



August 26th, 2026

Chairman Vasut and Members
House Select Committee on Governmental Oversight
Texas House of Representatives

RE: Written Testimony on the Texas Open Meetings Act

Chairman Vasut and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding the authority of political subdivisions to conduct meetings subject to the Texas Open Meetings Act outside their territorial boundaries.

The Texas Open Meetings Act exists to ensure that the public can observe the deliberations and decisions of governmental bodies conducting the people's business. That principle is undermined when a political subdivision conducts a meeting hundreds of miles from the taxpayers and residents it represents.

Political subdivisions are geographically defined governments. Their authority exists because they serve a particular community, and their meetings should generally occur within that community. Holding a properly posted meeting outside a political subdivision's territory may satisfy certain technical requirements while making meaningful public participation substantially more difficult. A resident should not have to travel to another city, county, or region of Texas simply to observe officials conducting the business of his or her local government.

This concern is particularly significant for retreats, workshops, strategic planning sessions, and similar gatherings. The label attached to a meeting should not determine the public's practical ability to observe governmental deliberations. Discussions that shape budgets, priorities, policies, or future governmental action are precisely the kinds of discussions for which public accessibility matters.

Texas Policy Research Action encourages the Legislature to establish a clear presumption that meetings subject to the Texas Open Meetings Act conducted by political subdivisions occur within the territorial boundaries of the political subdivision.

Any exceptions should be narrow and based upon genuine necessity rather than convenience, preference, or the desire to conduct discussions away from constituents. The Legislature should carefully define any exceptions to prevent them from swallowing the general rule.

Technology is also not a substitute for physical accessibility. Livestreaming and remote participation can supplement transparency, but the availability of a video feed should not become justification for relocating public meetings away from the people represented by the governmental body.

Making government transparent is a priority of the Texas Liberty Compact. Transparency requires more than posting an agenda and unlocking a meeting-room door somewhere in Texas. Government should conduct the people's business where the people it represents can reasonably observe it.

Local government should meet locally. Texas Policy Research Action encourages the Legislature to clarify the Texas Open Meetings Act accordingly.

Thank you for your consideration.

For Liberty, For Texas!

Jeremy D. Kitchen
President | Texas Policy Research Action (TPRA)