TEXAS SCORECARD

[redacted]

[redacted]Fw: SAVE AUSTIN NOW: 13k+ Petitions Received (65% of 20k) before 2/1/26 Initial Deadline // 8 Sign/Drop Off Meet Ups Scheduled // Vols, Support Needed
1 message

[redacted] Fri, Jan 23, 2026 at 11:38 AM

[redacted]

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Adam Cahn** [redacted]
Date: Thu, Jan 22, 2026 at 10:03 AM
Subject: Fw: SAVE AUSTIN NOW: 13k+ Petitions Received (65% of 20k) before 2/1/26 Initial Deadline // 8 Sign/Drop Off Meet Ups Scheduled // Vols, Support Needed
To: Adam Cahn [redacted]

[redacted]

From: Matt Mackowiak, Save Austin Now co-chair <matt@saveaustinnow.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 22, 2026 9:13 AM
To: Adam Cahn [redacted]
Subject: SAVE AUSTIN NOW: 13k+ Petitions Received (65% of 20k) before 2/1/26 Initial Deadline // 8 Sign/Drop Off Meet Ups Scheduled // Vols, Support Needed

SAVE AUSTIN NOW
PAC

Good Thursday morning --

We have some updates for you:

- **INTERNAL CITY-RUN AUDIT ORDINANCE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR OUR CHARTER AMENDMENT**

On Jan. 12, six weeks after we launched our outside performance audit charter amendment petition effort, Mayor **Kirk Watson** announced he was proposing an audit ordinance that the city would manage.

To be fair, as we said at the time, we believe that any effort to review city spending that leads to more efficient spending is positive.

But let us be absolutely clear: **A city-run audit ordinance is NO SUBSTITUTE for our charter amendment.**

Here's why: An ordinance can pass or be removed at ANY TIME with six votes. Watson's proposal has a clever provision that claims nine votes will be required to change it in the future, but that provision is VERY unlikely to survive any legal challenge as one council cannot bind the next.

It is not clear whether the Mayor's ordinance will pass when it is considered at the Feb. 6 meeting, and his proposal will likely change between now and then.

To be fair, there are some good and positive aspects to his initial draft. We appreciate anything that reviews spending in a way that is deeper than any previous effort.

But here are two undeniable facts:

1. **Any audit that is city tun is not external, whether an outside firm consults or not**
2. **You do not rebuild trust with taxpayers by only doing an internal audit**

Our external performance audit charter amendment is:

1. Based almost entirely off what Houston just did ($500k cost, $120M in savings proposed)
2. Requires a fully external, regular, performance audit of the ENTIRE City of Austin budget (for the first time in history) that includes:
   a. Every department
   b. Every vendor and subvendor
   c. Every utility (Austin Energy, Austin Water, and the Austin Transit Partnership which is overseeing Project Connect)
3. The outside contractor must be selected within FOUR MONTHS of passage
4. The outside contractor must complete the first audit within one year of being selected
5. These outside, performance audits MUST BE conducted AT LEAST once every five years
6. Before ANY future tax rate election (like Prop Q), an audit must have been completed NO LESS THAN ONE YEAR before such an election

The simple reality is: Mayor Watson's ordinance could be undone with six council votes next year. Or the year after.

Once our charter amendment passes, it can only be undone with another charter amendment.

Our effort will be the most transformation, structural reform in City of Austin history.

- **EIGHT AUDIT MEET UPs REMAIN OVER THE NEXT 13 DAYS: Drop off signed petitions or come sign in person!**

We have eight remaining meet up events scheduled over the next 13 days where Austinites can come SIGN IN PERSON or DROP OFF SIGNED PETITIONS!

Save Austin Now Audit Petition Meet Ups

Demand an External Affordability Audit!
Audit
Follow the Money!
www.ATXAudit.com

Date	Time	Location
Thur, Jan 22	4:30-6:30p	Reale's w/ Mackenzie Kelly (13450 Research Blvd)
Fri, Jan 23	4-6pm	Bouldin Acres (2027 S. Lamar Blvd)
Sat, Jan 24	10-11:30a	Scholz's (UT pregame) (1607 San Jacinto Blvd)
Mon, Jan 26	8-10a	Starbucks (Patio) (3637 Far West Blvd)
Thur, Jan 29	4:30-6:30p	Reale's w/ Mackenzie Kelly (13450 Research Blvd)
Fri, Jan 30	4-6pm	Bouldin Acres (2027 S. Lamar Blvd)

We will have petitions on hand to sign!
Bring your signed petitions to drop off!

Please come! Please share!

- **PETITION UPDATE: 13,500 Signed Petitions Received with 11 Days to Go!**

Our effort to place a Charter Amendment requiring regular, outside performance audits on the May 2026 ballot is making good initial progress, *but the clock is ticking*.

While only launching about on November 21 (and with Thanksgiving and Christmas in between), we have now collected **13,500+** (67.5%) of the signed petitions that we need. **We have JUST 11 DAYS TO GO (!)** before our FIRST deadline of Feb. 1, 2026.

We have tried to make this as easy as possible, given the constraints the City puts on these efforts.

- We have now mailed more than 80,000 households (20,000 more mailed 1/13/26 and 40k mailing THIS WEEK) the petition (with postage paid in both directions). These mailers cost roughly $1.50/each. **We need to pay for all of this mail!**

YES, I WILL HELP FUND MAIL ASAP

- We have a REQUEST BY MAIL option on our website where you fill out your address, and we mail you the petition directly (same week as requested).
- You can download the petition, print it, fill it out, sign it and mail it in.
- If you email matt@saveaustinnow.com, we will email you the petition as an attachment.
- We have recruited locations around town where you can sign IN PERSON any day of the week. The list of locations is here.

Please make an effort to sign the petition today!

- **URGENT: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

We need volunteers to help collect petitions, canvass large events, and validate collected petitions. You can set your own schedule.

» Please fill out the volunteer form here.

SUPPORT OUR AUDIT EFFORT

DOWNLOAD THE PETITION: We now have an EASY download link which downloads the petition into an 8.5x11 format for easy printing at home or work.

» **Download link** here.

Important: How to Print the Petition Correctly:
• In your printer settings, select **"Actual Size" or "100% scale".**
• **Do NOT** choose "Fit to Page," "Shrink," etc.
• Print **single-sided**, black & white is fine.

If you haven't signed yet, please download, fill out, sign, and mail back. There is space for five Austinites to sign.

If you have signed, can you please collect more signatures from family, friends, colleagues and neighbors THIS WEEK?

MORE MAIL NEEDED: We have mailed 60,000 households a copy of the petition. We need to mail 40,000 more ASAP (it takes time for mail to hit, be opened and read, filled out and mailed back.

Will you help us mail more households TODAY?

» You can securely give here.

» You can also Venmo to @saveaustinnow.

» You can make a check to "Save Austin Now" and mail it to: 807 Brazos Street, Suite 306, Austin, TX 78701.

SUPPORT OUR AUDIT EFFORT

OTHER WAYS TO HELP

1. **REQUEST AN AUDIT PETITION BE MAILED TO YOU**

If you would like an audit petition mailed to your home (with return postage pre-paid) go here. We will mail you a petition ASAP and it will have return envelope with postage paid.

2. **SEND US AN EMAIL AND WE WILL EMAIL YOU THE PETITION AS AN ATTACHMENT AND YOU CAN PRINT IT AT HOME**

Email Matt (matt@saveaustinnow.com) and we will email the petition to you as an attachment. You can then download the petition, print it, fill it out legibly and sign it (11x17 or 8.5x11), and mail it in. There are five sections for signers so we can take up to five signatures from City of Austin residents.

3. **SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER**

Here's the volunteer form, with options to help collect, help pick up, and help validate — on your own schedule.

4. **DONATE TO OUR EFFORT**

We absolutely need your financial support.

- With VERY limited time to qualify for the May 2026 ballot, we are relying on mail as our primary collection method.
- We are mailing a cover letter, the petition (2 pages, 11x17, and an envelope with return postage paid). This costs roughly $1.50/each. The more we mail, the faster we hit the minimum of 20,000 valid signed petitions that we need. We then must self-validate, which we do by recruiting volunteers and paying workers to do this.
- WAYS TO SUPPORT US
  - You can securely contribute here.
  - You can make a check to "Save Austin Now PAC" and mail it to:
    807 Brazos Street
    Suite 306
    Austin, TX 78701
- If you wish to send a wire, please email Matt.

As we have said before, **WE HAVE ONLY BEGUN TO FIGHT**!

THANK YOU.

-Matt & Steven

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**** IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: OUR ORIGINAL ANNOUNCEMENT IS BELOW**

Demand an External Affordability Audit!

Audit

Follow the Money!

www.ATXAudit.com

DONATE HERE TO OUR AUDIT CAMPAIGN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, November 21, 2025

Save Austin Now Organizes Coalition to Require an External Affordability and Efficiency Initiative Charter Amendment

Aims to Collect 25,000 Signed Petitions by Feb. 1 to Require First External Performance Audit of Entire City Budget in Austin History

AUSTIN, TX — With a broad coalition of city leaders with them, nonpartisan Save Austin Now PAC today announced it is launching a petition effort to put a Charter amendment on the May 2026 ballot that will require an external and performance-based affordability and efficiency initiative, which must be completed within one year of the contract engagement (with the independent contractor selected within 120 days) and which must be conducted every five years or no less than one year before any future tax rate election. The Charter amendment explicitly requires that the Independent Contractor commit to identify annual or multi-year cost savings that exceed the cost of the initiative.

This effort is modeled after a successful external audit conducted by the City of Houston this year which identified more than $120M in suggested savings and helped Houston avoid a tax rate election, unlike Austin.

We can find no example of an external performance audit of the entire city budget ever being conducted in city history. Internal audits, overseen by city officials, have been conducted for individual city departments at times in recent years. However, they have not adequately measured performance or outcomes, tracked spending and contract performance by contractors and subcontractors, or included our utilities.

This Charter amendment is being launched 17 days after Prop Q, supported by Mayor **Kirk Watson** and nine of ten council members (Council Member **Marc Duchen** was the only exception), for a 20.2% city property tax hike to produce $110M in revenue annually to close a $33M budget deficit for the 2025-2026 budget year. Prop Q failed 63%-37%, with more than 109,000 Austin voters opposing the tax increase.

"It is not enough that the Mayor and Council just try to restore trust they've lost from voters; the City government must be affordable, effective, and efficient," said **Bill Aleshire**, a local attorney and former Travis County Judge who drafted the Charter amendment language. "This Charter amendment will help achieve that."

DONATE TO FORCE THE AUDIT

"Prop Q was the people's referendum—a clear, common-sense call from Austinites who are tired of rising costs and unclear spending," said Save Austin Now co-chair **Steven Brown**, a lifelong East Austin resident and local Democrat. "This isn't about politics; it's about accountability. We simply want the City of Austin and our City Council to embrace an independent audit so we can finally see where we can be more efficient and make our city more affordable for the hard-working taxpayers who keep it running."

"The lesson of the Prop Q defeat is that taxpayers do not currently trust our city leaders when it comes to the city budget and city spending," said Save Austin Now co-chair **Matt Mackowiak**. "For trust to be restored, now and in the future, we need an external performance audit to improve affordability and efficiency, before the next budget year and then regularly afterwards. We are confident a majority of Austinites will support this common-sense approach and we hope the City Council chooses to enact this Charter amendment, but if they do not, we will pass it in May 2026."

"It is long past time the citizens of Austin are allowed to look under the hood at City Hall and see where all this money is going," said local attorney and prominent Prop Q opponent **Adam Leowy**. It is the only way to make sure our taxpayers dollars are being stewarded correctly."

"This external and performance-based affordability and efficiency initiative is an opportunity to analyze performance standards, legal compliance, systems, internal controls, and transparency that can result in taxpayers getting improved services at the least possible costs," said former Travis County Auditor **Susan Spataro**. "This initiative not only can provide assurances to Austin taxpayers, but also can be an asset for City Council and City Management to get new and improved insight and guidance in the performance of their duties in serving the people of Austin."

"I support Save Austin Now's plan to require an independent, external audit of the City's spending, with the results available to the public," said local Democrat, East Austin resident and former two-term City Council Member **Ora Houston**. "I am keenly aware of the need to have periodic external audits to ensure that the taxes citizens pay to the City are used efficiently and effectively. My council experience and my family history – my father had a degree in Business Administration – convince me that periodic, independent, public audits will also assure basic City services are the highest priority, the City's other priorities are clear, and the public can see that expenses match those priorities."

"Surely the Austin City Councilmember's realize that with Prop Q going down 63% to 37% that it truly was a vote of NO confidence from the City of Austin taxpayers in how the City Council understands its ability to produce a budget that the citizens are willing to accept," said former Travis County Commissioner (Precinct 3) **Gerald Daugherty**. "Therefore, this City Council must support an outside audit to simply show that they are serious about trying to gain back any confidence of legitimate fiscal management for this city and if they are really serious, they'll adopt a 5 year "Sunset Provision" from this point forward!"

"This is a common-sense Charter Amendment," said former Austin City Council Member **Brewster McCracken**. "It will ensure that city leaders have the best information to be good stewards of taxpayer funds. It will also ensure that the people of Austin have access to independent information on how their money is being spent. I was pretty surprised when the Council put Proposition Q on the ballot. I was even more surprised by the revelations that a majority of the council was extensively using one-time funds to pay for ongoing expenses and masking that from the public. These all represented big departures from how Austin city government had handled funding gaps in the past. That's why I voted no on Proposition Q. I want the Austin City Council to be successful. This Charter amendment is a necessary corrective to restore fiscal best practices and accountability. That's why I'm supporting it."

The petition can be found here. Only City of Austin residents can sign the petition and be counted.

DONATE NOW

More information, opportunities to donate, and a volunteer sign up page are available at SaveAustinNow.com.

# # #

HELP US FIGHT FOR TAXPAYERS

Ways to support us:

> 1. You can SUPPORT our campaign with a secure donation made here.
> 2. You can mail a check made out to "Save Austin Now" and mail it to:

Save Austin Now

807 Brazos Street

Suite 306

Austin, TX 78701

> 3. For wire instructions, please email matt@saveaustinnow.com.

If you have questions, please reply to this email and we will reply as quickly as we can.

As we have said before, **WE HAVE ONLY BEGUN TO FIGHT**!

THANK YOU.

-Matt & Steven

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