

**TEXAS ALLIANCE OF GROUNDWATER DISTRICTS**  
**LEGISLATIVE POLICY**  
**Adopted 01.27.2016**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

The Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts is a 501(c)(3) organization created exclusively for charitable, educational, or scientific purposes. As such, TAGD's principal goals related to legislation and other policies, such as agency rulemaking and interim charges affecting groundwater conservation districts and the management of groundwater in Texas is to:

1. Serve as an informational resource for State and Federal Legislators and agencies; and
2. Inform TAGD members of relevant legislation and policies that may impact district governance.

Toward that end, TAGD representatives and employees should endeavor to serve as a premier resource on groundwater management practices in the State and keep the membership up to date on the status of legislation and policies affecting groundwater conservation districts. TAGD believes that such efforts are the best way to positively affect and respond to legislation and other policies related to groundwater conservation districts. In the limited instances where TAGD members deem advocacy in legislative or other policy matters necessary, this Policy will serve as a guide for participation and decision-making. Nothing in this Policy should be construed as limiting a member's ability to pursue lobbying activities on behalf of an employer or client.

**2.0 EMPLOYEE, OFFICER, AND COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS**

TAGD's Executive Director should serve the following roles related to legislative issues and other policy information and advocacy:

1. Act as the main point of contact for Legislators, legislative staffers, agencies and the public concerning TAGD positions;
2. Function as a resource for and provide relevant information to public officials as necessary in furtherance of TAGD's mission and this Policy;
3. Inform the membership of developing legislative or agency issues of possible interest to groundwater districts and provide regular updates as provided herein;
4. Notify the membership of Legislative Committee and Subcommittee meetings as necessary; and
5. Report lobbying activities to the Executive Committee on a regular basis and to the Texas Ethics Commission as required by law.

As maintained in the Bylaws, TAGD's Vice President is the chair of the Legislative Committee. As it relates to this Policy, the Vice President is responsible for:

1. Presiding over meetings of the Legislative Committee;
2. Designating Subcommittees to the Legislative Committee, appointing members, and determining the scope of the subcommittee;
3. Coordinating with the President in appointing a Chairman to each designated Subcommittee;
2. Facilitating compliance with TAGD's policies related to legislative and other policy advocacy;
3. Working with the Executive Director to respond to inquiries regarding TAGD's legislative and other policy positions; and
4. Coordinating with the Executive Director to serve as resource for public officials as necessary in furtherance of TAGD's mission and this Policy.

The Legislative Committee is responsible for:

1. Initiating legislative proposals, policies and resolutions for presentation to TAGD's membership;
2. Informing TAGD's membership of pending legislation of possible interest to groundwater districts;
3. Developing a position on legislation of possible interest to groundwater districts that is pertinent to the TAGD; and
4. Acting on legislation with approval from the Executive Committee.

### **3.0 Legislative Committee Participation**

#### **3.1. Membership on the Committee**

At the start of each fiscal year, TAGD shall open up membership in the Legislative Committee ("Committee") for a two-week sign up period (the "sign-up period"). Any individual employed by a TAGD-member GCD may serve on the Committee, but voting membership is limited to one representative per TAGD-member GCD. Individuals who qualify and sign up during the sign-up period will make up the standing Committee until the subsequent fiscal year, when the process will be repeated.

If an individual begins employment with a TAGD-member GCD after the sign-up period, he or she may join the Committee outside of the sign-up period as long as no other employee of that member-GCD is already a member. If an individual otherwise misses the sign-up period but wishes to sign up for the Committee during a fiscal year, they may request to join the Committee by email to the Executive Director. The Committee will then vote to approve or deny the membership request for membership during that fiscal year.

A voting member of the Committee may designate an alternate to attend a Committee meeting and vote in the member's place, provided the member notifies the Executive Director in writing in advance of the meeting. If the alternate is not an employee of the designated TAGD-member GCD or a consultant with no other clients than the

designated TAGD-member GCD, the Committee member must submit a written notice in accordance with section 8.0(B) of the Bylaws.

### **3.2. Committee Votes**

Each GCD-member of the Committee is entitled to one vote on all matters before the Committee. A quorum is made up of the people who come.

### **3.3. Consensus**

At the first meeting of each fiscal year, the Committee shall define the voting standards that will be used for the Committee.

### **3.4. Committee Meetings**

GCD-member representatives who are not formal Committee members as specified herein and associate member representatives may participate as nonvoting members of the Committee. Committee meetings may not be closed to TAGD-member GCD staff.

### **3.5 Subcommittee(s) and Objectives**

Subcommittees are designated by TAGD's Vice President at or directly after the first Legislative Committee meeting of the year, but may also be appointed as the need arises by the Vice President to address specific objectives of the Legislative Committee.

The duties and authority of a Subcommittee shall be determined by TAGD's Vice President. A Subcommittee shall exist for the entirety of its scope and task, including tasks that extend beyond a fiscal year.

Subcommittees shall report to the assembly of the Legislative Committee. Reports will include a proposed schedule for task completion, action items and review of all work completed. Subcommittee reports must be presented in its entirety, with specific information on how TAGD membership will or will not benefit from the specific issue or task, as well as any anticipated challenges it may have at the State legislature or other related agencies or interest groups.

### **3.6 Membership of Subcommittee(s)**

The membership of a Subcommittee shall not exceed 11 voting members. Eligible Subcommittee members are appointed by the Vice President and are selected from GCD members of the Legislative Committee. The Vice President and President shall jointly designate a Chairman to a Subcommittee. Non-voting and Associate TAGD members may contribute in an advisory capacity to a Subcommittee.

### **3.7 Subcommittee Quorums**

A working quorum shall consist of one-third of the members of the Subcommittee for developing and deliberating on issues. No action may be taken under a working quorum.

A voting quorum shall consist of a majority of the members of the Subcommittee for the purposes of taking action on an item of business.

## **4.0 LEGISLATIVE TRACKING**

During a session of the Texas Legislature, the Executive Director should regularly inform TAGD's membership of pending legislation of possible interest to groundwater

districts. In so doing, the Executive Director should track such legislation and provide updates to the membership as applicable. The Legislative Committee should give an update on prospective and pending legislation, as well as a summary of the positions TAGD has taken on such legislation, if any, at each TAGD meeting that occurs during a session of the Texas Legislature.

## **5.0 POLICY STATEMENTS**

Policy statements drafted prior to each Legislative Session are TAGD's preferred method of legislative advocacy. Beginning in January of each even-numbered year, the Legislative Committee should meet regularly by electronic communication, by conference call, or in person to discuss and attempt to reach consensus on pending issues related to groundwater districts that may be raised during the next session of the Texas Legislature. Any policy statements drafted and approved by the Committee should be presented to the full membership for a vote prior to the beginning of the legislative session, if possible. Approved policy statements may be distributed to groundwater conservation district boards, Legislators and their staff, and any other interested parties. To the extent that a piece of proposed legislation encompasses an approved position statement, TAGD representatives may support and advocate for such legislation, including testifying for bills at Committee hearings. In such testimony, the TAGD representatives should explicitly note whether the applicable position statement was or was not unanimously approved by the TAGD membership.

## **6.0 OTHER LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY**

Starting in January of each odd-numbered year and running through the end of the Texas Legislative Session, the Committee should meet regularly by electronic communication, by conference call, or in person. The purpose of these meetings should be to determine whether any pending legislation filed or amended since the last meeting warrants action by TAGD and to vote on relevant bills. If the Committee cannot reach a consensus on the bill, as that term is defined by the Committee, it will remain in the neutral category and TAGD should avoid taking a position.

Pursuant to the Bylaws, the Committee may not act on legislation without approval from the Executive Committee. The Legislative Committee should regularly report the status and result of Committee votes on proposed bills to the TAGD Membership and summarize TAGD positions during pending legislation updates at TAGD regularly scheduled meetings as described in section 3.0.