



Mr. Dale Fowler (CEcD, Victoria Economic Development Corporation, President)

Web Site: <http://victoriaedc.com>
Email: dalefowler@victoriaedc.com
Phone Number: 1.800.765.8198
Fax Number: 361.485.3190

Texas Tribune CEO, Evan Smith, Discusses Legislation's Effect on Economy

The 2017 Texas Legislature has not pointed the state toward the kind of economic recovery that is needed, said Evan Smith, Texas Tribune chief executive officer.

Under Gov. Rick Perry, the state was generous with incentives for companies to come to the state, Smith said.

Smith spoke Thursday at the semiannual Victoria Economic Development Corporation Partnership meeting.

"This used to be an economics issue, and today it's a politics issue," he said. "Yesterday's economic incentives are today's corporate welfare."

Incentives are frowned on by enough politicians in the Texas Legislature that in the 2017 session the funds for economic development are much lower than in the past, Smith said.

The last day of the regular legislative session is Memorial Day.

Many economic incentives in Texas have been gutted across the board, he said.

"Even the dollars that the governor put in the last session toward attracting the best faculty for our universities . was gutted in this legislature," Smith said.

Controversial bills in this session could cause negative economic impact to the state, he said. One is a bill that would regulate access to women's locker rooms, restrooms and showers.

The state of North Carolina went through a time when they had a similar bill that was put in place and it caused the state to be boycotted, taking away positive economic impact, Smith said.

"They saw sports events like the NCAA finals, concerts, tourism activities, company relocations . to the amount of several billion dollars, it is alleged, go away as a result of this bill," he said.

The 2017 Texas Legislature session started with a budget between \$6 billion and \$10 billion behind what was spent last cycle, Smith said.

"That set a very difficult tone at the beginning of this session," he said.

In 2016, Texas had the second lowest percentage for voter turnout in the general election, Smith said.

"Texas loves to be first and best at everything. We know this," Smith said. "The reality is that at least in one area we're not all that good, and that's in voter turnout."

During the last four election cycles, Texas has had the lowest voter turnout of any state in the country.

People often don't vote because they believe the system is rigged, Smith said. People also don't vote because the winner is known after the primary election in almost every case in the state.

"Can you argue with that?" he said.

Smith said the reason behind this is because of the way that districts are drawn out.

"In a lot of districts, there's not even a major party opponent because they've drawn the maps in such a way the party doesn't even bother to fill the candidate," he said.

Smith founded The Texas Tribune, a nonprofit news outlet, in 2009, which has raised \$45 million since to support the organization's goals of providing nonpartisan and nonbiased news about policy, politics and statewide issues for free.

VICTORIA ADVOCATE - By Kathryn Cargo - May 21, 2017 at 9:09 p.m., Updated May 22, 2017 at 6 a.m.

Link to article: <https://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/2017/may/21/texas-legislature-not-working-for-economic-recover/>