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Public Safety
The Rio Grande Valley is a dynamic region located on the southernmost tip of Texas with a rapidly growing population nearing 1.5 million.

Situated along the northern banks of the Rio Grande River, the Rio Grande Valley consists of Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties, and is home to a great array of assets, ecotourism opportunities, temperate weather, and a high quality of life.

The Rio Grande Valley’s geographically distinctive location on the U.S.-Mexico border serves as a vital economic gateway to the global marketplace, playing a critical role towards the economic prosperity of Texas and the nation.

While retaining an agriculture-influenced economy, the region’s role in international trade and commerce spur billions of dollars of industrial investment, job-creation, and emerging technology growth.

As boundless opportunities currently define the region, the RGV is not without noteworthy challenges. Continued expansion of water management and water quality infrastructure is an essential means of protecting its residents and resources from flood and coastal storm vulnerabilities.

The region’s exceptional population growth and economic sustainability also foster the need for addressing the region’s top priorities such as expansion of healthcare access and resources, further development of transportation infrastructure, and ensuring a well-educated, highly-skilled workforce is fostered locally to continually meet the demands of industry and market growth.

The RGV leaders and elected officials stand united, more than ever in delivering this set of unified regional priorities.

We look forward to our continued positive and collaborative relationship with Texas lawmakers to ensure that Rio Grande Valley residents, visitors, and stakeholders are guaranteed prosperous development and the highest quality of life, now and for many years to come.
The Rio Grande Valley plays a significant role towards the state’s recognition for being a global leader in economic development. The region’s strategic location, as well as the leadership and commitment from area elected officials, economic development organizations, government entities, and business leaders allow the Valley to be well-positioned for future job and economic growth. Many of Texas’ economic advancements have been attributed to various state and local economic development programs. To maintain a prosperous future, further legislative support, expansion, and development must continue.

**Regional Perception.**
Inaccurate depictions of border violence and overwhelming immigration pose a serious threat to the sustainable economic prosperity of the region.

A regional priority is to encourage the portrayal of the RGV accurately; by promoting local assets such as the vital binational economy, vast tourism opportunities, affordable cost of living, low crime rates, and the overwhelmingly high quality of life experienced by residents and visitors.

**Tourism.**
Given the negative attention brought to the South Texas border region, lawmakers should support ideas and proposals to help spur economic activity and promote tourism in order to aid local communities and businesses in their effort to restore full growth and prosperity.

**Municipal Regulation.**
State lawmakers should preserve the abilities of municipalities and jurisdictions to cultivate vibrant, competitive, and livable communities by supporting flexible and local decision-making with particular attention to tax-base regulation, appraisal growth caps, annexation, revenue limits, reduced rollback rates, and unfunded mandates.
Economic Development Incentive Programs.
Continue support for state and local programs for corporate and small business expansions, relocations, and job growth such as the Texas Enterprise Zone Fund, Texas Leverage Fund, tax incentives available under the Texas Economic Development Act (TX Code Chapter 313), and programs designed to encourage public/private partnerships.

Foreign Trade.
Legislative activities and policies should enrich international competitiveness and regional economic sustainability by supporting efficient and feasible foreign trade and direct investment which maximize the region’s trade-capable assets.

Industry Resilience.
Legislation should strengthen economic resilience through the advancement of emerging high-tech and high value industries (e.g., healthcare, manufacturing, skills-trade, etc.), reinvestment of agriculture/aquaculture, rural industry development, and programs for effective economic diversification.

Entrepreneurship.
State lawmaker support entrepreneurs and small businesses through specialized tax relief programs, access to investment capital, small business incubation, and long-term loan and investment incentives.

State Bank Investments.
The RGV supports HB1175 (a bill supported by the Independent Bankers Association of Texas aka IBAT and Texas Bankers Association).

It allows State Chartered Banks to make and promote community development investments on par with Federally Chartered Banks. Community development investments not only benefit the communities in which these banks are located, but they are also important to banks in their efforts to comply with the “investment” test of the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA).
Education and Workforce Development continues to be a top priority in the Rio Grande Valley. As the Texas economy continues to expand and grow, support must continue for comprehensive human capital development by ensuring local school systems, institutions of higher education, and workforce development programs are allocated the funding and resources necessary to develop a highly-skilled, educated workforce.

The Valley’s six institutions of higher education combined enroll more than 70,000 students and offer a comprehensive range of training, certificates, technical and professional degrees; more than 20,000 credentials were awarded to students during the 2017-18 academic year.

The majority of Valley students must maintain employment to supplement family income; many of whom live at home, and are only able to attend college with the assistance of some type of financial aid.

The region’s colleges and universities are producing a quality workforce at a very affordable Total Academic Cost. To continue the trend of success, the region’s higher education institutions must continue to receive critical legislative support and funding.

The UTRGV School of Medicine. (SoM)
The SoM is a significant driver of economic development by transforming the region’s medical workforce training and healthcare professional job creation. The SoM continues to be one of the region’s top priorities and is requesting to be funded as a start-up enterprise and to restore funding to prior levels.

• $10 million in new appropriations to allow hiring of clinical educators and faculty researchers, as well as staffing and operating resources to sustain the medical education program and accomplish other programmatic and institutional goals as required for national accreditation.
• An additional $4.4 million will allow for cancer research and clinical program initiatives.

General Academic (Four-Year) Institutions.
• Fully fund higher education formulas.
• Enhance financial aid funding such as Texas GRANTS.
• Continue investment in the Texas Research University Fund and National Research University Fund.
• Fund UTRGV’s General Academic Non-Formula Support Items at current levels.
• Funding for expansion of the Texas A&M Healthy Texas Initiative.
• Provide enhanced funding for Hazlewood Legacy students.
• Recognize and reward efforts in high need fields, particularly health sciences and medical occupations.

Community & Technical Colleges.
• Support an 8%, or $144 million, overall increase in state formula funding for the 2020-2021 biennium. The recommended funding level includes projected growth in contact hours, student success points, and inflationary increases.
Continued support of performance-based funding.
Support increasing the biennial rate for Success Points from the current $173 to $215 per point.
The Texas Association of Community Colleges and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board are aligned on this recommendation.
Return TSTC's Returned-Value Formula to its historically funded rate of 33% to 36%.
Fund TSTC for Dual Credit programs in the same manner as community colleges.

**Dual Credit Programs.**
Support dual credit as both a proven means for students to earn college credit while they are still in high school, and as an important factor in meeting the state’s 60X30TX plan.
By 2030, a goal has been established in which no less than 30% of high school graduates will have earned at least 12 semester credit hours (SCH) in dual credit.
Require dual credit students to declare a meta-major/field of study upon completion of 12 SCH in core academic subjects or declare a career path upon completion of 12 SCH in Career Technical Education (CTE).
Expand student eligibility for the Texas Education Opportunity Grant (TEOG) program to dual credit students for up to 12 SCH in core academic transfer subjects or in CTE courses leading to certifications.

**Workforce Education Programs.**
Expand career and technical education (CTE) dual credit offerings and workforce Continuing Education (CE).
Increase state investments in community college formula funding to help broaden the reach of their CTE and CE programs.
Sustain state funding for Apprenticeship Texas, Skills Development Fund, and Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grant program.

**RGV Institutions of Higher Education**

There are opportunities for students in Rio Grande Valley, and we hope the Legislature’s outlay with higher education in particular, will continue to bring value to the region and entire state. The state’s return on investment is evident at each of the region’s institutions of higher education with expanding programs relevant to the entire state, increasing access to education and healthcare, and contributing to the workforce and economy.
Transportation and trade infrastructure is essential to sustaining and expanding the economic prosperity of the region through efficient movement of people, goods and services. Funding for maintenance and modernization of regional infrastructure projects, port resources, and port-of-entry improvements ensure continued job creation, increased trade capacity, and improved safety and mobility for local, regional, and evacuation-related travel. In order to strategically reduce congestion and meet the needs of our growing population, all methods of finance, including locally-supported toll roads and other alternative funding programs should be supported while preserving available state resources.

**I-69 Interstate. (I-69 East, I-69 Central, I-69 Central Interchange)**
As the only Interstate system in South Texas, I-69 is vital to the growth and stability and is a high priority for the region. The interstate system provides for the economic growth of the region allowing connectivity to the deep water port on the US/Mexico border, inland ports and major educational institutions. The interstate system also provides evacuation routes in an area prone to flooding and susceptible to tropical storms.

**South Padre Island Second Causeway.**
South Padre Island is home to nearly 3,000 residents year-round. During peak seasons, millions of visitors travel to South Padre Island; in 2016 over 8.2 million people visited the Island. With an increasing number of vehicles traveling to South Padre Island and only one mainland access bridge, new infrastructure developments are needed to alleviate traffic congestion and improve safety.

**International Border Trade Corridor. (IBTC)**
The IBTC project will provide direct connectivity from inland ports such as the Donna and Pharr bridges to the interstate system, Interstate 2. IBTC will also extend direct connections for the future State Highway 68 which will deliver an alternative, parallel route to I-69C, and relieve the congestion predicted to come with the continued population and economic growth of the area.
**Port of Brownsville.**
As the only deep-water port on the U.S./Mexico border, the Port of Brownsville serves as an essential waterway resource impacting millions of dollars in global trade. We thoroughly support continued funding through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and other sources, and encourage state agency review and coordination of federal/state permits and authorizations to maximize this regional resource.

**FM1925 (Monte Cristo Road).**
FM 1925 is a major East/West connector across the region. Plans to develop this corridor further will provide direct connection from I-69C to I-69E from Hidalgo County to Cameron County and eventually connect to the SPI 2nd Causeway project. Future development would provide a vital parallel corridor to I-2 between Cameron and Hidalgo Counties.

**East Loop Corridor Project.**
State Highway 32 construction project, also referred to as the East Loop Corridor Project shall greatly improve safety on the commercial route from the Port of Brownsville to the Veterans Bridge at Los Tomates. Over 1,000 commercial vehicles travel between Veterans Bridge and the Port of Brownsville each day, and fully funding this project will ensure the safety of the surrounding community while preserving a key commercial trade corridor.

**Regional Transit Authority. (RTA)**
The creation of a locally-governed RTA would ensure resources for the expansion of regional public transportation to increase bus routes, expand rural coverage and enhance student access to colleges. Additionally, an RTA would lay the framework for a regional commuter rail system serving Cameron and Hidalgo Counties to address the transportation needs of a densely growing population.
As the region’s population continues to grow, it is of significant importance for all residents to have access to a comprehensive set of local resources and systems to ensure adequate access to healthcare, nutrition, housing, fundamental technology and all resources necessary to safeguard a livable, healthy and safe community for persons of all ages.

**UTRGV School of Medicine. (SoM)**
As well as serving as the catalyst for medical workforce training and job creation, UTRGV’s School of Medicine is projected to have a multi-billion dollar economic impact as a result of expanded healthcare access, the creation of residency programs supporting graduating medical students, and improved medical access to the community via UT Health RGV Clinics, Graduate Medical Education sites, Area Health Education Centers, and mobile health clinic sites.

**Trauma Network.**
As one of the largest metropolitan areas in Texas, the RGV must expand its regional trauma capabilities to include a Level I Comprehensive Trauma Center. Having an adequate trauma healthcare network across the region would provide critical resources to prepare and respond to incidents of disaster.

**Underserved Populations.**
Support legislation which increases funding for community resources and services for vulnerable, low-income and underserved individuals such as Veterans, senior citizens, homeless individuals, and those with chronic mental and/or physical health conditions to expand access to suitable healthcare resources, quality nutrition, and other vital comprehensive resources.

**Digital Communication Access.**
Digital literacy and accessible electronic communication play an essential role accessing many of today’s fundamental services and resources. State lawmakers should support closing the digital divide by opposing attempts to apply restrictive policy and regulations that would further serve as a barrier to accessing this technology.

**Affordable Housing.**
Support legislative efforts that safeguard the civil rights of Texans protected under the Fair Housing Act and ensure affordable, safe, secure, and accessible housing resources exist for all residents of the Rio Grande Valley.
The Rio Grande Valley is situated mostly on an existing flood plain that is highly vulnerable to flooding due to coastal storms and significant rain events. Maintaining and expanding water management and water quality infrastructure is a critical key priority for the region. As the population continues to increase, issues such as water supply sources, coastal conservation measures, and resources for efficient, safe environmental sustainability are of chief importance for continue prosperity and resilience.

**Flood Management Infrastructure.**
Recognizing the flood vulnerabilities of the region, supporting infrastructure expansion through legislative activities and additional funding sources are critical to retaining economic resilience and ensuring the safety and security of all Valley residents. Expansion of flood management infrastructure would provide mitigation measures to prevent future catastrophic disasters.

**Water Supply & Water Quality.**
State lawmakers must look towards innovative options and alternatives to provide both sustainable water resources and ensure acceptable water quality measures. Programs such as conjunctive use of surface and ground-water, desalination resources, conservation technologies and adequate water quality monitoring resources should be supported and funded.

**Coastal Conservation.**
The Valley’s treasured coast line offers abundant opportunities for tourism, economic development and cargo access. Coastal storm surge vulnerabilities threaten a fragile coastal ecology, including hundreds of migratory bird species and fish and shrimp populations. Legislative activities should support protective regulations and resources to ensure the largest regional assets remain resilient.

**Environmental Quality.**
A healthy, clean, and safe environment defines prosperity and quality of life for residents and industry. State lawmakers should support measures to ensure environmental regulation and policies are applicable, maintainable, and address prevalent issues such as illegal dumping, limited recycling capacity, and antiquated permitting processing.
The Rio Grande Valley prides itself on being a safe and secure community with statistically low crime rates and a high quality of life. With public safety resources such as police, fire, emergency medical, border security and effective communication resources being fundamental services without compromise, legislation should support continued critical resources to hire adequate personnel, improve benefits, expand facility capacities, and update technology and equipment.

**Public Safety Training & Resources.**
Support legislative and policy efforts for increased training resources to ensure the region maintains highly-qualified public safety professionals and critical equipment, technology, facilities, and resources.

**Interoperable Communication.**
Communication technology, such as interoperable radio technology, 9-1-1 network infrastructure, and mobile contingency strategies ensure the region-wide network of public safety officials and telecommunications have seamless, reliable methods for communication. Legislative activities should support increasing resources to meet the demands of multi-jurisdiction requirements and continual technological advances.

**Border Security.**
The Rio Grande Valley identifies the southern border with Mexico as a key asset for economic development, trade and commerce, and cultural influence. State legislation should support strategic and feasible border security policies and resources to ensure public safety upholds adequate and appropriate resources to secure the southern border while maintaining efficient international trade and development.

**Disaster Response & Preparedness.**
Preparing for, responding to, and recovering from natural or man-made disasters requires adequate resources and facilities. State lawmakers should support legislation and policies to increase the required capabilities and capacity of a region as large of the Valley so it remains resilient to risk.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DIRECTORY OF RGV-DAY PARTNERS</strong></th>
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| **Border Health Political Action Group**  
http://borderhealthpac.com/bhpac-board-of-directors |
| **Brownsville Chamber of Commerce**  
http://brownsvillechamber.com/ |
| **Brownsville Independent School District**  
http://www.bisd.us/ |
| **Burton Companies, LLC**  
http://burtoncompanies.com/ |
| **Cameron County**  
http://www.co.cameron.tx.us/ |
| **City of Edinburg**  
http://cityofedinburg.com/ |
| **City of McAllen**  
http://www.mcallen.net/ |
| **City of Mission**  
https://missiontexas.us/ |
| **City of Pharr**  
http://pharr-tx.gov/ |
| **City of Weslaco**  
http://www.weslacotx.gov/ |
| **Weslaco Economic Development Corporation**  
http://www.weslacoedc.com/ |
| **Edinburg Economic Development Corporation**  
http://edinburgedc.com/ |
| **Edinburg Regional Medical Center**  
https://www.edinburgregional.com/ |
| **Greater Brownsville Incentives Corporation**  
http://greaterbrownsville.com/ |
| **Greater Mission Chamber of Commerce**  
https://www.missionchamber.com/ |
| **Greater Pharr Chamber of Commerce**  
http://www.pharrchamberofcommerce.com/ |
| **Guzman & Munoz**  
http://www.gmu.com/site/ |
| **Harlingen Economic Development Corporation**  
https://www.harlingenedc.com/ |
| **Harlingen San Benito MPO**  
http://hsmopo.org/ |
| **Hidalgo County Drainage District No.1**  
http://hcdld.org/ |
| **Hidalgo County MPO**  
http://www.hc-mpo.org/ |
| **Hidalgo County Precinct 4**  
https://www.hidalgo-county.us/359/Commissioner-Pct-4 |
| **IBC Bank**  
https://www.ibc.com/en-us/Pages/default.aspx |
| **International Shipbreaking Limited, LLC**  
http://www.shiprecycling.com |
| **Leadership Brownsville**  
http://www.leadershipbrownsville.org/home.html |
| **Lonestar National Bank**  
http://www.lonestarnationalbank.com/ |
| **Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council**  
http://www.lrgvdc.org/ |
| **McAllen Chamber of Commerce**  
http://www.mcallen.org/ |
| **McAllen Economic Development Corporation**  
http://www.mcallenedc.org/ |
| **McAllen Medical Center | South Texas Health System**  
https://www.mcallenmedicalcenter.com/ |
| **Noble Texas Builders**  
https://www.nobletexasbuilders.com/ |
| **Port of Brownsville**  
https://www.portofbrownsville.com/ |
| **Rio Grande City Economic Development Corporation**  
http://www.rgedc.com/ |
| **Rio Grande Regional Hospital**  
https://rgoreh.org/ |
| **Rio Grande Valley College**  
http://www.rgvcollege.edu/ |
| **RGV Partnership**  
http://rgvpartnership.com |
| **Santa Cruz Properties, LTD**  
http://www.santa-cruz-properties.com/ |
| **Socialife Magazine**  
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| **South Texas College**  
https://www.southtexascollege.edu/ |
| **Starr County**  
http://www.co.starr.tx.us/ |
| **Texas Gas Service**  
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| **Texas International Produce Association**  
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| **Texas Southmost College**  
http://www.tsc.edu/ |
| **Texas State Technical College**  
https://www.tstc.edu/campuses/harlingen |
| **The University of Texas at San Antonio**  
https://www.utsa.edu/ |
| **The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley**  
https://www.utsrgv.edu/ |
| **Town of Laguna Vista**  
http://www.lagunavista.cio/ |
| **Texas Southern University**  
http://www.texasst.edu/home/ |
| **UTRGV Foundation**  
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