

## **Austin Mayor Kirk Watson**

Mayor Kirk Watson has been immersed in public policy, spanning local and state government in Texas, for more than three decades. He served in the Texas Senate for over 13 years, leading on a wide range of issues including education, health care, transportation and government transparency. His peers elected him President Pro Tempore of the Senate in 2019.

In 1991, Gov. Ann Richards appointed Watson Chair of the Texas Air Control Board, the agency charged with addressing air quality issues. He was Vice-Chair of the committee that oversaw creation of the agency now known as the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

First elected Austin mayor in 1997, Watson won praise for bringing different political sides together around transformative environmental and economic development initiatives. In 2012, serving in the Texas Senate, he led the effort to build a new medical school at The University of Texas at Austin.

As a result of his numerous health care efforts, Watson has been honored by the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute and NAMI Austin. The American Medical Association recognized him with the prestigious Dr. Nathan Davis Award for Outstanding Government Service.

Watson also served as the Founding Dean of the Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of Houston.

He was honored multiple times in Texas Monthly magazine's analysis of the state's best legislators. In 1998, the magazine described him as "a man with a vision of what the community wants—and the moxie to carry it out."

He is a recipient of the prestigious President's Citation from The University of Texas at Austin and the Pro Texana Medal of Service from Baylor University. The Baylor Line Foundation (formerly the Baylor Alumni Association) named him a Distinguished Alumnus. Austin Community College awarded him an honorary degree. The Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas gave him its Open Government Lawmaker of the Year award, and the Texas Press Association named him a Friend of the First Amendment. The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce also has named him Austinite of the Year.