



Written by [David Kelly](#) on October 6, 2023

Abbott Calls for Special Session on School Choice, Border Security

Texas Governor Greg Abbott asked state lawmakers on Thursday to return for the year's third special session, to focus on education savings accounts, border security, public safety, and prohibiting Covid-19 vaccine mandates by private employers.

The office of Governor Abbott posted the following in a [press release](#):

I am bringing the Texas Legislature back for Special Session #3 to continue building on the achievements we accomplished during the 88th Regular Legislative Session and two special sessions this summer.... Together, we will chart a brighter future for all Texas children by empowering parents to choose the best education option for their child. Texas will also pass laws to mirror the federal immigration laws President Joe Biden refuses to enforce that will reduce illegal immigration and enhance the safety of Texans. For the first time ever, Texas will subject people to arrest for illegal entry into our state from a foreign nation. All licensed law enforcement officers in Texas will be authorized to arrest or remove any person who illegally enters the State, with penalties up to 20 years in prison for refusing to comply with removal. To crack down on repeated attempts to enter Texas illegally, re-entry will be penalized with up to 20 years in prison. Additionally, we must protect the freedom of Texans from forced COVID-19 vaccinations. I look forward to working with my partners in the Legislature to address these



AP Images
Greg Abbott



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critical issues.

Thursday's announcement included a [proclamation](#) that identified agenda items for the special session, which begins at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, October 9.

Topping the list of the posted agenda items is "Education Freedom." During the regular legislative session that ended in May, the governor had rejected several school-choice proposals that were limited and would have focused on only certain children based on needs or economic status. Abbott is determined to get legislation passed by lawmakers that will provide education savings accounts for "all Texas schoolchildren."

Supporters of school vouchers and other school-choice measures are optimistic about the proposed education legislation. "We are excited to see a new education savings account program for children in Texas that need and want a private school option," Laura Colangelo, executive director of the [Texas Private Schools Association](#), told [Community Impact](#).

Opponents are concerned that any state money placed into the proposed education savings accounts would take needed funds from public districts, especially hurting schools in rural communities. Adding to their concerns are the differences between private and public schools and how the state holds them accountable. This could lead to lively debate during the special session, potentially ending without any resolution, again.

The next agenda item for the session is "Border Security." Abbott listed the following key items in his proclamation:

- Legislation to do more to reduce illegal immigration by creating a criminal offense for illegal entry into this state from a foreign nation and authorizing all licensed peace officers to remove illegal immigrants from Texas.
- Legislation to impede illegal entry into Texas by increasing the penalties for criminal conduct involving the smuggling of persons or the operation of a stash house.
- Legislation to impede illegal entry into Texas by providing more funding for the construction, operation, and maintenance of border barrier infrastructure.

"Public Safety" is another agenda item listed, with Abbott asking lawmakers to pass "legislation concerning public safety, security, environmental quality, and property ownership in areas like the Colony Ridge development in Liberty County, Texas."

According to the [Austin American-Statesman](#), Colony Ridge is a "housing development northeast of Houston with a booming immigrant population that has been described as the fastest-growing community in Texas."

"In recent weeks, the housing development has been the subject of conservative media reports highlighting Mexican flags, signs written in Spanish and questions about the immigration status of the people living in the roughly 33,000-acre development," the paper continued.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick [posted](#) last week that he had read stories about Colony Ridge and wanted to see what was going on there for himself. He drove through the development, took a helicopter tour, spoke with the developer, and had a thorough briefing with local law enforcement.

"It's the fastest-growing and biggest housing development I have seen anywhere in Texas," Patrick wrote. "Some reports claim Colony Ridge may have become a magnet for people from around the world



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who are not U.S. citizens. With the Biden administration allowing millions of people to cross the Texas border, many ask if this community is going to become its own enclave with a population bigger than a mid-size city inside the state of Texas.”

What Patrick witnessed led him to ask Abbott to address the issue of public safety during the special session, especially for areas such as Colony Ridge.

The last item listed in the agenda proclamation asks lawmakers to pass legislation prohibiting Covid-19 vaccine mandates by private employers.

No one knows how long lawmakers will be in the session, especially with these potentially controversial agenda items. The [Texas Constitution’s Article 3, Section 40](#) limits special sessions to a maximum of thirty days, but imposes no minimum.



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