

“INSIDE”

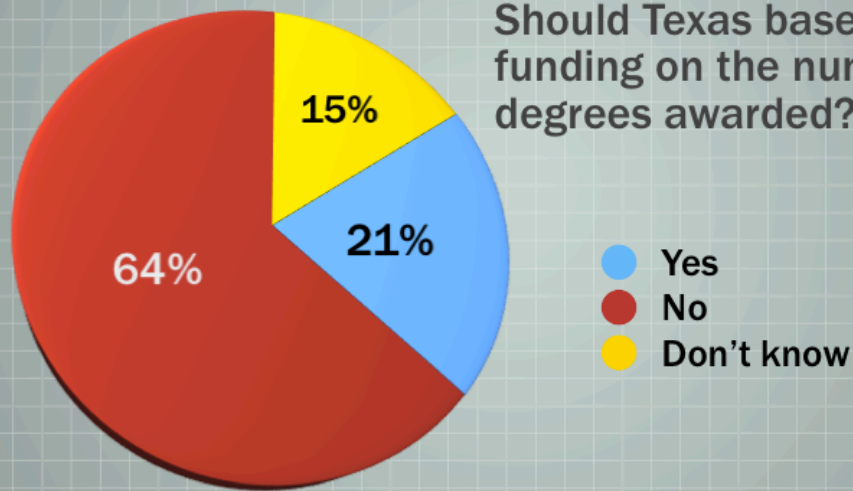
INTELLIGENCE

THE TEXAS TRIBUNE
TEXAS  WEEKLY

The insider's poll for the week of February 14.

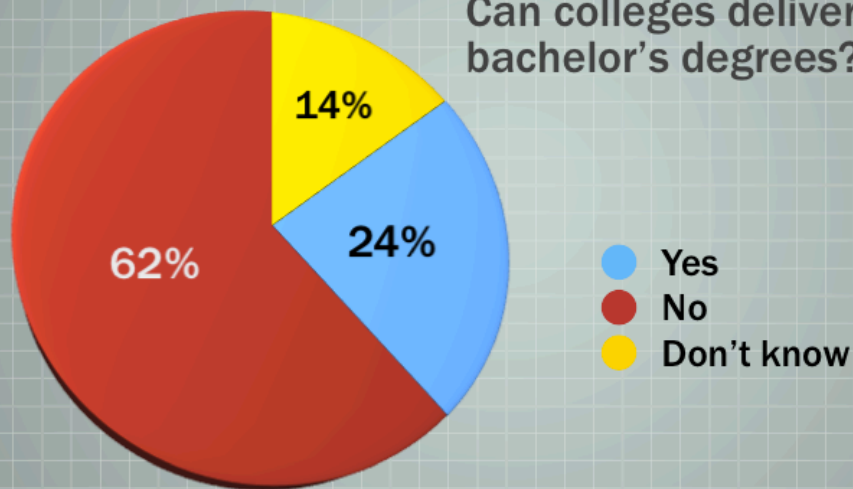
INSIDE INTELLIGENCE

Should Texas base college funding on the number of degrees awarded?

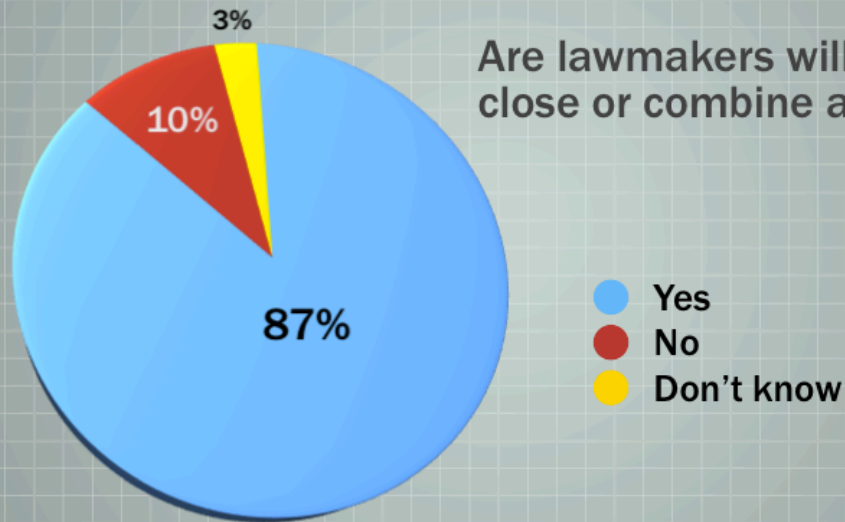


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Can colleges deliver \$10,000 bachelor's degrees?



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Are lawmakers willing to close or combine agencies?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

This week's open-ended prompt was: "*If lawmakers decide to save money by consolidating or closing agencies, which state agencies should they target?*" And here's how the insiders answered:

- "Those that appear to perform overlapping functions."
- "Railroad Commission"
- "TDHCA"
- "The TCEQ, PUC and ERCOT."
- "Don't know"
- "Supreme Court and Court of Criminal Appeals. Some of the appellate districts. The various health agencies."
- "The Governor's office"
- "Combine PUC RRC TCEQ, but it really does not matter when it comes to saving money. Great campaign talking points, though, to counter whatever revenue increases they will have to pass."
- "Anything not putting public health or public education at serious risk."
- "Railroad Commission and all the agencies proposed in the Governor's budget."
- "I don't think closing agencies is the answer"
- "Texas Enterprise Fund"
- "Combine the multiple river authority agencies, sunset advisory commission"
- "PUC & RRC should be combined"
- "Those recommended for consolidation by Sunset Commission."
- "Facilities Commission; Agriculture Department; Real Estate Commission"
- "'One our two Appeals Courts ... Architectural Examiners Board ... Arts Commission ... Veterans Land Board'"
- "Redundant agencies . . . 'nice to have' agencies."

- "Railroad Commission, General Land Office"
- "Office of public utility counsel"
- "OCCC first"
- "'Railroad Commission and TCEQ ... Ag and Parks & Wildlife ... TRS and ERS ... TDCJ and TYC ... Various mid-level provider regulatory boards under Texas Medical Board'"
- "Railroad Commission, Credit Union Commission, State Barbering Advisory Board, State Board of Education, Texas Music Office, Texas Real Estate Commission,"
- "Consolidate the HHS agencies, combine licensing boards that have similar functions."
- "TX Dept of Ag"
- "Any and all not considered absolutely essential"
- "They should start with reviewing Sunset reports from the last 10 years and seeing which agencies have been vetted and are disposable."
- "RRC. PUC"
- "Dept of Rural Affairs"
- "Combining energy related agencies, and health related agencies, etc, seems wise and efficient. Closing agencies like the Historical Commission would be a crime, unless those duties are absorbed by someone else."
- "Governor Perry's list looks like a good start."
- "They simply won't. The agencies all have big constituencies (and lobbyists who represent those constituencies) and they won't target any."
- "All the redundant ones, it makes zero sense to have a Podiatry Board, Acupuncture, etc merge them all into one board of Health"
- "The Texas Enterprise Fund and the Texas Emerging Technology Fund"
- "Rural Affairs to Dept Ag"
- "Sunset Commission has a lot of good ideas about this. We should either do what they recommend, or close the Sunset Commission."
- "Texas education agency and Higher Education Coordinating Board (without the elected board)"
- "All licensing should be consolidated to TDLR."
- "Don't know"
- "They will not save money by merging regulatory agencies since they are substantially fee driven. To save GR money, you have to go to where GR is spent-- education and human services. There may be savings available from school district consolidation; but that is a politically loaded exercise."
- "It doesn't matter. There is not enough money to be saved in consolidation to make any difference in the budget crisis."
- "DIR"
- "'It makes sense to consolidate the Texas Medical Board, the Texas Board of Nursing, the Texas Board of Dental Examiners, the Texas Optometry Board, the Texas Board of Examiners of Psychologists, the Texas Board of Chiropractic Examiners, the Texas Board of Pharmacy, the Executive Council of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Examiners and the Texas Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners into one new agency, the Health Professions Agency.'"
- "They certainly shouldn't close the Historical Commission or the Commission on the Arts. They should start with the agencies where there are already management structures in place to deal with the programs being transferred. For example, DIR and the Facilities Commission could be transferred to the Comptroller with practically no loss of operational capability and with a real chance to reduce administrative overhead. Licensing & Regulation could be transferred to the Secretary of State under the same conditions. Many licensing boards could be shuttered, with the State relying on subject-matter

experts from State universities to provide input on licensing issues to help fill the gap, along with an advisory committee structure that meets once or so a year, and use videoconference facilities to hold those meetings. Same for the proposal of consolidating health boards into a new agency -- just transfer them all over to HHSC under a similar structure. TABC could be moved to DPS (the TABC agents all want to be the cops anyway), and the Commission on Jail Standards could go over there or over to Sam Houston State University. Consolidate the Higher Education Coordinating Board with TEA. Abolish the Council on Competitive Government. Abolish the Fire Fighters' Pension Commissioner and consolidate with ERS. Merge PUC & RRC. Merge all retirement systems together and reduce administrative overhead related to having multiple retirement systems (and the savings are there!). All consolidations and closings should be accompanied by both strict FTE and management position caps so that line workers who deliver program services are the ones who will continue to provide those services and that any savings are not eaten up by new 'managers' to 'manage change.' Finally, whether the Lege consolidates or closes agencies, they should implement the Gallego Committee's recommendations for improving efficiency and recouping costs."

- "Eliminating / combining agencies needs to be done. DIR could go away and few people would know it. What has to be done to save money is to cut entitlement programs and education. No big secret there."

- "It's like Willie Sutton said about robbing banks -- you've got to go where the money is. HHS was mostly consolidated earlier this century but more can still be done. Along with education, that's where true cost savings can be found."

- "Small agencies that can be consolidated into like functions."

- "Most of the governor's office functions"

- "Merge all small agencies into TDLR."

- "Combine PUC and the Railroad commission Combine DPS and TABC"

- "No opinion. Closing several smaller and/or noncritical agencies is likely very politically appealing but doesn't really make that big of a dent in the budget."

- "None. There are no savings in consolidation or closing."

- "Firefighters Pension Commission, Feed & Fertilizer Control Service, Gulf Coast Waste Disposal Authority, Marriage & Family Therapists, All the retirement system boards should be put under one umbrella, all the River Authorities should be put under one umbrella"

- "Those that do not perform a core state function should be scrutinized for closure; many agencies should be consolidated"

- "TEA"

- "Railroad Commission"

- "TCEQ and the Railroad Commission"

- "No answer"

- "The Governor's choices are a good start."

- "Facilities Commission"

- "While not certain of which agencies are candidates for closing or consolidation, such a process should take place regardless of the state's financial status. If this decision is not presently part of the Sunset process, it should be."

- "The above mentioned as well as TYC and TJPC should be consolidated."

- "DIR"

- "Railroad Commission, anything with the arts, anything that can be handled better by counties or regional county organizations."

- "We should not close arts related agencies as arts affects learning abilities in children. Perhaps the State Board of Education could be closed."

- "Non essential / non regulatory"

- "DIR"
- "How about combining all those medical or quasi medical licensing entities (dentists, chiropractors, opticians e.g.) into one medical licensing entity? Similarly, the financial institution agencies could be consolidated, as could the various engineering and architecture licensing entities (engineers, landscape architects, geoscientists, etc.). OneStar should be closed--by definition not a public function."
- "Railroad Commission, Enterprise Fund, Emerging Technology Fund."
- "Those that serve no important statewide purpose, with mission statements making frequent use of the word 'promote'."
- "PUC/RRC"
- "Railroad Commission, Land Commission, Gaming and Lottery....."
- "Not sure. I don't think they will close the Historical Commission."
- "It would be nice if they actually sunsetted an agency that was up for sunset"
- "RRC, PUC"
- "Not looking at them myself"
- "Combine PUC and RR Commission"
- "Savings are marginal relative to deficit and gesture largely symbolic"
- "All licensing and natural resources agencies."
- "SORM"
- "Licensing agencies, health science centers"
- "No opinion."
- ""For closure, consider those agencies that are (a) largely funded by state general revenue rather than fees or federal funds and (b) perform services that we can do without for several years. (Re-starting a closed agency will take considerable time, probably more time than winding down.) ... For consolidation, don't waste time considering it or the expense of printing new letterhead. It won't save a dime, expect where people get too confused to access needed services.""
- "The small ones that are licensing or examiners' board agencies."
- "Keep TDI and TxDOT, consolidate TCEQ and the water board and the various authorities, consolidate PUC and RRC and then every other agency should be closed or consolidated into one of the above."
- ""Higher Ed Coordinating Board ... Railroad Commission""
- "Arts, OPIC, OPUC, Film Commission, various non essential Boards within DSHS/HHSC, DIR into comptroller office."
- "Cost savings from such actions are likely to be all show and no dough. Such an effort is really just a distraction from the real issues and hard budget choices that need to be made."
- "Not the ones the Governor did. All those have been fought over in sunset."
- "Facilities Commission; TDHCA; Consolidate Vet Land Commission & Vet Land Board"
- "Railroad Commission."
- "Texas Railroad Commission"
- "Historical commission. Due to then messing w the gov. Just kidding"
- "All health care licensing should be placed under the medical board. Quacks do not police the activities of fellow Quacks well."
- "They should look at all agencies and focus on duplication of the same or similar services and the possibility of consolidation."
- "RRC, PUC, TCEQ, TDHCA, TSAHC,"
- "None. Rearranging chairs on the deck. This is not the issue."

- "Licensing agencies."
- "This discussion speaks to the failure of the sunset process which was designed to do this in a logical and orderly fashion. It doesn't work and needs to be reformed."
- "Railroad Commission"
- "Small agencies that are mostly pass-thrus for federal money (like Housing & Comm Affairs) are good consolidation targets; put remaining staff in Gov's office. Closing regulatory agencies cuts the budget but doesn't really help balance it (the GR-dedicated issue)."
- "Only those that do not contribute to states economy"
- "I have no list unless did something like close the Ag Comm and land office that are left over from the 19th Century and made them some smaller appointed agency."
- "Administrative consolidation of school districts. Cut 1/2 vice principals and cut athletic budgets by 30% - including AD salaries."
- "Don't know"
- "The Public Utility Commission"
- "Perry's list is a good start."
- "Put the State Preservation Board under the Historical Commission, the Animal Health Commission under the Agriculture Department, the Alcoholic Beverage Commission under the Department of Public Safety, the Railroad Commission under the General Land Office, and the responsibility to collect all debt owed to the state under the Attorney General. Just for good measure, go ahead and replace the Lottery and Racing Commissions with the State Gaming Commission to handle the expansion of gambling in Texas!"
- "They should look at every state agency. This would be a good function for the newly recreated Government Reform Committee chaired by Bill Callegari."
- "None"
- "The legislature should consolidate TEA and THECB. Create an Education Czar overseeing both P-12 and higher education with a director for P-12 and another one for higher education."
- "None"
- "TYC & Juvenile Probation Commission, Health Licensing Agencies, Cultural Affairs agencies,"
- "All non-essential agencies."

Our thanks to this week's participants: Clyde Alexander, George Allen, Ellen Arnold, Jay Arnold, Jim Arnold, Louis Bacarisse, Charles Bailey, Reggie Bashur, Don Baylor, Dave Beckwith, Tom Blanton, Hugh Brady, Andy Brown, Terri Burke, Jose Camacho, Lydia Camarillo, Kerry Cammack, Snapper Carr, Janis Carter, George Cofer, Rick Cofer, John Colyandro, Harold Cook, Eva De Luna-Castro, Hector Deleon, Kate Doner, Scott Dunaway, David Dunn, Jack Erskine, Alan Erwin, Gay Erwin, John Esparza, Jon Fisher, Terry Frakes, Wil Galloway, Bruce Gibson, Scott Gilmore, Daniel Gonzalez, Jim Grace, Alan Gray, John Greytok, Michael Grimes, Billy Hamilton, Wayne Hamilton, Albert Hawkins, Adam Haynes, Shanna Igo, Deborah Ingersoll, Cal Jillson, Jason Johnson, Richard Khouri, Tom Kleinworth, Tim Lambert, Nick Lampson, Pete Laney, James LeBas, Donald Lee, Luke Legate, Leslie Lemon, Richard Levy, Ruben Longoria, Vilma Luna, Matt Mackowiak, Bryan Mayes, Patricia McCandless, Dan McClung, Scott McCown, Mike McKinney, Robert Miller, Bee Moorhead, Steve Murdock, Craig Murphy, Keir Murray, Richard Murray, Todd Olsen, Gardner Pate, Jerry Philips, Tom Phillips, Wayne Pierce, John Pitts, Royce Poinsett, Kraege Polan, Jay Propes, Ted Melina Raab, Bill Ratliff, Tim Reeves, Carl Richie, Kim Ross, Luis Saenz, Jeff Saitis, Mark Sanders, Jim Sartwelle, Stan Schlueter, Steve Scurlock, Terri Seales, Christopher Shields, Martha Smiley, Terral Smith, Todd Smith, Larry Soward, Bryan Sperry, Tom Spilman, Jason Stanford, Keith Strama, Bob Strauser, Russ Tidwell, Bruce Todd, Trey Trainor, Ken Whalen, Darren Whitehurst, Chad Wilbanks, Ellen Williams, Michael Wilt, Peck Young, and Angelo Zottarelli.