

2023

TEXAS LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

State Budget Surplus



Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON



Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

Texas Legislative Issues 2023
State Budget Surplus

The Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston conducted an online survey of Texans ages 18 and older to assess their preferences and opinions regarding legislation under consideration by the Texas Legislature during the 2023 legislative session. The survey was fielded between January 9 and January 19, 2023, in English and Spanish, with 1,200 YouGov respondents, resulting in a confidence interval of +/-2.8%. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race/ethnicity, and education and are representative of the population of Texas adults.

This is the first of six reports. It examines the saving and spending preferences of Texans related to the state's current \$33 billion budget surplus, support for legislation to reimburse universities and colleges for tuition benefits provided to veterans and their dependents and to expand Medicaid's postpartum coverage from six to 12 months, and support for a series of proposed sales tax exemption bills. Future reports will examine support for casino gambling, school choice, and legislation regulating marijuana, abortion, firearms, elections, immigration, and energy.

Executive Summary

The median Texan wants to save between \$10 and \$14 billion of the state's \$33 billion budget surplus for the current (2021-23) budget year, with 27% of Texans favoring savings within this range.

38% of Texans want to save less than the median Texan, with 20% wanting to save between \$5 and \$9 billion, and 18% wanting to save between \$0 and \$4 billion of the \$33 billion surplus.

35% of Texans want to save more than the median Texan, with 19% wanting to save between \$15 and \$19 billion, 8% wanting to save between \$20 and \$24 billion, and 8% wanting to save between \$25 and \$33 billion of the \$33 billion surplus.

Republicans (56%) are significantly more likely than Democrats (46%) and Independents (41%) to want to save between \$10 and \$19 billion of the \$33 billion budget surplus.

Democrats (46%) and Independents (41%) are significantly more likely than Republicans (27%) to want to save between \$0 and \$9 billion of the \$33 billion budget surplus.

Texans were asked about their support for different proposals for spending portions of the \$33 billion budget surplus:

- 85% support using the funds to provide public school safety and security grants, including 52% who strongly support this proposal.

- 82% support using the funds to build five new mental health hospitals, including 48% who strongly support this proposal.
- 81% support using the funds to expand broadband internet service in rural areas, including 41% who strongly support this proposal.
- 81% support using the funds to pay the undergraduate tuition of nurses, including 42% who strongly support this proposal.
- 81% support using the funds to pay for a one-time additional investment in the state's road system, including 44% who strongly support this proposal.
- 79% support using the funds to pay for a one-time additional investment in K-12 public school infrastructure, including 46% who strongly support this proposal.
- 77% support using the funds to expand the business personal property exemption to \$100,000, including 37% who strongly support this proposal.
- 77% support using the funds to provide incentives for businesses to build more natural gas fueled power plants to improve electric grid reliability, including 39% who strongly support this proposal.
- 75% support using the funds to pay for a one-time additional investment in damaged roads located in oil and gas producing areas of the state, including 34% who strongly support this proposal.
- 73% support using the funds to expand the property tax homestead exemption for homeowners from \$40,000 to \$60,000, including 47% who strongly support this proposal.
- 73% support using the funds to pay for salaries and equipment for county law enforcement in rural areas of the state, including 35% who strongly support this proposal.
- 72% support using the funds to create a \$1 billion endowment for the University of Houston and Texas Tech University systems, including 33% who strongly support this proposal.

84% of Texans support legislation (44% strongly and 40% somewhat) which would reimburse Texas public colleges and universities for at least 50% of the cost of providing veterans and their dependents with tuition benefits under legislation that has been passed by the Texas Legislature. Nine out of ten Democrats (90%) support this legislation with eight out of ten Independents (78%) and Republicans (80%) in support. Presently these colleges and universities are only reimbursed for about 10% of the costs of these legislatively mandated tuition benefits.

75% of Texans support legislation (47% strongly and 28% somewhat) that would expand postpartum Medicaid coverage in Texas from 6 months to 12 months. More than nine out of ten (91%) Democrats, seven out of ten (72%) Independents, and six out of ten Republicans (63%) support this legislation.

Substantial majorities of Texans support legislation that if passed would provide Texas sales tax exemptions for different products, including the following:

- 87% of Texans support exempting textbooks purchased or rented by university and college students from the state sales tax for one week in August and for one week in January, including 57% who strongly support this legislation.
- 83% of Texans support exempting computers, tablets, and smartphones priced under \$500 and purchased during the August back to school tax free weekend from the state sales tax, including 49% who strongly support this legislation.
- 81% of Texans support exempting child and adult diapers and baby wipes from the state sales tax, including half (52% and 51%) who strongly support this legislation.
- 75% of Texans support exempting feminine hygiene products from the state sales tax, including 49% who strongly support this legislation. Four-fifths (81%) of women and two-thirds (68%) of men support this legislation, as do 83% of Democrats and 69% of Republicans.
- 67% of Texans support exempting maternity clothes from the state sales tax, including 35% who strongly support this legislation.

Survey Population Demographics

Whites account for 45% of this survey population of Texas adults, Latinos 37%, Blacks 12%, and others 6%. Women account for 51% of the population and men for 49%. Regarding generations, 29% of the population belongs to the combined Silent Generation (born between 1928-1945) and Baby Boomer (1946-1964) cohort, 25% to Generation X (Gen-X, 1965-1980), 30% to the Millennial (1981-1996) generation and 16% to the Generation Z (Gen-Z, 1997-2014) cohort. Two-fifths (39%) of the population identifies as Democrat, 36% as Republican, 20% as Independent, and 5% are unsure about their partisan identification.

How Much of the \$33 Billion Texas Budget Surplus Should be Saved?

The survey respondents were asked “How much of the \$33 billion budget surplus for the current two-year budget cycle (2021-23) do you believe the state of Texas should save rather than spend?” The response options were \$25 to \$33 billion, \$20 to \$24 billion, \$15 to \$19 billion, \$10 to \$14 billion, \$5 to \$9 billion, and \$0 to \$4 billion.

Figure 1 provides the distribution of the responses of these Texas adults. The median Texan believes that between \$10 and \$14 billion should be saved (27% align with this position), with 38% of Texans favoring saving less (20% at \$5 to \$9 billion and 18% at \$0 to \$4 billion) and 35% favoring saving more (19% at \$15 to \$19 billion, 8% at \$20 to \$24 billion, and 8% at \$25 to \$33 billion).

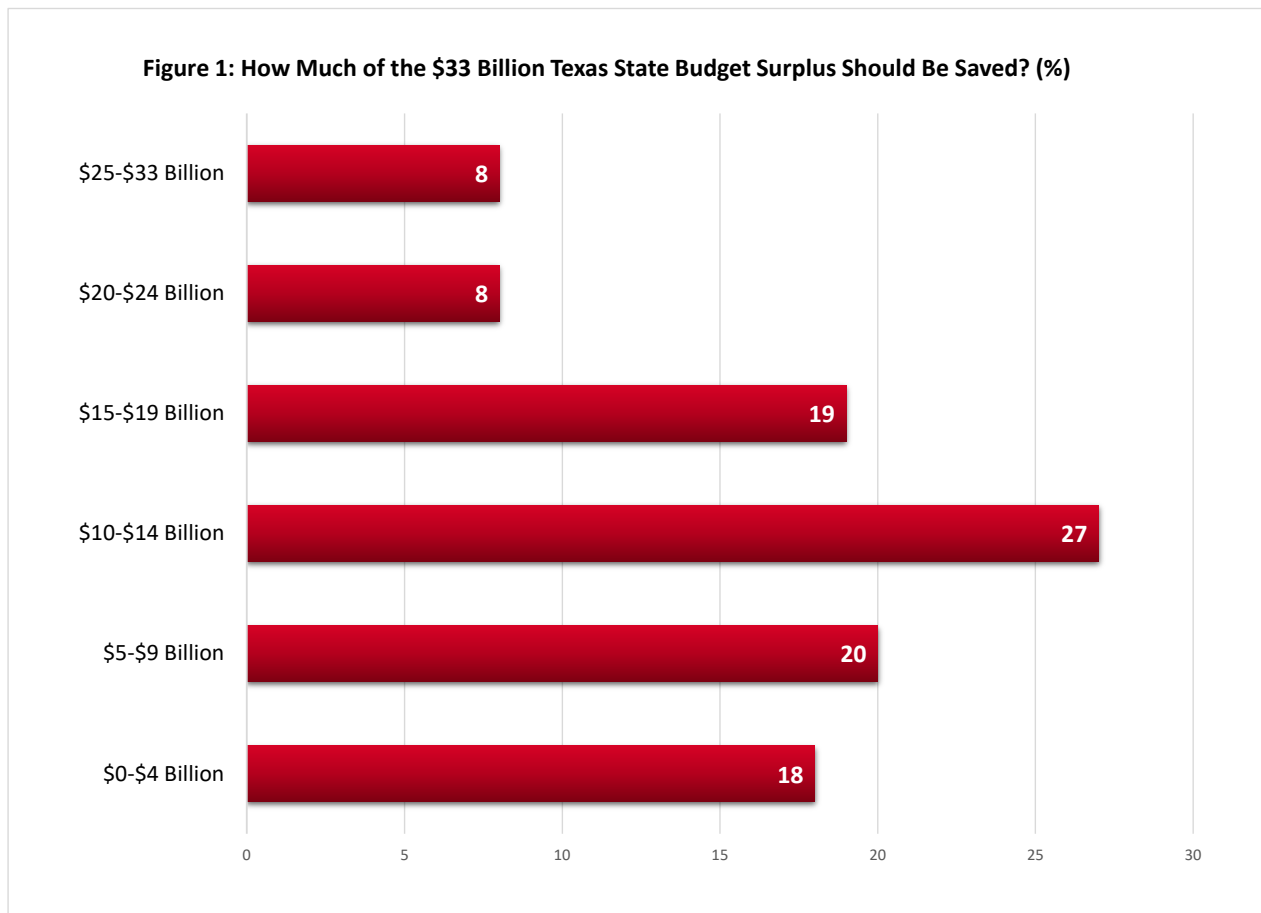


Table 1 provides a breakdown of the saving preferences in three saving categories (\$0 to \$9 billion, \$10 to \$19 billion, \$20 to \$33 billion) by ethnicity/race, gender, generation, and partisan identification.

Table 1: How Much of the \$33 Billion Texas Budget Surplus Should be Saved? (%)

Group	Sub-Group	\$0 to \$9 Billion	\$10 to \$19 Billion	\$20 to \$33 Billion
Overall	Overall	38	46	16
Ethnicity/Race	White	35	49	16
	Latino	41	44	15
	Black	39	43	18
Gender	Women	35	48	17
	Men	42	43	15
Generation	Silent/Boomers	35	47	18
	Generation X	40	47	13
	Millennials	40	44	16
	Generation Z	41	44	15
Partisan ID	Democrat	46	41	13
	Independent	41	39	20
	Republican	27	56	17

Overall, there do not exist any substantial ethnic/racial, gender or generational differences in regard to preferences for saving vs. spending the \$33 billion budget surplus. Republicans (56%) are however significantly more likely to want to save in the range of \$10 to \$19 billion than are either Democrats (41%) or Independents (39%). Similarly, Democrats (46%) and Independents (41%) are significantly more likely than Republicans (27%) to want to save in the range of \$0 to \$9 billion.

How Should the Budget Surplus Be Spent?

The survey respondents were presented with the following 13 distinct proposals (which were rotated) for spending the budget surplus:

- Provide a one-time additional investment for the state’s road system.
- Provide a one-time additional investment for damaged roads in the state’s oil and gas producing areas.
- Provide a one-time additional investment for broadband internet in rural areas of the state.
- Provide a one-time additional investment for K-12 public school infrastructure.
- Permanently raise the property tax homestead exemption for homeowners from \$40,000 to \$60,000.
- Provide one-time tax credits or incentives to businesses to promote the immediate construction of more natural gas power plants to increase the state electric grid’s reliability.
- Permanently expand the business personal property exemption (for items such as computers and desks) from \$2,500 to \$100,000 to help small businesses.

- Create a rural law enforcement fund to raise salaries and buy equipment for sheriffs and deputies in counties with a population that is less than 50,000.
- Provide a 13th check (an additional month’s pension payment) for retired teachers for each of the next two years.
- Build five new mental health care hospitals across the state.
- Provide funding for school safety & security grants in 2023-24 for K-12 public schools to pay for security systems, metal detectors, fencing, door-locking systems, alarm systems, and more secure doors and windows.
- Create a fund to pay for the undergraduate tuition of nursing students who agree to work as nurses in the state for at least five years upon graduation.
- Create a \$1 billion endowment fund for the University of Houston System and for the Texas Tech University System, which unlike the University of Texas and Texas A&M University, do not have access to the state’s multi-billion dollar Permanent University Fund (PUF).

Table 2 provides the proportion of respondents who strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose and strongly oppose each of the 13 proposed expenditures for the budget surplus. In all cases, “don’t know” responses (median of 14%) were excluded from the analysis. More than half of Texans (52%) strongly support using the funds to provide school safety and security grants for K-12 schools. In no case, do more than 13% of Texans strongly oppose any of the proposed expenditures.

Table 2: Support for & Opposition to 13 Proposed Expenditures for the State's \$33 Billion Budget Surplus (%)

Options for Budget Surplus Expenditure	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Public School Safety & Security Grants	52	33	9	6
5 New Mental Health Hospitals	48	34	13	5
Homestead Exemption from \$40k to \$60k	47	26	15	12
K-12 Public School Infrastructure	46	33	14	7
Investment in State Road System	44	37	13	6
13th Check for Retired Teachers	43	30	15	12
Pay Undergraduate Tuition of Nurses	42	39	12	7
Rural Broadband Internet	41	40	13	6
Build More Natural Gas Plants for Electric Grid	39	38	13	10
Expand Business Property Exemption to \$100k	37	40	17	6
Rural Law Enforcement Salary/Equipment	35	38	16	11
Investment in Oil & Gas Producing Area Roads	34	41	17	8
\$1 Billion Endowment for Univ of Houston & TX Tech	33	39	15	13

Figure 2 provides the proportion of respondents who support (strongly and somewhat) each one of the 13 proposals. All 13 expenditure proposals enjoy robust support among Texans. The support for the proposals ranges from a low of 72% (creating a \$1 billion endowment for the University of Houston and Texas Tech University Systems) to a high of 85% (public school safety and security grants). Rounding out the top five are building five new mental health hospitals (82%), a one-time additional investment in rural broadband internet (81%), creating a fund to pay for the undergraduate tuition of nurses (81%), and a one-time additional investment in the state’s road system (81%).

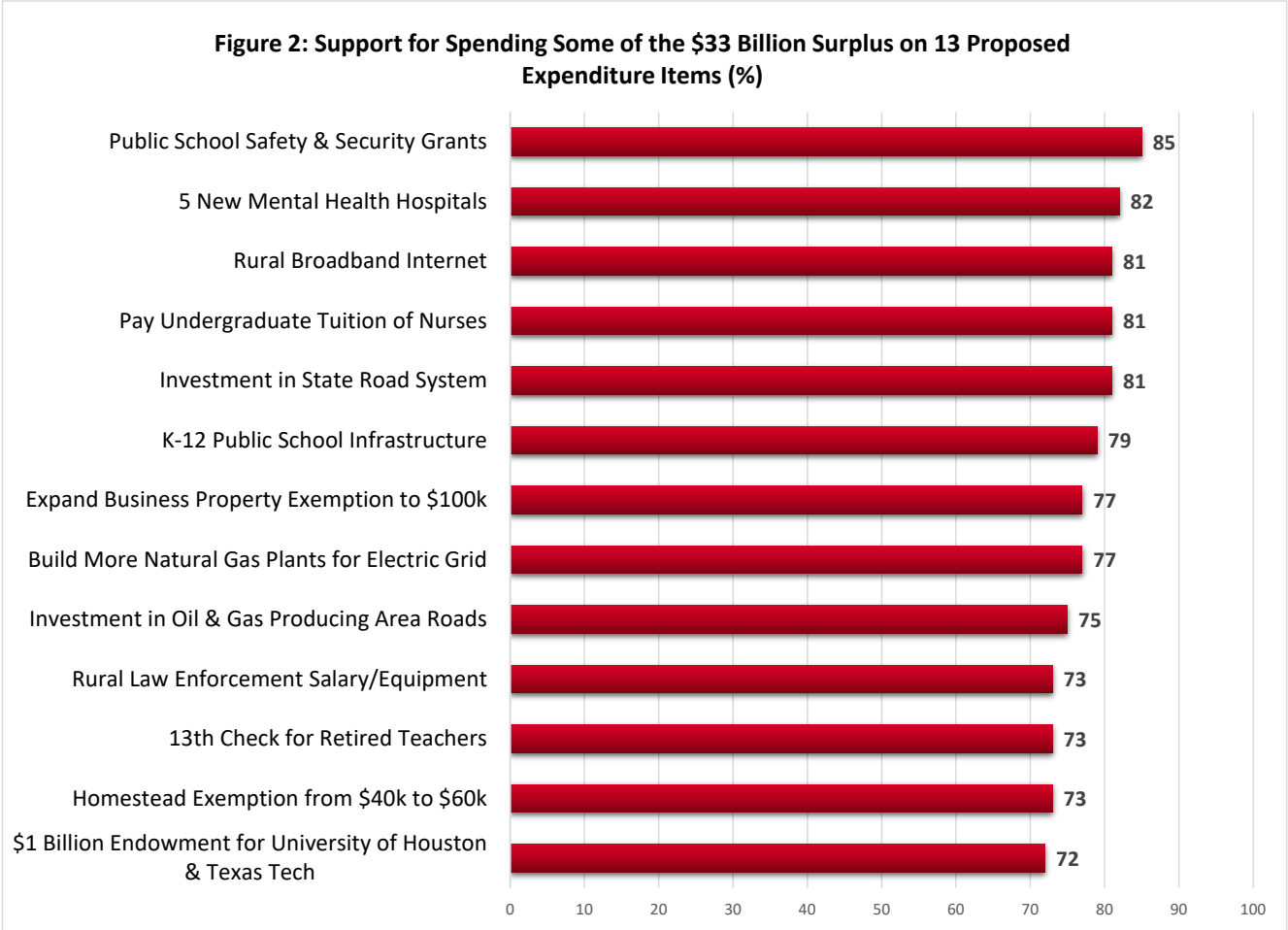


Table 3 provides the proportion of white, Latino and Black Texans who support (strongly and somewhat) each one of the 13 expenditure proposals for the budget surplus. The three proposals with the highest level of support among whites are raising the property tax homestead exemption from \$40,000 to \$60,000 (82%, with 53% strongly supporting), funding public school safety and security grants (82%, with 46% strongly supporting), and a one-time additional investment in the state’s road system (80%, with 43% strongly supporting). The three proposals with the highest level of support among Latinos are funding public school safety and security grants (87%, with 57% strongly supporting), building five new mental health hospitals across the state (86%, with 55% strongly supporting), and a one-time additional investment in K-12 public school infrastructure (86%, with 54% strongly supporting). The three proposals with the highest level of support among Blacks are funding public school safety and security grants (91%, with 60% strongly supporting), creating a fund to pay for the undergraduate tuition of nurses (86%, with 51% strongly supporting), and a one-time additional investment in K-12 public school infrastructure (86%, with 45% strongly supporting). As a side note, 77% of homeowners support (54% strongly) the proposal to raise the property tax homestead exemption from \$40,000 to \$60,000 compared to 67% of renters (31% strongly).

Table 3: Ethnicity/Race & Support for 13 Proposed Expenditures for Budget Surplus (%)

Proposed Expenditure Items	White	Latino	Black
Public School Safety & Security Grants	82 (46)	87 (57)	91 (60)
5 New Mental Health Hospitals	79 (42)	86 (55)	84 (53)
Rural Broadband Internet	77 (36)	85 (47)	81 (45)
Pay Undergraduate Tuition of Nurses	78 (38)	84 (44)	86 (51)
Investment in State Road System	80 (43)	84 (45)	74 (41)
K-12 Public School Infrastructure	72 (39)	86 (54)	86 (45)
Expand Business Property Exemption to \$100k	73 (32)	78 (36)	82 (42)
Build More Natural Gas Plants for Electric Grid	78 (39)	74 (36)	77 (41)
Investment in Oil & Gas Producing Area Roads	74 (29)	74 (38)	79 (36)
Rural Law Enforcement Salary/Equipment	73 (34)	71 (35)	75 (35)
13th Check for Retired Teachers	65 (38)	79 (49)	85 (46)
Homestead Exemption from \$40k to \$60k	82 (53)	67 (41)	65 (38)
\$1 Billion Endowment for Univ of Houston & Texas Tech	66 (30)	74 (32)	82 (40)

The proportion who strongly support the proposed expenditure is in parentheses.

Table 4 provides the proportion of women and men Texans who support (strongly and somewhat) each one of the 13 expenditure proposals for the budget surplus. The three proposals with the highest level of support among women are building five new mental health hospitals across the state (87%, with 52% strongly supporting), funding public school safety and security grants (86%, with 55% strongly supporting), and providing a one-time additional investment in rural broadband internet (86%, with 45% strongly supporting). The three proposals with the highest level of support among men are funding public school safety and security grants (84%, with 48% strongly supporting), a one-time additional investment in the state’s road system (80%, with 45% strongly supporting), and creating a fund to pay for the undergraduate tuition of nurses (79%, with 41% strongly supporting).

Table 4: Gender & Support for 13 Proposed Expenditures for Budget Surplus (%)

Proposed Expenditure Items	Women	Men
Public School Safety & Security Grants	86 (55)	84 (48)
5 New Mental Health Hospitals	87 (52)	78 (44)
Rural Broadband Internet	86 (45)	76 (38)
Pay Undergraduate Tuition of Nurses	83 (43)	79 (41)
Investment in State Road System	83 (43)	80 (45)
K-12 Public School Infrastructure	78 (48)	73 (40)
Expand Business Property Exemption to \$100k	79 (34)	75 (40)
Build More Natural Gas Plants for Electric Grid	76 (36)	78 (43)
Investment in Oil & Gas Producing Area Roads	78 (32)	72 (36)
Rural Law Enforcement Salary/Equipment	76 (38)	70 (33)
13th Check for Retired Teachers	71 (43)	66 (38)
Homestead Exemption from \$40k to \$60k	70 (44)	77 (49)
\$1 Billion Endowment for Univ of Houston & Texas Tech	71 (30)	73 (35)

The proportion who strongly support the proposed expenditure is in parentheses.

Table 5 provides the proportion of the members of the four generational cohorts (Baby Boomers/Silent Generation, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z) who support (strongly and somewhat) each one of the 13 expenditure proposals for the budget surplus. The three proposals with the highest level of support among the Baby Boomer/Silent Generation cohort are funding public school safety and security grants (90%, with 54% strongly supporting), a one-time additional investment in the state’s road system (87%, with 50% strongly supporting), and building five new mental health hospitals across the state (86%, with 50% strongly supporting). The three proposals with the highest level of support among Generation X are funding public school safety and security grants (84%, with 47% strongly supporting), building five new mental health hospitals across the state (84%, with 46% strongly supporting), and providing a one-time additional investment in rural broadband internet (81%, with 40% strongly supporting). The three (four) proposals with the highest level of support among Millennials are building five new mental health hospitals across the state (83%, with 53% strongly supporting), a one-time additional investment in K-12 public school infrastructure (83%, with 52% strongly supporting), and, with 82% in support for each (43% strongly), a one-time additional investment in rural broadband internet and a one-time additional investment in the state’s road system. The three proposals with the highest level of support among Generation Z are funding public school safety and security grants (85%, with 52% strongly supporting), creating a \$1 billion endowment for the University of Houston and Texas Tech University systems (83%, with 38% strongly supporting), and creating a fund to pay for the undergraduate tuition of nurses (82%, with 34% strongly supporting).

Table 5: Generation & Support for 13 Proposed Expenditures for Budget Surplus (%)

Proposed Expenditure Items	Boomers/Silent	Gen-X	Millennials	Gen-Z
Public School Safety & Security Grants	90 (54)	84 (47)	80 (53)	85 (52)
5 New Mental Health Hospitals	86 (50)	84 (46)	83 (53)	73 (39)
Rural Broadband Internet	84 (47)	81 (40)	82 (43)	74 (29)
Pay Undergraduate Tuition of Nurses	85 (44)	79 (42)	79 (44)	82 (34)
Investment in State Road System	87 (50)	80 (43)	82 (43)	67 (35)
K-12 Public School Infrastructure	76 (43)	79 (43)	83 (52)	76 (42)
Expand Business Property Exemption to \$100k	77 (36)	77 (35)	81 (40)	68 (33)
Build More Natural Gas Plants for Electric Grid	81 (44)	72 (35)	75 (39)	79 (35)
Investment in Oil & Gas Producing Area Roads	79 (35)	69 (31)	77 (35)	71 (36)
Rural Law Enforcement Salary/Equipment	83 (43)	68 (32)	69 (34)	67 (28)
13th Check for Retired Teachers	78 (44)	72 (38)	79 (48)	72 (37)
Homestead Exemption from \$40k to \$60k	85 (68)	69 (42)	71 (40)	59 (25)
\$1 Billion Endowment for Univ of Houston & Texas Tech	65 (28)	65 (31)	79 (37)	83 (38)

The proportion who strongly support the proposed expenditure is in parentheses.

Table 6 provides the proportion of Texas Democrats, Independents and Republicans who support each one of the 13 expenditure proposals. The three (four) proposals with the highest level of support among Democrats are creating a fund to pay for the undergraduate tuition of nurses (90%, with 54% strongly supporting), providing a one-time additional investment in rural broadband internet (89%, with 52% strongly supporting), providing a one-time additional investment in K-12 public school infrastructure (88%, with 63% strongly supporting), and building five new mental health hospitals across the state (88%, with 62% strongly supporting). The three (four) proposals with the highest support among Independents are funding public school safety and security grants (79%, with 45% strongly supporting), building five new mental health hospitals across the state (79%, with 39% strongly supporting), providing a one-time additional investment in rural broadband internet (75%, with 37% strongly supporting), and creating a fund to pay for the undergraduate tuition of nurses (75%, with 36% strongly supporting). The three proposals with the highest level of support among Republicans are funding public school safety and security grants (90%, with 51% strongly supporting), expanding the small business personal property tax exemption to \$100,000 (90%, with 38% strongly supporting), and providing tax credits or incentives to businesses to build more natural gas power plants in order to improve the reliability of the state’s electrical grid (87%, with 86% strongly supporting). Slightly behind these three proposals is an expenditure proposal that was nevertheless strongly supported by 54% of Texas Republicans: increasing the homestead exemption from \$40,000 to \$60,000.

Table 6: Partisan ID & Support for 13 Proposed Expenditures for Budget Surplus (%)

Proposed Expenditure Items	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Public School Safety & Security Grants	83 (54)	79 (45)	90 (51)
5 New Mental Health Hospitals	88 (62)	79 (39)	80 (40)
Rural Broadband Internet	89 (52)	75 (37)	76 (33)
Pay Undergraduate Tuition of Nurses	90 (54)	75 (36)	75 (33)
Investment in State Road System	86 (53)	70 (31)	83 (43)
K-12 Public School Infrastructure	88 (63)	70 (35)	73 (33)
Expand Business Property Exemption to \$100k	78 (40)	72 (30)	90 (38)
Build More Natural Gas Plants for Electric Grid	69 (34)	72 (35)	87 (46)
Investment in Oil & Gas Producing Area Roads	72 (36)	66 (26)	83 (37)
Rural Law Enforcement Salary/Equipment	64 (31)	66 (28)	86 (45)
13th Check for Retired Teachers	86 (55)	65 (36)	63 (33)
Homestead Exemption from \$40k to \$60k	70 (45)	71 (40)	79 (54)
\$1 Billion Endowment for Univ of Houston & Texas Tech	83 (40)	69 (29)	61 (27)

The proportion who strongly support the proposed expenditure is in parentheses.

Reimbursing State Colleges & Universities for Veteran Tuition Benefits

The survey respondents were provided with the following question: “Under Texas law, veterans and their dependents receive tuition and fee exemptions at state colleges and universities, exemptions for which these institutions currently only receive a minimal amount of compensation. Do you support or oppose legislation that would require the Texas Legislature to fund at least 50% of the cost to these institutions of higher education of providing tuition and fee exemptions to veterans and their dependents under any program created by the Texas Legislature?”

Figure 3 provides the distribution of the responses. More than eight out of ten Texans (84%) support (44% strongly support and 40% somewhat support) a legislative proposal to compensate Texas public colleges and universities for at least 50% of the cost of providing veterans and their dependents with these tuition benefits, such as provided for under the Hazlewood Act. Conversely, only 16% of Texans oppose this legislation, 10% somewhat and 6% strongly.

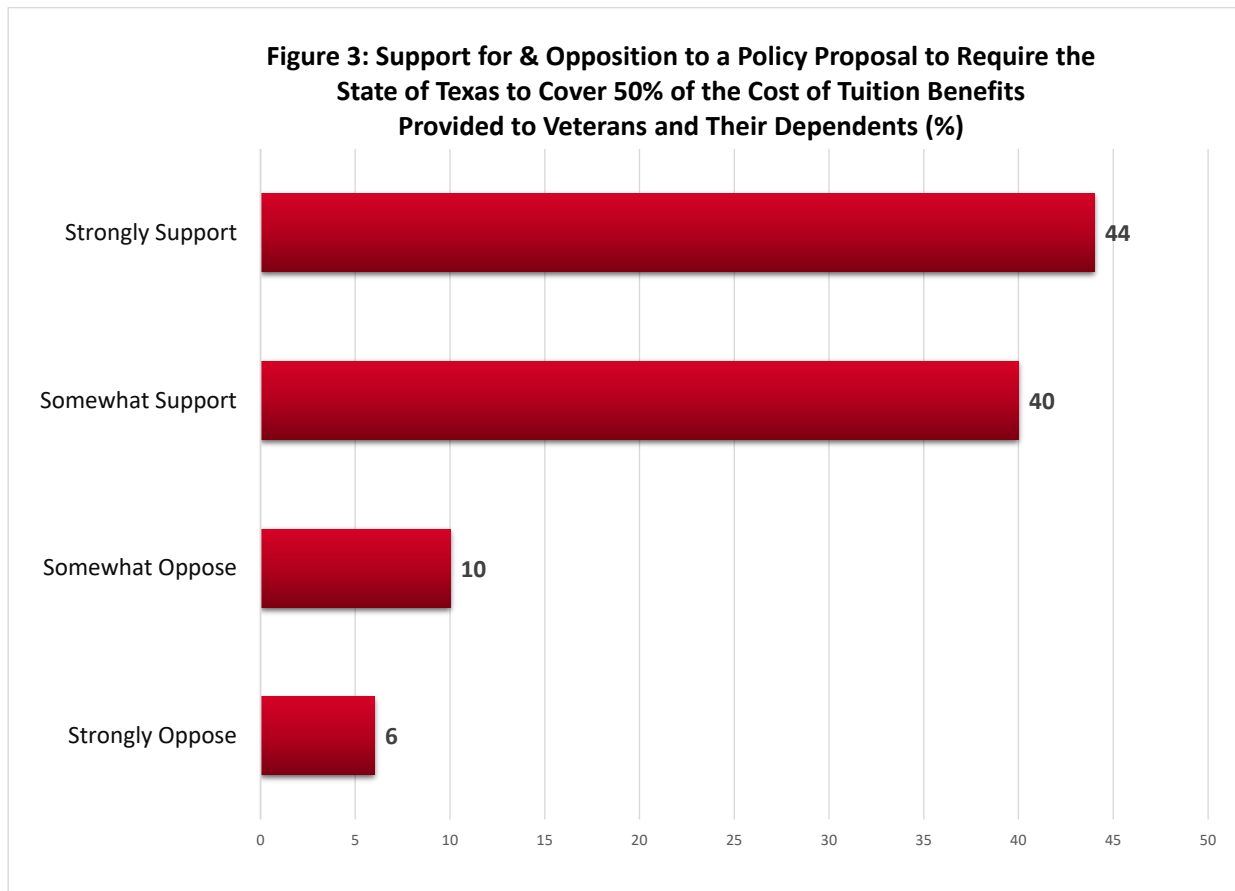


Table 7 provides breaks down the proportion of Texans who support (strongly or somewhat) this proposed legislation by ethnicity/race, gender, generation, and partisanship.

Table 7: Support for Proposal to Reimburse Universities/Colleges for 50% of Veteran Tuition Benefits (%)

Group	Sub-Group	Percentage Supporting Policy
Overall	Overall	84 (44)
Ethnicity/Race	White	80 (40)
	Latino	85 (46)
	Black	90 (46)
Gender	Women	85 (45)
	Men	81 (42)
Generation	Silent/Boomers	82 (49)
	Generation X	82 (42)
	Millennials	86 (43)
	Generation Z	83 (37)
Partisan ID	Democrat	90 (52)
	Independent	78 (40)
	Republican	80 (38)

Proportion strongly in support in parentheses.

Overall, this legislative proposal to reimburse universities and colleges for at least 50% of the tuition benefits they are legislatively mandated to provide enjoys overwhelming support across ethnic/racial, gender, generational and partisan groups, with support ranging in a narrow band from a low of 78% to a high of 90%.

Expanding Medicaid Postpartum Coverage from 6 to 12 Months

The survey respondents were provided with the following question: “Currently, in Texas eligible new mothers receive six months of postpartum (i.e., after their baby is born) coverage under Medicaid. Do you support or oppose legislation that would expand postpartum coverage under Medicaid for these new mothers to 12 months?”

Figure 4 provides the distribution of the responses. Three out of four Texans (75%) support this legislation to expand postpartum Medicaid coverage from six to 12 months, 47% strongly and 28% somewhat. In contrast, one in four Texans (25%) oppose this legislation, 12% strongly and 13% somewhat.

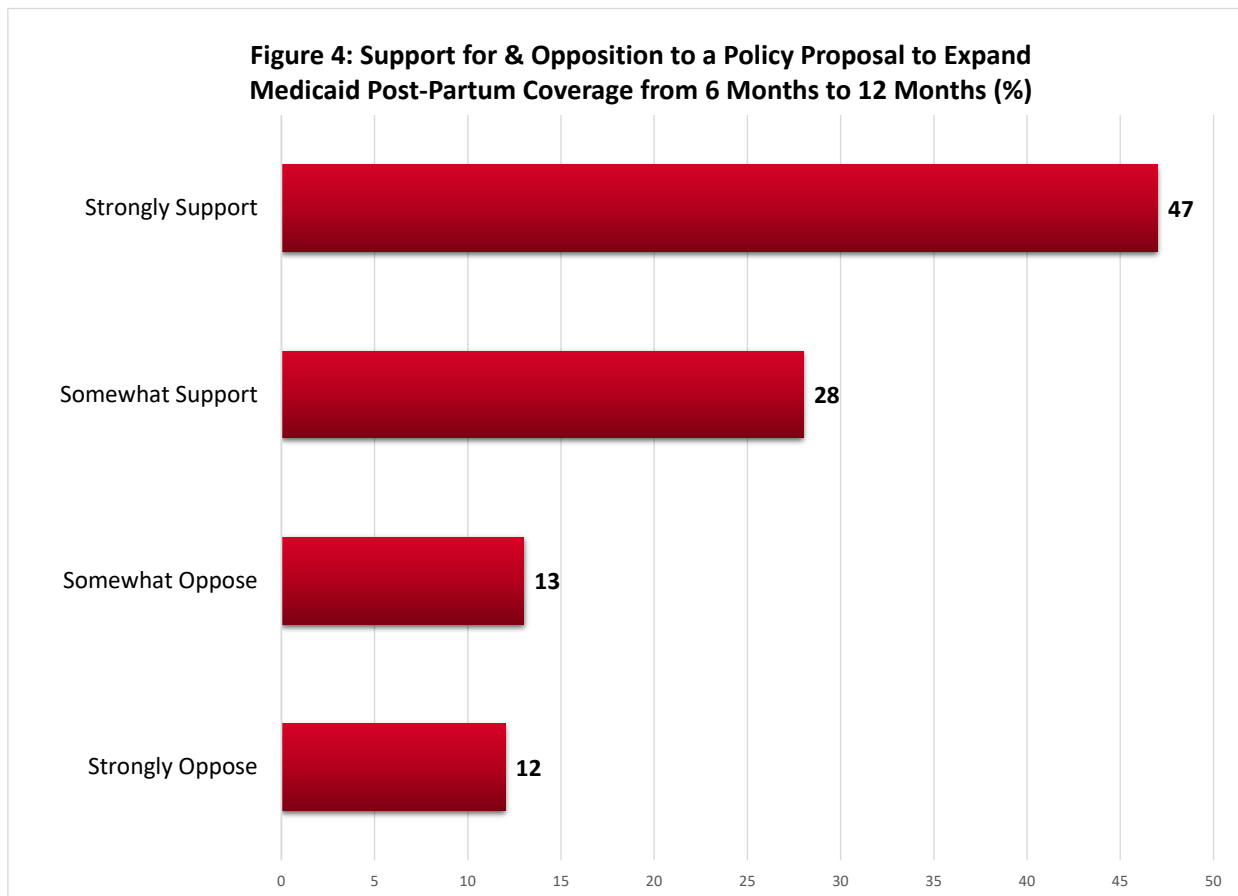


Table 8 provides breaks down the proportion of Texans who support (strongly or somewhat) this proposal by ethnicity/race, gender, generation, and partisanship. Support ranges from a low of 60% to a high of 91% across these different sub-groups, underscoring that the legislation enjoys majority support across all demographic groups. That said, there are some statistically salient ethnic/racial, generational, and partisan, though not gender, differences in support. Black Texans (91%) are significantly more likely to support the legislation than either Latino (76%) or white (69%) Texans. Members of the Silent/Boomer (60%) generational cohort are significantly less likely to support the legislation than are the members of the other three generational cohorts (76%, 85%, 82% respectively). And Democrats (91%) are significantly more likely to support the legislation than are Independents (72%) or Republicans (63%), although it is important to note that more than three out of five Republicans and more than two out of three Independents does support the legislation to expand Medicaid’s postpartum coverage from six to 12 months.

Table 8: Support for Expanding Medicaid Post-Partum Coverage from 6 Months to 12 Months (%)

Group	Sub-Group	Percentage Supporting Policy
Overall	Overall	75 (47)
Ethnicity/Race	White	69 (41)
	Latino	76 (55)
	Black	91 (48)
Gender	Women	76 (49)
	Men	74 (44)
Generation	Silent/Boomers	60 (35)
	Generation X	76 (44)
	Millennials	85 (56)
	Generation Z	82 (55)
Partisan ID	Democrat	91 (65)
	Independent	72 (38)
	Republican	63 (33)

Proportion strongly in support in parentheses.

Support for Six Proposed Texas Sales Tax Exemptions

In the survey, the respondents were provided with the following question: “Legislation has been submitted in the Texas Legislature that if passed would result in the elimination of the state sales tax for certain items. Do you support or oppose legislation that would exempt:”

- Feminine hygiene products from the state sales tax.
- Child and adult diapers from the state sales tax.
- Child diapers and baby wipes from the state sales tax.
- Textbooks purchased or rented by university and college students from the state sales tax for one week in August and one week in January.

- Maternity clothing from the state sales tax.
- Computers, tablets, and smartphones priced under \$500 and purchased during the August back to school tax free weekend from the state sales tax.

Table 9 provides the distribution of the proportion who strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose and strongly oppose each one of the six proposed sales tax exemptions (which were rotated in the survey). Approximately one-half of Texans strongly support five of the six proposed sales tax exemptions for: textbooks purchased or rented by university or college students during one month in August and in January (57%), child and adult diapers (52%), child diapers and baby wipes (51%), computers, tablets and smartphones priced under \$500 and purchased during the August back to school tax free weekend (49%), and feminine hygiene products (49%). The proportion strongly opposing these six exemptions ranges from a low of 5% (college/university textbooks) to a high of 14% (maternity clothing).

Table 9: Support for & Opposition to Six Proposed Texas Sales Tax Exemptions (%)

Proposed Sales Tax Exemption	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Textbooks for One Week in August & January	57	30	8	5
Child & Adult Diapers	52	29	10	9
Child Diapers & Baby Wipes	51	30	11	8
Computers/Tablets Under \$500 for One Week in August	49	34	9	8
Feminine Hygiene Products	49	26	14	11
Maternity Clothing	35	32	19	14

Figure 5 provides the proportion of Texans who support (strongly or somewhat) legislation that would provide for each one of the six sales tax exemptions. Almost nine out of ten (87%) Texans support exempting college and university textbooks purchased during one week in August and one week in September from the state sales tax, with 83% supporting a sales tax exemption for computers, tablets and smartphones priced under \$500 and purchased during the August back to school tax free weekend, and 81% supporting proposals to exempt child diapers, adult diapers, and baby wipes from the state sales tax. Three out of four (75%) Texans support legislation that would exempt feminine hygiene products from the state sales tax while two out of three (67%) support a sales tax exemption for maternity clothing.

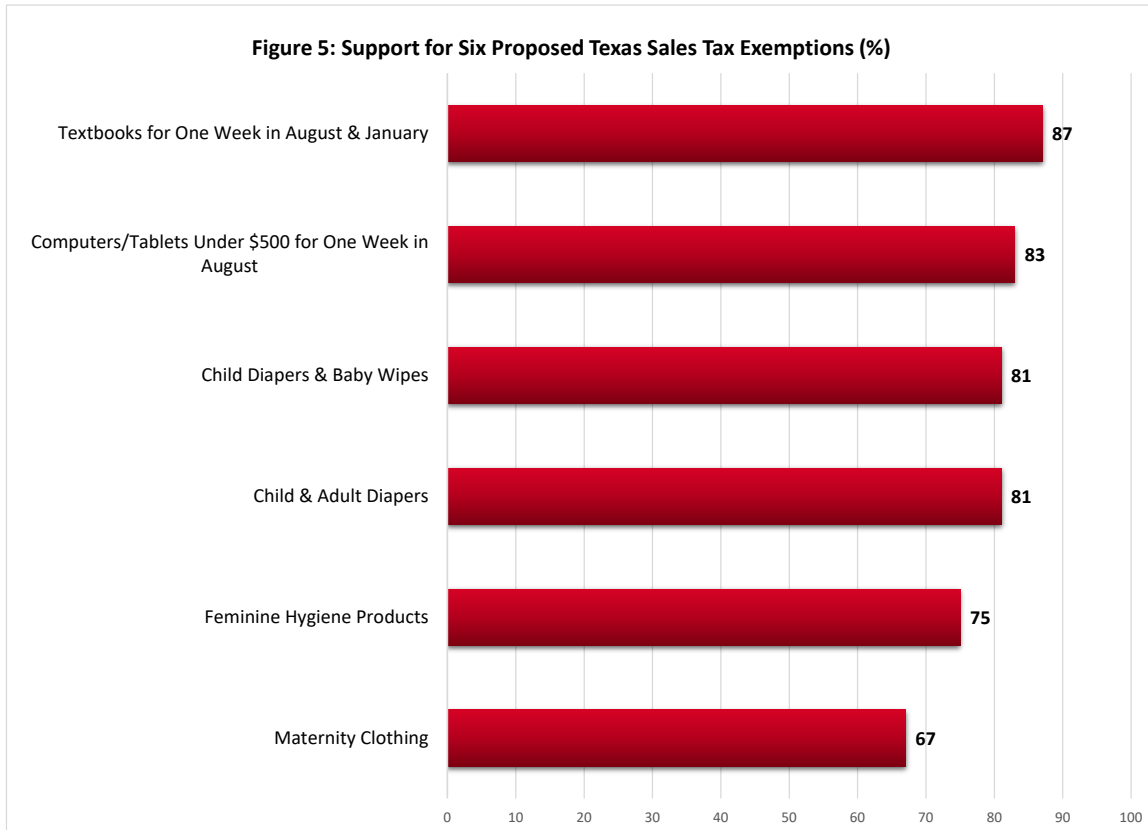


Table 10 breaks down the support for the six sales tax exemptions by ethnicity/race. Overall, there do not exist any noteworthy ethnic/racial differences in regard to support for this legislation, with the very modest exception of Black Texans being somewhat more likely to support a tax exemption for maternity clothing than Latino and white Texans, 75% to 66% and 65%.

Table 10: Ethnicity/Race & Support for Six Proposed Sales Tax Exemptions (%)

Proposed Sales Tax Exemption	White	Latino	Black
Textbooks for One Week in August & January	89 (58)	84 (54)	85 (59)
Child & Adult Diapers	83 (52)	89 (50)	89 (52)
Child Diapers & Baby Wipes	82 (51)	80 (50)	79 (49)
Computers/Tablets Under \$500 for One Week in August	81 (44)	84 (51)	87 (54)
Feminine Hygiene Products	76 (48)	71 (47)	75 (48)
Maternity Clothing	65 (33)	66 (34)	75 (42)

Proportion strongly supporting in parentheses.

Table 11 breaks down the support for the six sales tax exemptions by gender. With two exceptions, there do not exist any salient differences between women and men in support of these bills. The more minor difference between women and men is in support for a tax exemption for child and adult diapers (86% vs. 76%, respectively) while the more major difference is in support for a tax exemption for feminine hygiene products (81% vs. 68%, respectively), although even in the latter case it is important to note that more than two out of three men support the sales tax exemption for feminine hygiene products.

Table 11: Gender & Support for Six Proposed Sales Tax Exemptions (%)

Proposed Sales Tax Exemption	Women	Men
Textbooks for One Week in August & January	89 (59)	85 (54)
Child & Adult Diapers	86 (58)	76 (46)
Child Diapers & Baby Wipes	85 (55)	77 (47)
Computers/Tablets Under \$500 for One Week in August	87 (49)	80 (49)
Feminine Hygiene Products	81 (56)	68 (41)
Maternity Clothing	67 (35)	66 (34)

Proportion strongly supporting in parentheses.

Table 12 breaks down the support for the six sales tax exemptions by generation. Overall, there does not exist much in the way of salient inter-generational differences in support for these six sales tax exemptions. One exception however is related to the exemption for feminine hygiene products, which a notably higher proportion of Millennials (88%) than members of the Baby Boomer/Silent Generation cohort (71%) and members of Generation Z (65%) support.

Table 12: Generation & Support for Six Proposed Sales Tax Exemptions

Proposed Sales Tax Exemption	Boomers/Silent	Gen-X	Millennials	Gen-Z
Textbooks for One Week in August & January	91 (61)	91 (63)	81 (54)	81 (43)
Child & Adult Diapers	86 (57)	82 (53)	81 (53)	71 (39)
Child Diapers & Baby Wipes	80 (52)	83 (50)	82 (56)	74 (39)
Computers/Tablets Under \$500 for One Week in August	84 (54)	88 (53)	82 (44)	77 (41)
Feminine Hygiene Products	71 (46)	81 (53)	88 (51)	65 (43)
Maternity Clothing	64 (32)	66 (37)	68 (38)	70 (28)

Proportion strongly supporting in parentheses.

Table 13 breaks down the support for the six sales tax exemptions by partisanship. More than three out of four Democrats (91%), Republicans (84%) and Independents (79%) support the sales tax exemption for college/university textbooks. While Democrats favor all six exemptions to a greater degree than Republicans, the inter-party difference is only statistically significant for three exemptions: child and adult diapers (87% vs. 71%), feminine hygiene products (83% vs. 69%), and maternity clothing (75% vs. 61%). It is important to note however that more than two out of three Republicans support legislation that would provide a sales tax exemption for feminine hygiene products and for child and adult diapers.

Table 13: Partisan ID & Support for Six Proposed Sales Tax Exemptions (%)

Proposed Sales Tax Exemption	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Textbooks for One Week in August & January	91 (66)	79 (49)	84 (51)
Child & Adult Diapers	87 (62)	70 (41)	71 (46)
Child Diapers & Baby Wipes	84 (62)	74 (42)	78 (44)
Computers/Tablets Under \$500 for One Week in August	88 (55)	75 (38)	80 (44)
Feminine Hygiene Products	83 (61)	70 (42)	69 (40)
Maternity Clothing	75 (41)	62 (33)	61 (30)

Proportion strongly supporting in parentheses.

Report Authors

Renée Cross, Senior Executive Director & Researcher, Hobby School of Public Affairs

Mark P. Jones, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy's Fellow in Political Science, Rice University;
Senior Research Fellow, Hobby School of Public Affairs

Research Team

Maria P. Perez Argüelles, Research Associate, Hobby School of Public Affairs

Savannah Sipole, Research Associate, Hobby School of Public Affairs

Agustín Vallejo, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Hobby School of Public Affairs