



**October 22, 2019**

# Texas Welcomes All

- 2016 – North Carolina Bathroom Bill Passes
- 2017 – 85<sup>th</sup> Texas State Legislative Session
  - Coalition Creation
  - Legislative Strategy, Outreach, Engagement
  - Challenges and Successes
- 2018 – Session Interim
  - Pro-Business Candidate Support
  - Industry Outreach
  - 2018 Elections
  - Coalition Reorganization
- 2019 – 86<sup>th</sup> Texas State Legislative Session
  - Priorities and Concerns
  - Challenges and Successes
  - Looking Ahead



# Texas Welcomes All

## North Carolina – 2016

- March 23 – North Carolina legislature passed HB 2 – the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act
  - Backlash from meetings industry
  - NCAA relocation
  - Concert cancellations
- VisitDallas President/CEO, Phillip Jones, sounded alarm in Dallas
  - Shared concerns at December 2016 Annual Meeting
  - Briefed industry leaders on concerns in Texas
- March 30, 2017, the legislature partially repealed House Bill 2, removing the restrictions on restroom use by transgender individuals.

# Texas Welcomes All

## Texas – 2017

- January 5 – Senator Lois Kolkhorst files SB 6 – Texas Privacy Act
  - Require transgender Texans to use public bathrooms that correspond with their sex assigned at birth.
  - Prohibit city and county officials from adopting ordinances that prevent private businesses from making policies for their bathrooms and dressing rooms.
  - Require each locker room or restroom in government buildings, public schools and universities to be designated for use based on biological sex.
  - Authorize the attorney general to levy a civil penalty if local governments and school districts do not follow the regulations.
  - Considered “top priority” for Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick.

# Texas Welcomes All

## Texas – 2017

- January 6 – VisitDallas hosts press conference to oppose SB 6
  - Staff begins researching similar coalitions across U.S.
  - Staff purchases “TexasWelcomesAll” domain
  - Staff begins creation of social media accounts
- January 9 – PCMA Convening Leaders occurs in Austin, Texas
- January 11 – VisitDallas, Texas DMOs host press conference at State Capitol to launch **Texas Welcomes All**
  - Phillip Jones, VisitDallas
  - Deborah Sexton, PCMA
  - Bill Reed, PCMA Board Chairman
  - Susan Robertson, ASAE
  - Texas Association of Business



January 11, 2017 – Texas State Capitol

# Texas Welcomes All

## 2017 Legislative Strategy, Outreach & Engagement

### ➤ Strategy

- Align with Texas Association of Business, Texas Competes, Equality Texas
- Focus on House of Representatives (150 members)
- Regular meetings with House Speaker, State Affairs chairman

### ➤ Outreach

- Pro-business “moderate” Republicans and all Democrats

### ➤ Engagement

- Office meetings, press conferences, providing “cover”
- Testify at Senate and House Committee hearings
  - Provide data on financial losses (Perryman Study)

# Texas Welcomes All

## 2017 Texas Welcomes All Strategy

- Engagement (cont.)
  - Engage business community (large and small)
  - Engage industry associations
    - PCMA, ASAE, Association Forum, IAEE, MEI, others
  - Legislative Forum/town hall in Dallas
  - Op-ed in major newspapers
  - Any and all media opportunities



# Texas Welcomes All

## End of 85<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session

- SB 6 passed Senate
  - Did not pass House
- Legislative Session ended with no bathroom bill passed
- Governor called Special Session
  - List of 20 priorities, including bathroom bill
  - Bathroom bill filed in Senate and House



# Texas Welcomes All

## Special Session Strategy

- Continue legislator outreach
- Continue alignment with business community
  - Joint big business CEO letter, oil and gas industry
- Continue alignment with similar coalitions
- Continue alignment with industry leaders
- Fundraising through American Unity Fund
  - Place radio and print ads in target markets
- Host one press conference each week of Special Session
  - Business and industry leaders
  - Law enforcement
  - Faith leaders
  - Women in business



Faith leaders from around Texas gather at First United Methodist Church near the Texas Capitol as the Texas Believes coalition on Feb. 9, 2017. The group is opposing several upcoming anti-LGBT bills and is rejecting the use of faith as a political weapon to justify discrimination. © Bob Daemmrich for The Texas Tribune



# Special Session Press Conferences

# Texas Welcomes All

## End of Special Session

- SB 3 passed Senate
- HB 46 failed House
- Bathroom bill dead





# Texas Welcomes All

## 2018 – Session Interim

- Pro-Business Candidate Support
  - Identify candidates
  - Find support
- Industry Outreach
  - Keep PCMA, ASAE, others current with updates
  - Panel at PCMA in Nashville
  - SKIFT Global Forum in New York City
  - Destinations International Advocacy Symposium in Philadelphia
  - Ad in industry publications



On behalf of Texas Welcomes All and members of the Texas travel and tourism industry, **THANK YOU** for your ongoing support during the 85th Texas Legislative Session and Special Session.



Texas Welcomes All is a catalyst in uniting our community and reminding the world that we support, celebrate and welcome all who visit, live, learn, work and play here. Texas embraces and promotes diversity, inclusion and equality and understands it's our differences that make us stronger. Deep in the heart of Texas, from our contemporary cities to our small towns, and from every corner of our state - we welcome all.



Texas Welcomes All is a coalition of tourism industry leaders who aim to showcase the inclusive nature of Texas and its residents by sharing the message that Texas is open for business to everyone.

[www.TexasWelcomesAll.com](http://www.TexasWelcomesAll.com)

# Texas Welcomes All

## 2018 – Session Interim

- 2018 Elections
  - Flipped 12 House seats
  - Flipped 2 Senate seats



# Texas Welcomes All

## 2018 – Session Interim

- Texas Welcomes All Reorganization
  - Relaunched Texas Welcomes All in summer 2018
  - Developed vision, mission and goals
  - Developed Legislative Agenda
  - Received commitments from Texas DMOs/CVBs



# Texas Welcomes All

## 2018 – Session Interim

- Identified legislative priorities
  - Texas tourism budget
  - Events and Major Events Trust Fund
  - Protection of local non-discrimination ordinances
- Identified legislative concerns
  - Any attempt to broaden the current Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)
  - Religious Refusal Legislation
  - Nullifying Local Non-Discrimination Ordinances
  - Bathroom Bill and/or “Texas Privacy Act”

# RELIGIOUS REFUSALS

- “Religious refusal”: A category of legislation intended to allow individuals and organizations to call on religious belief in refusing to serve, sell to, or work with a person or persons.
- Likely to take both **broad** and **targeted** forms
- License to Discriminate
- **This wave of religious refusals will impact employers’ operations, brands, and bottom lines.**

# RELIGIOUS REFUSALS

- There are five categories of targeted religious refusals which were filed in Texas in 2017:
- **Marriage:** Would allow elected officials and government employees to refuse to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples.
- **Business & employment:** These vary from refusals for wedding industry businesses and employees, to broader protection for individuals and businesses in any industry to decline services, to the creation of a “conscientious objector” status for employees who might create a hostile work environment or refuse to serve certain customers.

# RELIGIOUS REFUSALS

- **Higher ed:** Would require colleges and universities to allocate taxpayer funds to student groups that discriminate on membership, in violation of non-discrimination policies.
- **Health care:** Would allow medical professionals to refuse to treat certain patients or to provide certain medical services.
- **Adoption & foster care:** (Texas law as of 2017) Allows taxpayer-funded child welfare organizations to discriminate in adoption and foster care services.

# WHY RELIGIOUS REFUSALS MATTER TO BUSINESS

- The strategy to splinter refusals into more targeted bills assumes that while the business community might rally against a broad RFRA in the mold of Indiana’s 2015 law, employers and chambers of commerce might be persuaded that targeted religious refusals are outside their economic competitiveness lane. But businesses rightly have an interest in these policies, no matter how targeted.
- Religious refusals beyond the current TRFRA create a “license to discriminate” on a number of fronts that will affect workers’ personal and family lives, conflict with corporate diversity & inclusion strategies, and create legal, financial, and brand headaches for businesses:

# WHY RELIGIOUS REFUSALS MATTER TO BUSINESS

- Religious refusals can create exemptions “for virtually anything that a person contends is part of their religion.
- **Tourism woes:** Because it now has a child welfare religious refusal law in place, **Texas is subject to an official travel ban from the state of California.**
- **Impact on LGBT workforce:** Religious refusals are crafted in large part with the LGBT community in mind, so **an employer’s workforce, and the children of the workforce, will be directly impacted.** This goes beyond baking the cake: Texas bills in 2017 would have allowed a pediatrician to refuse to care for the child of a gay couple, a retail worker to refuse to serve a transgender customer, an employee to refuse to work on a project with a bisexual teammate, and more.

# WHY RELIGIOUS REFUSALS MATTER TO BUSINESS

- **HR headaches:** Enshrining in law the right of individual employees to discriminate against customers and co-workers creates a **nightmare scenario for human resources, and for broader diversity and inclusion efforts** within a company.
- **Brand headaches:** In the age of social media, customer-facing businesses have a lot to worry about when it comes to laws that would allow workers to pick and choose whom to serve.
- **Undoing of municipal non-discrimination protections:** The inclusive non-discrimination protections that many Texas employers rely on in big cities could be undone in whole or in part by any number of religious refusals and pre-emption bills that have been attempted in the past.

# Texas Welcomes All

## 2019 – 86<sup>th</sup> State Legislative Session

- New House Speaker – Dennis Bonnen
- Challenges – Several religious refusal bills filed
  - Included bathroom bill language
  - Nullified local non-discrimination ordinances
  - Included any profession requiring a license to work in Texas
- Several pre-emptive bills filed re: paid medical sick leave
  - No initial position on these bills
  - Opposed bills when local non-discrimination protection language striped from bill at hearing

# Texas Welcomes All

## 2019 Legislative Strategy, Outreach & Engagement

- Similar Strategy
  - Align with Texas Association of Business, Texas Competes, Equality Texas
  - Align with business community (Apple, IBM, Celanese, etc.)
  - Align with faith community
  - Focus on House of Representatives (150 members)
- Similar Outreach
  - Pro-business “moderate” Republicans and all Democrats
- Engagement
  - Office meetings, press conferences
  - Testify at Senate and House Committee hearings

# Texas Welcomes All

## End of 86<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session – Successes

- No “religious refusal” bill passed
- No pre-emptive bill passed
- “Chick-fil-A Bill” passed
  - Prohibits the government from taking "adverse action" against any individuals or businesses based on membership, support or donations to religious groups.

# Texas Welcomes All

## Texas Welcomes All – Looking Ahead

- Non-profit status (501c4)
- Foundation (501c3)
- Board of Directors
  - Major Texas DMO representation
  - ASAE
  - Executive Director
- Funding
  - DMO membership
  - Partner membership
  - Grants

# Coalition Partners



# Texas Welcomes All

Q/A

# Thank you

