



Liberty Cities May Be Small, But They're A Really Big Deal

Support for Senate Bill 710

by The Honorable Jess Fields, *Senior Policy Analyst*

At the Texas Public Policy Foundation, we've talked a lot about the "Liberty City" in recent months. Understandably, this has a lot of folks shaking their heads in confusion. What is a Liberty City?

You can be forgiven for thinking that the term is an oxymoron. In fact, we were more than a bit surprised to discover the tiny town of Von Ormy, Texas, and all of the exciting things they were doing down there. After incorporating in 2008, Von Ormy made a beeline straight toward limited government policies, efficient provision of services, and lower taxes, all as extraordinary as they are rare.

Most Texas cities, truth be told, go in the opposite direction. They move in the direction of ever-greater regulations on property, on small businesses, and even into such trivial matters as telling people what kinds of grocery bags they can use. This should be no surprise—governments have a tendency to get bigger and more powerful over time, intruding into the lives of regular people. The challenge is not in growing the power of government, but in limiting it.

That's why what Von Ormy did so incredible—they went against the grain and did their own thing, which really was what most Texans want out of their local government. We expect our cities to maintain streets, patrol our neighborhoods, and put out fires. But most of us don't care for a nanny state that makes decisions on our behalf.

In 2014, Von Ormy totally abolished its property tax, making it one of the few cities in the state without one. By that time, however, its fame had spread far enough to encourage at least one other small community in Bexar County—San-

dy Oaks—to successfully seek incorporation. In addition to the benefits of limited government policies, incorporation also had the benefit for both of these communities of making them immune to annexation by San Antonio. Now, another community, Kingsbury, in Guadalupe County, is seeking incorporation to avoid being annexed by Seguin and create its own Liberty City.

Senate Bill 710 may seem silly, and to some it will undoubtedly be so. How foolish, they might think, to limit a city to only those things that freedom-minded Texans want out of their newly incorporated city governments!

The Liberty City is a choice, however. There are three different kinds of general law cities right now in Texas—Types A, B, and C—and none of them expressly promote liberty and prohibit intrusive government.

Creating the Liberty City chapter allows citizens who choose to do so to limit their cities from the get-go, in order to ensure that their new city has limited, enumerated powers from the very beginning, and won't fall prey to the tendency of government to grow and liberty to yield.

It creates no unfunded mandate, and is no threat to established cities. It does not cost anyone anything. What it does is give Texans another choice to protect their freedom. The Liberty City matters, and having more of these around our state can only be positive for the future of Texas.

I urge the members of this committee to pass Senate Bill 710, and give Texans another tool to protect their liberty. ★

