



SAMPLE NEWSLETTER COPY

Feel free to cut and paste and use this content to help educate Texans about the importance of voting Yes on Prop. 5 on Nov. 5!

500-WORD VERSION

You may not know it, but every time you purchase a sporting good – like a bicycle, fishing tackle, golf equipment or a kayak – a portion of the existing tax you pay is called the Sporting Goods Sales Tax (SGST). The Texas Legislature passed a bill in 1993 to create the SGST because it realized that revenue from the cigarette tax, which had previously been the mechanism for funding our state parks, was declining. The state needed a way to keep up with growing demand for our parks that was sustainable and linked to the very consumers who were active users of outdoor recreation resources.

The legislation was widely praised and supported by the outdoor community, and from 1993 to 2017, more than \$2.5 billion has been realized from the SGST. Unfortunately, only 40% of those funds have made their way to our parks. Every two years the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Historical Commission, which also accesses the SGST, have to submit appropriations requests to the Legislature. The percentage of the SGST appropriated each year has varied wildly, from as low as 19% up to 100%. This inconsistency has made long-term planning near impossible. Many of our sites face serious structural challenges from deteriorating and outdated infrastructure, harsh environmental conditions and extreme weather events. There are five parks still waiting to be opened.

All the while, visitation has continued to increase. State Parks have approached 10 million annual visitations alone. Growing demand for our parks and historical sites, coupled with Texas' growing population, have put an even greater strain on a fragile system.

Fortunately, the 86th Texas Legislature had two stalwart champions – State Sen. Lois Kolkhorst and State Rep. John Cyrier—who wanted to ensure that our parks and historical sites had consistent, reliable funding for generations to come. A bill to put a constitutional dedication of the SGST on the ballot this fall passed with near unanimous support, demonstrating the widespread recognition that it was long past time to address this issue.

Now it's our turn to do our part. On November 5, Texans will have the opportunity to vote YES on Proposition 5 to protect Texas' natural areas, water quality and history. Importantly, this requires no new taxes or fees. Prop. 5 will dedicate revenue from the SGST, so those dollars can only be used by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Historical Commission on public parks and historic sites, and not for any other purposes.

Constitutional amendment elections have notoriously low turnout. As members of the outdoor community it is our responsibility to ensure that Prop.5 passes with flying colors. That's why we need to ensure all of our members are aware of the election, are registered to vote and show up to vote YES on Prop. 5 on Nov. 5

For more information on this issue, visit www.SupportTexasParks.org or follow the campaign on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), and like the Texas Coalition for State Parks on [Facebook](#) and help spread the word.

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250-WORD VERSION

Texas has an incredible system of state parks and historic sites that help preserve our heritage and provide important recreational and educational opportunities for Texas families. But our parks and historic sites are overflowing and stretched to the limit as Texans seek out outdoor opportunities in a state that is 95% privately owned. State Park visitation alone is nearing 10 million visitors annually.

All of those visitors coupled with chronic underfunding has placed a strain on an aging system with outdated infrastructure. If we are to meet growing demand and ensure future generations can enjoy these sites and the great outdoors, the system needs a dedicated stream of funding. This fall, Texans have an opportunity to do just that.

On November 5, 2019 Texans will head to the polls for a Constitutional Amendment Election. Proposition 5 or "Prop. 5" is one of 10 measures on which Texans will be asked to vote. **Prop. 5 will dedicate revenue from the Sporting Goods Sales Tax, so those dollars can only be used by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Historical Commission on public parks and historic sites, and not for any other purposes. Importantly, Prop. 5 requires no new taxes or fees.**

A YES vote on Prop. 5 on Nov. 5 will protect Texas' natural areas and historic sites, so we don't lose the very things that make Texas a special place in which to live.

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