

This document provides a summary and narrative of the relationship between the Texas Association of County Election Officials (TACEO) and the Secretary of State (SOS) based on the recorded timeline from August 25 to December 23.

Executive Summary

The relationship between TACEO and the SOS evolved from a structured, collaborative effort to address systemic issues into a complete breakdown of communication. The timeline reveals three distinct phases:

1. **Initial Friction & Routine (August – September):** Efforts to address "TEAM issues" via weekly meetings.
2. **Escalation & Confrontation (October):** Growing frustration leading to cancelled meetings, collective formal letters, and a shift in focus to the election cycle.
3. **Withdrawal & Alienation (November – December):** The SOS and associated entities (Civix) began avoiding direct executive engagement, culminating in the cancellation of attendance at the Mid-Winter Conference.

Timeline Narrative

Phase 1: The Attempt at Collaboration (August 25 – September 30)

The timeline begins on **August 25** with a formal invitation for TACEO to meet with the SOS regarding issues with the "TEAM" system and the unrest among the members that is evident on the Listserv. This initial period was characterized by a structured attempt to resolve technical or procedural concerns through a series of six "Weekly Meetings" throughout September. At this stage, while there were "concerns" to voice, the relationship remained functional and frequent. The dialog between TACEO and SOS never achieved the desired outcome and the TACEO board often felt as if the SOS was gaslight, over promising, or deflecting issues.

Phase 2: Frustration and the Election Push (October 1 – November 4)

The atmosphere shifted significantly in October. The TACEO board did not see any significant change in usability or responsiveness from the SOS. On **October 10**, the SOS filed an audit report on Civix, giving the vendor "All A's, further highlighting the frustrations between our members and the state. On **October 14**, the weekly meeting was cancelled due to "Board Frustration with lack of Answers."

This prompted a more aggressive stance from the Association:

- **October 15-17:** A collaboration call was held, including County and District Clerks Association of Texas (CDCAT), Tax Assessor Collector Association of Texas (TACA), and

County Judge and Commissioner Association of Texas (CJCAT) to discuss signing on to a "Collective Association Letter" sent to the SOS, formally communicated the concerns each association and its members have in using TEAM during the 2025 Constitutional Amendment Cycle.

- **October 20 – November 4:** The focus shifted to the operational realities of Early Voting and Election Day, creating a brief hiatus in the communications and meetings.

Phase 3: The Breakdown of Communication (November 7 – December 23)

Post-election, TACEO attempted to restart the dialogue, but the SOS began a pattern of avoidance.

- **The Mid-Winter Conflict:** In mid-November, the SOS suggested the Board simply join public webinars to gain any information on the status of TEAM rather than holding private calls. Initially the SOS had agreed to speak at the TACEO Mid-Winter Conference, as they have done regularly in the past.
- **The "Cold Shoulder":** During the SOS Cities and Schools Conference **December 1-3**, the SOS was reportedly refusing to speak to anyone on the Executive Board of TACEO, neither in formal or informal capacity.
- **Complete Withdrawal:** Throughout December, the breakdown became absolute. TACEO heard through third parties (CEIR and CIVIX) that the SOS would not be attending the Mid-Winter Conference. The timeline concludes on **December 23** with a final email from the SOS officially cancelling their attendance, marking a total severance of the partnership that had begun with an invitation to collaborate only four months prior.

Evolution of the Relationship

| Date Range | Nature of Relationship | Key Indicators |
|--------------------|------------------------|---|
| Late August | Formal / Reactive | TACEO invites SOS to meet over specific TEAM issues. |
| September | Routine / Structured | Consistent weekly meetings; attempts to process concerns. |
| Mid-October | Confrontational | Meetings cancelled; Board frustration peaks; formal letters sent. |
| November | Dismissive | SOS redirects Board to public webinars; avoids executive calls. |

December Estranged

SOS refuses to speak to the Board and cancels conference attendance.

Conclusion

The relationship essentially collapsed under the weight of unanswered questions, perceived "gas lighting" and unresolved systemic issues. This began as an attempt to serve as a resource to solve technical issues but evolved into some sort of administrative standoff, resulting in the SOS's complete withdrawal from any direct communication with TACEO's leadership team or the association as the primary professional organization of election officials across the state.