



Society for Epidemiologic Research

In the past year, reproductive rights in the United States have been taken away or threatened in 24 states. At the same time, 26 states have laws that are discriminatory to people who identify as LGBTQ+, and at least 35 states have passed or considered legislation on how U.S. history is (or is not) taught in schools. The State of Texas has been aggressive in these areas.

The 2024 SER annual meeting will be held in Austin, Texas (June 18-21). Some of our members have serious concerns about attending a meeting in Texas. These reasons vary—personal, safety, political, and others. As you consider whether to attend, we want you to have the information you need to make your decision. We also want to explain our rationale for going through with the annual meeting in Austin.

A major reason for proceeding with the meeting in Austin is financial. Annual meetings are scheduled 5 to 6 years in advance to ensure we can obtain the necessary space, as well as discounted room prices. SER guarantees payment to the venue. Cancellation or relocation of the Austin meeting would result in SER depleting its financial resources and jeopardizing the existence of the society. Also, while moving the meeting from Texas would have little impact on the State of Texas, proceeding with the meeting gives us an opportunity to have a positive impact.

We intend to use the meeting in Texas as a way to support the epidemiologists and students who live and work in Texas. Like many of us, they face challenges every day in their public health work. We can support them while learning from their experiences. We also encourage our Texas-based members to identify specific ways that SER can contribute to the local community during the conference.

We are gathering information about health care and safety for our members in Austin. [VisitAustin.org](https://www.visitaustin.org) has written to us and stated that any pregnant person with an emergency can get the care they need. Similarly, members of the LGBTQ+ community will be welcome. Did you know that Austin has the [third-largest LGBTQ+ population per capita](#) in the U.S.? The state of Texas is also the origin of [Juneteenth](#), and was the first to commemorate it as a state holiday in 1980. SER leadership is exploring other sources of information, including the potential for [workshops](#), [symposia](#), webinars, professional development, and mentorship opportunities focused on concerning topics. We invite your ideas.

Our goal is for you to have the information that you need to make your own decision about attending the meeting. We will have a virtual option for the meeting, which will allow attendance at selected sessions. We also encourage you to attend the mid-year meeting (location to be determined) if you choose not to attend in Austin.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Sue Bevan (sbevan@epiresearch.org) or me (bill_miller@unc.edu). Also, please contact us with ideas for positive activities to benefit public health professionals and/or local communities in Texas.

William C. Miller, SER President
On behalf of the SER Executive Committee