Texas Special Districts

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2026 Annual Summit, July 31, 2026



From Conversation to Action

2026 Texas Special Districts Coalition Annual Summit



Round Rock, TX – July 31, 2026

Building a Stronger Voice for Texas Special Districts

On July 31, 2026, TSDC Co-Founders Jonathan Roach, Clay Avery, and Erica Richardson welcomed attendees to the 2026 Annual Summit, bringing together special districts, public officials, professional partners, and advocates from across Texas to exchange ideas, identify shared challenges, and strengthen the collective voice of Texas special districts.

Common Goals Across Texas Communities

The Summit featured discussions on financial management, accounting and auditing, sales tax, workforce and staffing, cybersecurity, national advocacy, and legislative priorities. The day concluded with an open forum focused on the issues that unite special districts and the steps districts can take together as Texas approaches the 2027 Legislative Session.

Who Came to the Table?

Water & Utility Districts • Library Districts • Emergency Services & Public Safety • Mosquito Control Districts • City & County Officials • Professional Service Providers • State & National Special District Leaders

This gathering created opportunity for districts with different missions, structures, and communities to recognize how much they have in common.

As Ann Terry, Chief Executive Officer of the Special District Association of Colorado and President of the National Special District Association, thoughtfully reminded attendees:

"Our issues, our statutes, our communities… share the same goals."

This idea became one of the defining themes of the day.

Although the conversation centered shifted with each speaker, the message was consistent: **special districts are stronger when they learn from one another and work together.**

The roundtable discussion brought that idea into focus. Rather than simply discussing the challenges facing special districts, attendees began asking a more important question:

"What can we do to help one another long-term?"

Professional Services

Tools for Stronger Districts

Special districts are responsible for delivering essential services while navigating increasingly complex financial, technological, workforce, and regulatory environments. The Summit's professional services sessions gave attendees the opportunity to hear directly from a diverse lineup of experts who work with districts and other public entities every day.

Financial Foundations

The day began with a focus on **financial stewardship** and **revenue management**, addressing different pieces of the larger question: how can districts best fund, manage, and account for their resources? First, Matt Sullivan, Municipal Finance Specialist at Government Capital Corporation touched on financing options for district infrastructure, equipment, and other needs. Building on the financial side of district operations, Ryan Swaim and John Swaim, CPAs at Swaim Accounting Services, Inc., offered expertise in auditing, financial management, and advisory services to help districts better understand and manage their financial responsibilities. From there, Ryan Fortner, President & CEO of Revenue Management Services, highlighted opportunities to



strengthen local revenue through sales tax analysis and allocation. Shifting towards **district operations**, Melissa Sullinger, HR Client Success Consultant at CPS HR Consulting, shared strategies for addressing workforce needs, employee relations, recruitment, and organizational effectiveness.

Strengthening Texas Special Districts

Resources, Resilience, and Representation

From financial and operational support to cybersecurity, the Summit highlighted the range of resources available to help special districts meet the challenges of serving their communities.

Protecting Critical Infrastructure



Post-summit interviews revealed Jerrel Conerly, CISA Cybersecurity Advisor, as a standout speaker. Tasked with "the difficult task of speaking right before lunch," he presented an overview of critical cybersecurity threats, available resources, and optimal strategies for improving resilience and protecting critical infrastructure, opening up thoughtful discussion among guests through the remainder of the day.

As part of the Summit's cybersecurity programming, attendees also had the opportunity to complete State-required annual cybersecurity and artificial intelligence awareness training, satisfying applicable annual certification requirements.

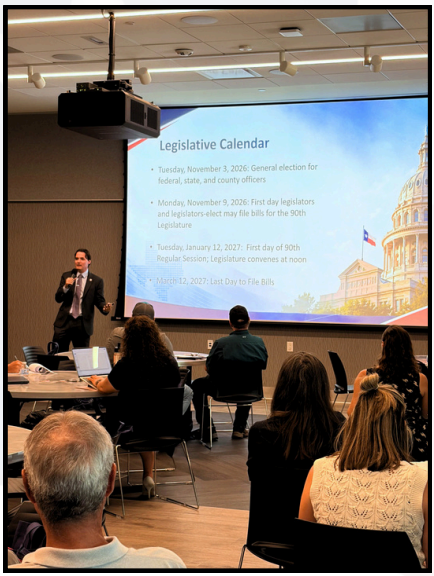
Voices That Matter

TSDC Co-Founder Erica Richardson, Executive Director of the Benbrook Library District, brought the perspective of Texas library districts to the conversation, sharing the unique challenges they face and the importance of ensuring those concerns are heard. Her remarks reinforced one of the Summit's central themes: TSDC can serve as a unified voice for all types of special districts, helping ensure their diverse needs and perspectives are represented.

Summit at a Glance

A Day of Ideas, Insight & Action

The 2026 Annual Summit was designed to give district leaders practical information they could take back to their communities. Following perspectives from critical service providers, the day rounded out with a focus on legislative change. Special districts across the country are working to address many of the same questions: How can districts communicate their value? How can they ensure their voices are heard by policymakers?



The National Perspective

Ann Terry encouraged Texas leaders to improve special district collaboration, advocacy, and communication across county and state lines alike. Her presentation emphasized the importance of the national legislation currently making its way through Capitol Hill, such as the Special District Fairness and Accessibility Act, and provided attendees with meaningful ways to take action and garner support.

Discussion Breeds Effective Change

Clay Avery, TSDC Co-FounSAFE-D Executive Director, provided specialized experience in Emergency Services Districts as well as a deeper look into Texas legislative processes, opening up a forum to discuss the issues that cannot be solved by any one district alone. Attendees had the opportunity to share lived experiences, best practices, and practical insight on how to get involved and ensure Texas special districts have a voice in the upcoming 2027 legislative session.

Answering the Call

The Summit Ends. The Work Continues.



The 2026 Annual Summit was a community-centered day of fruitful conversation, but conversation was never intended to be the final product.

The final session challenged attendees to identify common themes among Texas special districts and consider legislative advocacy and policy priorities for the 2027 Legislative Session.

The roundtable made one thing clear above all else:

Not only do Texas special districts have a story to tell, but a role to play in shaping the policies that affect their communities.

That work begins before the Legislature convenes.

It begins with strong relationships, communication, and a passion to stay informed. It begins as districts begin to recognize that they do not have to advocate alone.

Texas Special Districts Coalition is working to provide the resources, connections, and shared platform necessary to help districts engage more effectively.

Texas Action Items

4 Steps Every District Can Take Today

1 Strengthen Relationships

Strengthen relationships with your local legislators and representatives. Introduce your district well before your hour of need.

Invite representatives to visit your facilities. Share your district's accomplishments. Explain the challenges facing your community. Establish yourself as a trusted local resource.

2 Build a Public Prescence

Build a positive social media presence for your district. Use your district's platforms to show residents what happens behind the scenes.

Highlight district projects, services, and community improvements. Celebrate successes. When your residents understand what you do, they are far better equipped to understand why your work matters.

3 Stay Informed

Stay informed and engaged on issues affecting special districts. Legislative advocacy does not begin when a bill is filed. Pay attention to emerging issues. Talk with other districts. Follow legislative developments. Share information with your board and staff. Participate in TSDC discussions.

4 Advocate for Lasting Change

Advocate for legislative changes that support and strengthen special districts across Texas. Your district's experience matters. When legislation affects your operations, your community, or your ability to provide essential services, make your voice heard. Provide testimony. Contact your representatives. Share your district's story. Work with other districts to identify common priorities.

Thank You

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for Supporting Texas Special Districts

The success of the 2026 TSDC Annual Summit would not have been possible without the support of our sponsors, partners, speakers, and attendees. Thank you for investing in the people and communities that make Texas special districts stronger.

Thank you to the Round Rock Public Library for welcoming TSDC and providing a space for district leaders and professionals to connect, learn, and share ideas.

Round Rock Public Library

Thank You to Our Sponsors and Presenters.

We are grateful for your support throughout the 2026 TSDC Annual Summit and helping make this event possible.

Stay connected. Stay informed. Strengthen your district.

Whether you represent a special district, provide professional services, or simply want to learn more about the work of Texas special districts, there are many ways to get involved with TSDC.

Learn more about TSDC and find resources for your district at https://texassdc.com or contact admin@texassdc.com

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