

Legislators Discuss COVID-19, Healthcare and Education During Haynes and Boone's Virtual 2021 Texas Legislative Preview

January 7, 2021 Rafael Anchia, John Turner

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Haynes Boone hosted its biennial Texas Legislative Preview on Jan. 7, 2021, examining current affairs and issues that are expected to come up in the 87th Texas Legislature.

The traditionally in-person event was broadcast as a webinar panel discussion featuring four Texas state representatives: Haynes Boone Of Counsel [Rafael Anchia](#) (D-Dallas), Haynes Boone Partner [John Turner](#) (D-Dallas), Rep. Brooks Landgraf (R-Odessa), and Rep. Angie Chen Button (R-Richardson). The non-partisan event was moderated by Texas Tribune CEO and Co-founder Evan Smith.

The panelists spent much of the session discussing the COVID-19 pandemic and the negative impact it will continue to have on the state's economy and healthcare system.

"This will have to be the pandemic session," Anchia said, concurring with the other panelists that legislators will face a challenge addressing the state's infrastructure needs while contending with revenue shortfalls caused by the pandemic and declining crude oil prices.

"We all expect this to be a session of scarce resources," Turner said. "Maybe the federal government will be willing to step forward and help in this session" with additional COVID-19 relief measures such as the CARES Act.

Amid the budget challenges, the panelists discussed whether it will be possible for Texas to sustain the increases in education funding that were enacted in the previous legislative session.

"We need to honor our [education] promises" from the prior session, Button said. "Education is a necessary investment."

She and other panelists agreed that the state also needs to: continue to innovate and invest in infrastructure, such as improved broadband access to rural districts and low-income populations; support education and healthcare; promote job growth; and allow the state to continue to attract corporate relocations.

The webinar ended with a discussion of redistricting and whether a special session of the legislature would need to be called, after the regular session convenes, to redraw voting districts. Given delays in the 2020 census, resulting from the pandemic, Anchia said, the redistricting process might not be addressed until the next legislative session, in 2023.