

VACCINE LEGISLATION IN TEXAS AND THE RISE OF THE STATE ANTI-VACCINE MOVEMENT

Purpose

- The goal of this paper was to assess whether vaccine policies have moved from being a public health issue to a partisan issue in Texas over the last decade.
- The authors reviewed and analyzed vaccine-related bills filed and passed in the 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019 Texas legislative regular sessions.

Results

- Between 2009 and 2014, 104 vaccine-related bills were filed; 31 received floor votes, and 21 passed (a 20% passing rate, similar to the overall passing rate in each legislative session).
- Most bills that passed had bipartisan support (13), followed by seven that were sponsored only by Republicans, and just one that was sponsored exclusively by Democrats.
- Most bills that passed were neutral in content (10), followed by nine pro-vaccine bills, and only two anti-vaccine bills.
- While more Republicans filed anti-vaccine bills (13) compared to Democrats, they also filed just as many pro-vaccine bills (13) and eight neutral bills.
- Most bills that passed were related to vaccine information, the Texas Immunization Registry, or vaccine availability and access.
- There were no strictly pro- or anti-vaccine hotspots in Texas.
- Floor votes did not trend along party lines.

Conclusions

- Vaccine policies do not seem to be a partisan issue in the Texas Legislature.
- Bipartisan sponsorship helped improve the chances of bills being passed.
- Neutral and pro-vaccine bills were passed, but bills on divisive issues, such as non-medical exemptions, were more challenging to pass.

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