

The Austin Taxi Confidential

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The Official Newsletter of the Taxi Drivers Association of Austin

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Help Support Change, and Make it a Year to Remember!

More work ahead!



By: Ann Darbonne
Lone Star Cab 53

As you all know by now we received a raise of \$.10 cents on the drop at the end of December 2010 for our cleanup fee request. We also got a minimum out of the airport for the amount of \$11.95 (including the \$1.00 surcharge). Although this is not the goal that the TDAA aimed for, it is still a victory. It is something we now have that we did not have before.

In 2011 as things continue to move forward, the TDAA is still going to continue the fight that we have started for justice and equality for all taxi drivers in Austin. We are still working toward getting mobile permits, a driver's cancellation appeals process, a living wage; additional cab stands downtown, a cap on fees charged by the franchises, and several other issues.

In addition, we are working closely with Austin Interfaith. They are 50,000 members strong and know how to accomplish things. They have been in the political arena for a long time and they are a great source of knowledge and support.

In May of 2011, three of our current city council members are up for re-election. So, that being said, we need all drivers who are able to vote to do so. If you can vote and are not registered to do so, the TDAA directors will help you get registered. Once that is done we need you to show up at the polls and cast your vote for those who are likely to help us in our fight. The council members up for re-election are: Laura Morrison, Randi Shade, and Chris Riley.

Council Woman Laura Morrison is on our side some of the time. She is reasonable and can be expected to follow the truth and do what is right most of the time. I recommend that you support her with your vote.

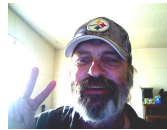
Steve Grassfield, Morris Poe, and the City of Austin Ground Transportation department have waged war on cab drivers for far too long. No matter what we make a request for, they never agree. They always have to come up with their own solution, which is rarely close to what we have suggested. We are constantly accused of attempting to defraud and/or take advantage of the customers, when in fact, if we make a request, the solutions have been carefully considered so as to be fair to all people involved (both passengers and drivers).

When we requested an airport minimum we asked for \$20, we agreed to compromise at \$14.85 (equivalent to a 6 mile trip, which is the measurement that they use for all other regulatory rates) plus the dollar surcharge, but ground transportation decided that was too high and opted for the equivalent of a 4 mile trip. On the cleanup fee we requested up to \$250 to be determined by the driver based on several factors, instead we got \$0.10 on the drop.

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Long Term Solidarity! Let's Make it Happen.

We control our own destiny. The key is "Solidarity!"



By: David W. Kelley
Austin Cab 85

So Far, So Good...

Who can deny the success, so far, of the "Taxi Drivers Association of Austin"? After avoiding the financially crippling maximum fare, keeping an interactive website online for over a year, providing much needed legal counsel and advice to drivers, partnering with the Austin Interfaith Alliance, and winning a "Best of Austin Award", we have done well in our first year of operation. However, we a long way to go, and the key is Solidarity.

Despite recent successes, we still have a long way to go in order to return to the profitability of yesteryear. Despite the regulation on the amount of taxi permits, the city Transportation Department continues to flood the market with alternative forms of transportation that don't enter into the calculation of the number of taxi permits. You all know what I mean, Super Shuttles, Charter Shuttles, and Saver Shuttles, trains, Bus routes to the airport, Cars-2-Go, and Pedi-cabs. None of these services existed when I started driving a cab. Now they want to add golf carts to the list. When will it end? It won't ever end, unless we can act as one, and employ the political might that comes from solidarity.

One thing that doesn't help is the formation of splinter groups that long to feed off the success of the TDAA. These groups, which basically seek the same freedoms as the TDAA, only hinder our chances for making headway, by distracting membership. Once again, Solidarity is the key. Splintering off into several small groups, only plays into the strategy of the franchise system which has dwindled away at driver revenue for years! Why help them keep us so poor, which translates into working hours so long, that we have no time to organize into solidarity. If we let this happen, we have only ourselves to blame for our poverty.



**I WANT YOU
TO JOIN THE TDAA**

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The city council allows them to continue to abuse drivers and we need to get the council members out of office that cannot see the forest for the trees. The Urban Transportation Commission usually comes in with a recommendation that at least meets us half way, but the city council completely ignores their recommendations, and goes with the Ground Transportation Departments recommendation. I have wondered, on occasion, why we even have a UTC, if the council is going to over ride what they say anyway.

So, let's work together for a productive and fruitful year. The TDAA is here for you and we need you to be there for each other.

Attention Drivers: You Need To Know This!

Beginning March 01, 2011 there will be a monthly general meeting on the 1st Tues. of each month at TRLA @ 4920 N. I-35, from 2-3pm. There will be speakers on different topics each month. The first topic will be "Need Extra Money? Get your tax credit". Drivers are encouraged to bring their families. Refreshments will be provided.

Web Page Update

The "Taxi Drivers Guide to Defending Yourself in Traffic Court" is now available online. To download a copy, simply log onto www.austintaxidriver.org and then click on campaigns/unfair tickets. Also available are the publications "Driving Austin, Driving Injustice", (aka the Lamp Report) and the "Report on Austin City Council Resolution 20100225-60 & Resolution 20100527-55", (aka the Resolution 60 report).

Leaders Wanted!

The TDAA needs leaders to serve as directors and volunteers. As the TDAA grows, and expands its political base, the number of meetings and projects grows also. The work we are doing is paying off, but, we have a lot more work to do. If you like driving a cab in Austin, and care about the future, contact any TDAA director and ask about volunteering. Directors are elected by membership and the next election will be held in July.

TDAA Kicks Off "Membership Renewal" Drive

The TDAA has been around for more than a year now, and that means it's time to renew your membership. We hope to increase membership this year, so if you're already a member, we hope you will renew. Current members will be contacted by phone and asked to renew their membership. It has been a good first year, let's make it a great second year.

Want to Join the TDAA?

Do you want to be a member? There are several ways you can join:

- Email info@austintaxidriver.org and ask for a membership application
- Send a letter of inquiry to: Taxi Drivers Association of Austin, PO Box 29734, Austin, Texas 78755
- Ask one of the Board members of the TDAA for an application directly.

Joining is quick and easy. Membership lists are not shared with the franchises, and participation can be limited to what each individual feels comfortable with. What is important is that we all stand together and support the cause in any way we can!



RAFFLE!!!

Drawing Mar. 27th, to enter, see any TDAA Board Member

J & G Encroachment Thwarted!



Here, an illegally parked, J & G Van, causes a traffic jam in front of the Hampton Inn!

Citywide Express Shuttle Service, parked in the no parking zone, in front of the Hampton Inn. Apparently, according to city inspector Joe Tower, J & G and the parking attendants at the Hampton Inn, had convinced city officials that since they had a contract with the hotel, they were somehow exempt from the no parking signs posted. The city inspector told a TDAA officer that "valet parking only" meant that the parking attendants, aka "valets", could park vehicles of their choosing in the no parking area.

Fortunately, in this case, justice has prevailed, thanks to a TDAA written complaint, to the city, about this egregious attempt to encroach on Taxi business. "Valet Parking Only", is not an open invitation for parking attendants to open their own taxi service. "Valet Parking Only" means this area is to be used to valet park the vehicles of guests staying at this Hotel. This is now the cities' official position and J & G is no longer permitted to park in "no parking" zones.

TDAA works with U. T. Public Relations Department

Since school began in September, the TDAA has been the subject of a class project at the University of Texas Public Relations Department. Being a newly formed organization, with limited PR history, presented an interesting project for the students, and guess what; (as if you didn't know) they came up with a bunch of really good ideas.

We will be mounting a Public Relations campaign this year based on this valuable input. Our thanks go out to all the students for all their hard work and also to the University of Texas Public Relations Department.

TDAA Officers Are:

- Ann Darbonne.....President
- Anna Fendlason.....Vice-President
- Chris Obioma.....Treasurer
- David W. Kelley.....Financial Secretary

DRIVE SAFELY!