.S. Census Bureau’s list of the fastest-growing cities with populations of more than 50,000. Given that rapid expansion, it’s crucial for the city to follow state legislation on topics such as development, municipal debt and taxation.

The Texas Legislature meets every two years, and in 2023, lawmakers filed more than 11,000 bills. When it looks like a bill could have a negative impact on Georgetown, city officials need to study its language, contact representatives and work with them to try to modify or kill the legislation, Traub says. “If we can’t do that, we have no say in what happens to our city or the constituents who live in it.”

In the past, Georgetown relied on the legislature’s website for facts about bills in progress. But that site offered only basic information, not useful intelligence.

“You couldn’t get information about the legislator who filed the bill, or about previous versions. You couldn’t save the list. There wasn’t any tracking capability,” Traub says.

Whatever monitoring the city could do involved a great deal of manual labor. “We had to download the PDF of the bill, print it out, mark it up, scan it back, and email all the different versions back and forth,” Traub says.

Georgetown needed a better way to engage with legislation. After evaluating the available options, officials decided to implement a government affairs software-as-a-service (SaaS) suite for tracking state legislative activity.

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Using the Right Tools

Getting up and running on the government affairs platform was easy, Traub says. Having researched the tools in advance and taken the vendor's training, she could quickly configure the solution to zero in on vital information.

Helpful features deployed by Georgetown include:

Tracking boards: Georgetown can use Quorum to track any bill introduced in the Texas Legislature, plus documents such as agendas and meeting minutes from nearby communities. By setting up notifications for key words and phrases, city officials can easily stay up to date on the measures they care about. The system also includes background information on lawmakers and their staff.

Sheets: Users can create a spreadsheet to track bills on any topic. The solution automatically updates the sheet to reflect new activity, such as hearings that have been held, changes to a bill's language, and how the bill is progressing through the legislative process. One spreadsheet tracks bills that Georgetown opposes. "I look through that list and flag the ones that have the highest chance of passing or the greatest impact," Traub says. City officials use this information when they collaborate to promote the city's interests.

Dashboards and search visualizations: These tools provide graphic representations to help users understand the status of a bill or group of bills. For instance, at the end of the 2023 legislative session, Traub used a dashboard to report to the city council on Georgetown's engagement with the state lawmaking process. "The dashboard showed how many bills that we opposed passed and how many failed. It allowed us to track our priority bills, creating a snapshot that I could put in a presentation to the council," Traub says.

Directories and outbox: The system stores and continuously updates contact information for all state elected officials and state agency executives, allowing city officials to send personalized messages to selected groups of officials or staff.

Information Fuels Action

Quorum's tools have strengthened Georgetown's voice in discussions about state laws that affect the public. "We are more engaged," Traub says. "We are able to see what's out there and work with our legislators more efficiently."

Because all the functions in the solution's suite are linked, Georgetown gains a holistic view of the facts surrounding any bill. The city can also set alerts for changes to social media posts about high-profile bills; Georgetown officials immediately receive email and push notifications.

With that information comes the opportunity to act. Georgetown officials no longer have to rely on an organization representing local governments to promote their viewpoints.

"We're able to advocate for ourselves, for the people who live within our city and for the staff members who put in so much effort here each day," Traub says.

This piece was written and produced by the Government Technology Content Studio, with information and input from Quorum.

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