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Business Group: Stop Gas Tax Diversions

by [Christine Ayala](#) | Nov. 13, 2014 | [4 Comments](#)



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Bill Hammond is the CEO of the Texas Association of Business.

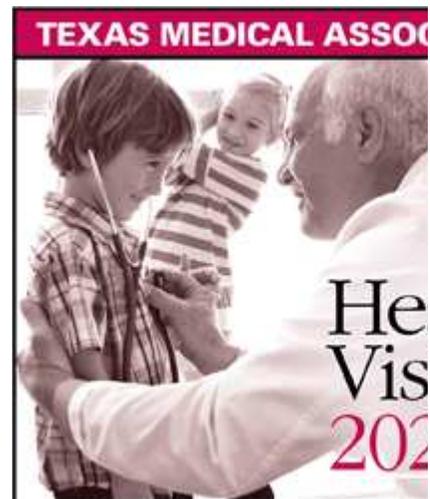
Texas business leaders are prioritizing road funding and higher education spending as lobbying issues for the upcoming

legislative session, according to the Texas Association of Business' [2015 agenda](#), which it released Thursday.

The association is calling for the Legislature to end diversions of state gas taxes from road funding and to dedicate half of motor vehicle sales taxes to road construction and maintenance. Bill Hammond, the association's CEO, said those changes would steer \$700 million in gas taxes and \$2.3 billion in motor vehicle sale taxes to help the state close the funding gap it faces to maintain current road conditions.

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The Texas Department of Transportation says an extra \$5 billion a year is needed to maintain roads in the state today.

These funds would compliment a statewide ballot item [approved this month](#) by voters that will divert some money headed to the state's Rainy Day Fund from oil and gas taxes to the State Highway Fund, which pays for maintenance and road construction projects.

“Last week, the voters spoke loudly and clearly, and said this should be a top priority for the coming session,” Hammond said Thursday at a news conference. “But it only provides about \$1.7 billion. If we do both of those things, we will be very close to what TxDOT said they need, just to maintain the current level of congestion.”



Although transportation was the association's top issue, Hammond also said the association supports expanding outcome-based funding for four-year colleges and universities, in which 10 percent of the state’s funding would be based on an increase in completion rates.

“Last session we, along with others, were successful in bringing outcome-based funding for two-year schools,” Hammond said. “It is a modest proposal. Right now all the funding is based on enrollment, with no relationships to outcomes. We’ve done great with access, but we need to do better on completion.”

Hammond said 60 percent of jobs being created in the state require some sort of certificate or diploma, but the state is not producing the graduates and skilled workers to fill them.

While the TAB's agenda doesn't specifically address minimum wage, Hammond said Thursday that the association is opposed to a wage hike. Asked about immigration, he said that the issue was a federal — not a state — problem to resolve.

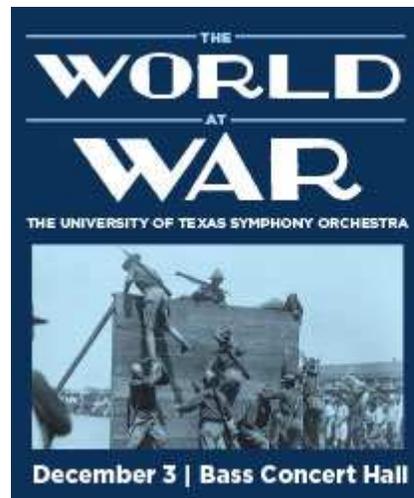
The agenda also asked the Legislature to:

- End the state’s relationship with Texas Mutual Insurance, the state's leading provider of workers'

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compensation insurance. The association also called for the state to allow the insurer to provide policies to Texas businesses operating in other states.

- Increase the number of medical residencies available in state to increase primary care practitioners
- Ensure dedicated revenues are used for intended purposes.

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