



TEXAS 4-H CONGRESS

2024 Information



Texas 4-H Congress is a four-day mock legislative experience for 4-H members going into 9th grade – through those who just graduated 12th Grade (at the time of the event). During this time, 4-H members assume the roles of legislators, lobbyists, and press corps to gain a first-hand understanding of how the legislative process works. Bills that are written and sponsored by 4-H members focus on issues concerning Texas and Texas youth. These bills are assigned to the appropriate committee, debated in committee meetings, and then on the floor of the House or Senate. If a bill is successful in negotiation and the legislative debate in all three stages, it is delivered to the Governor of Texas 4-H Congress for his or her signature or veto. Copies of all the bills that are signed into law during Texas 4-H Congress are provided to the Office of the Governor for review.

Age Eligibility

Official grades for Texas 4-H Congress are members going into 9th grade – through those who just graduated 12th Grade (at the time of the event). This is a prestigious event reserved for older 4-H members. Because of the number of 4-H members allowed to attend, counties should make it a priority to select older 4-H members for the House and Senate that have never attended the event.

Location

Headquarters for Texas 4-H Congress will be at the Sheraton Austin Hotel at the Capitol, 707 East 11th Street, Austin, Texas 78701.

Dates to Remember for Texas 4-H Congress Participation

February 5, 2024	Bill submission opens
February 15, 2024	Lobbyist application opens on 4HOnline
February 15, 2024	Press Corps application opens on 4HOnline
March 14, 2024	Lobbyist application closes
March 14, 2024	Press Corps application closes
March 29, 2024	Lobbyist and Press Corps notification
April 1, 2024	Early Bird Registration opens on 4HOnline
April 30, 2024	Early Bird Registration closes on 4HOnline
May 1, 2024	Registration continues on 4HOnline at an increased fee
May 30, 2024	Bill submission closes
May 30, 2024	Registration closes on 4HOnline
July 1, 2024	Delegate Letters distributed
July 1, 2024	Bill Book posted online
July 12, 2024	Texas 4-H Congress Leadership Team arrives
July 14, 2024	Congress Delegates and Chaperones arrive
July 17, 2024	All Participants depart

Participation Costs

Registration costs include hotel, meals, snacks, and production fees. Other costs that delegates may incur include transportation to and from Austin, meals in route to and from Austin, three (3) breakfast meals while in Austin, and incidental spending money.

REGISTRATION TYPE	EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION (Apr 1 – Apr 30)	REGULAR REGISTRATION (May 1 – May 30)
House/Senate/Press Corps/Lobbyist	\$425.00	\$500.00
Texas 4-H Congress Leadership	\$500.00	\$500.00
Chaperones	\$250.00	\$250.00

The registration cost of approximately \$425.00 is due in part to the assistance of more than \$100,000.00 from donors such as the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Ed Rachal Foundation, and others. Without these gracious donors, the registration cost would be more than \$800.00 per person.

Texas 4-H Chaperone registration will be paid by district program funds for one male and one female chaperone. ***No transportation, parking, mileage, toll fees, per diem or out-of-pocket expenses will be paid to chaperones by Texas 4-H Congress.*** It is suggested that county or district funds be used to pay for transportation and per diem to and from Texas 4-H Congress.

Travel Information

Start Date: Sunday, July 14, 2024

District Capitol Tours are on Sunday afternoon.

Dinner starts at 6:00 p.m. followed by the Opening Session.

End Date: Wednesday, July 17, 2024

All Participants must depart the hotel by 10:00 am

Travel costs are not covered in the registration fees. Each district determines the coordination of travel to and from the event.

Parking is available at the hotel for approximately \$35.00 per day for self-parking. Districts/counties with large vans, pickups, or other vehicles that will not be able to park in the garage will need to communicate with Congress Coordinator by May 1 to secure parking with the City of Austin along the streets.

Submitting Legislative Bills

Any 4-H member may submit a Texas 4-H Congress bill for consideration and debate. Participating in Congress is not a requirement. Writing and submitting a bill provides each 4-H member the opportunity to participate in an exercise in civic engagement.

All participants in Texas 4-H Congress must submit a COMPLETE bill for consideration. "All" includes Texas 4-H Leadership Team, Lobbyists, Press Corps, and District Delegates. To accomplish the writing and submission of legislative bills, it is recommended that the County Extension Agent, or a volunteer, assist the youth in learning what a quality bill includes, how to write one, and then submitting the bill on-line. Refer to the Texas 4-H publication entitled "Understanding the Texas Legislative Process, A Guide for Participating in Texas 4-H Congress." This publication is located on the Texas 4-H website. 4-H members from the same county, or other counties, are not allowed to submit the same bill for meeting this requirement.

2024 Committees

- Agriculture and Livestock
- Energy and Environment
- Homeland Security and Public Safety
- Public Health and Welfare
- Education
- Government, Finance and Appropriations
- Judiciary and Juvenile Justice

District Tours

Each district is responsible for organizing and scheduling Texas State Capitol tours if they want to participate in a tour. The district office and/or district chaperones are encouraged to work with a House or Senate office to schedule a tour of the Capitol for Sunday from 12:00 noon to 3:30 PM. All groups should be back at the Sheraton Hotel by 5:00 PM to ensure all luggage is in lodging rooms prior to the dinner starting at 6:00 PM.

Participant Quotas

Quotas are set for 4-H House and Senate members. The quota does not include adults, Texas 4-H Congress Youth Leadership Team members, Press Crops, and/or Lobbyist member selections. Texas 4-H Congress strives to provide equal opportunity for all Texas 4-H members. If the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program is able to accomplish the stated district quota system, an additional educational challenge will be provided for participants as they work to pass legislation that affects just a rural or urban area.

Area	House / Senate Delegates	Area	House / Senate Delegates	Area	House / Senate Delegates
District 1	20	District 8	20	El Paso County	2
District 2	20	District 9	20	Fort Bend County	2
District 3	20	District 10	20	Harris County	2
District 4	20	District 11	20	Tarrant County	2
District 5	20	District 12	20	Travis County	2
District 6	20	Bexar County	2	4-H Military	2
District 7	20	Dallas County	2	PVCEP	4

**Urban county delegates are strongly encouraged to represent the minority community and to be delegates from not only the "community club" but also representatives of special interest, community partnerships, and other "non-traditional" 4-H delivery methods. Districts are encouraged to maintain an alternate list of delegates if their quota is filled. Alternates will be allowed after all districts, urban*

counties, and the Prairie View Cooperative Extension 4-H Program have submitted applications and delegate spots are still available. Please do not request exceptions to this quota system.

Participant Communication, Dress and Forms

All necessary forms for Texas 4-H Congress will be posted on the Texas 4-H Congress website, as well as sent electronically to each participant in the Texas 4-H Congress participant packet. Copies of all communications will be sent via e-mail to county and district offices.

Suggested attire for the event will also be emailed. Since this is a prestigious event and the 4-H members will be on the floor of the Texas House of Representatives and Senate, a coat and tie and slacks/khakis are to be worn by all males and professional style dresses, pant suits, skirts/blouse, slacks/blouse/blazers are to be worn by females at all official legislative events.

Theme Party

TBD

Texas 4-H Congress Participant Roles

- **House or Senate Members:**
 - These roles are primarily for 4-H members that have never participated in Texas 4-H Congress. Members serving in the House or Senate should be prepared and able to speak about issues affecting Texas and Texas youth. Issues the 4-H member will be speaking about may or may not be related to the subject matter of the bill they submitted. House and Senate members will be participating in a variety of professional settings such as committee meetings, chamber sessions, and may be lobbied or questioned on different issues by the Lobbyist group and/or the Press Corps. Assignments are made by the State 4-H Office.
 - *House and Senate members allotted to participate: 260*
- **Lobbyists:**
 - The responsibility of the Lobbyist group is to identify certain bills and then lobby members of the House and Senate to either pass or defeat the bill. Lobbyist members should be prepared and be comfortable approaching others who may have a different opinion on legislative topics. The Lobbyist group will hold a private reception for certain House and Senate Members, along with Congress Leadership.
 - Applications to be considered for a Lobbyist position will be submitted online through 4HOnline. The online application opens February 15 and closes March 17. Applicants will be notified whether they have been accepted to serve in the Lobbyist role. If not selected and space is available, they could apply to be part of the district delegation.
 - *Lobbyist allotted to participate: 14*
- **Press Corps:**
 - Texas 4-H Congress Press Corps members can be either first time or returning 4-H members. Individuals applying for the Press Corps should have strong skills in writing, word processing, interviewing, photography, and focused on making deadlines. The Press Corps group is responsible for publishing daily articles, videotaping, and helping maintain a

Texas 4-H social media presence. Press Corps members may not be able to attend certain activities because of publication deadlines.

- Applications to be considered for a Press Corp position will be submitted online through 4HOnline. Applications are open February 1 – March 17. Applicants will be notified of their selection to serve in the Press Corps. If not selected and space is available, they could apply to be part of the district delegation.
 - *Press Corps members allotted to participate up to 15*
- **Texas 4-H Congress Youth Leadership Team:**
 - Members of Texas 4-H Congress Leadership Team will assume key legislative roles throughout Texas 4-H Congress. Members will arrive in Austin on Friday before Congress begins between 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM. Leadership Team members will be involved in training and planning the two days prior to 4-H Congress to be able to effectively conduct the necessary business. It is a requirement that the selected Texas 4-H Congress Leadership Team members participate fully in Congress to participate in the leadership roles (beginning on Friday and ending on Wednesday).
 - *Texas 4-H Congress Leadership Team members allotted to participate: 31*
- **Chaperones:**
 - Two adult chaperones from each district and one from PVCEP will be serving in official roles at Texas 4-H Congress. These adults serve as advisors to the legislative committees, chaperone dances, assist with press corps or lobbyist (as assigned), assist with decorating for meals/banquets, and serve as security and transportation monitors. Chaperones are expected to chaperone **ALL** delegates during Texas 4-H Congress while serving as the contact for specific district members in case of an emergency or incident. Additional chaperones are not expected, nor will they be accepted for this event.
- **Texas 4-H Congress Adult Leadership Team:**
 - This team consists of Texas 4-H Faculty, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agents, and volunteers. Each member of the management team has a specific area of responsibility during Texas 4-H Congress.