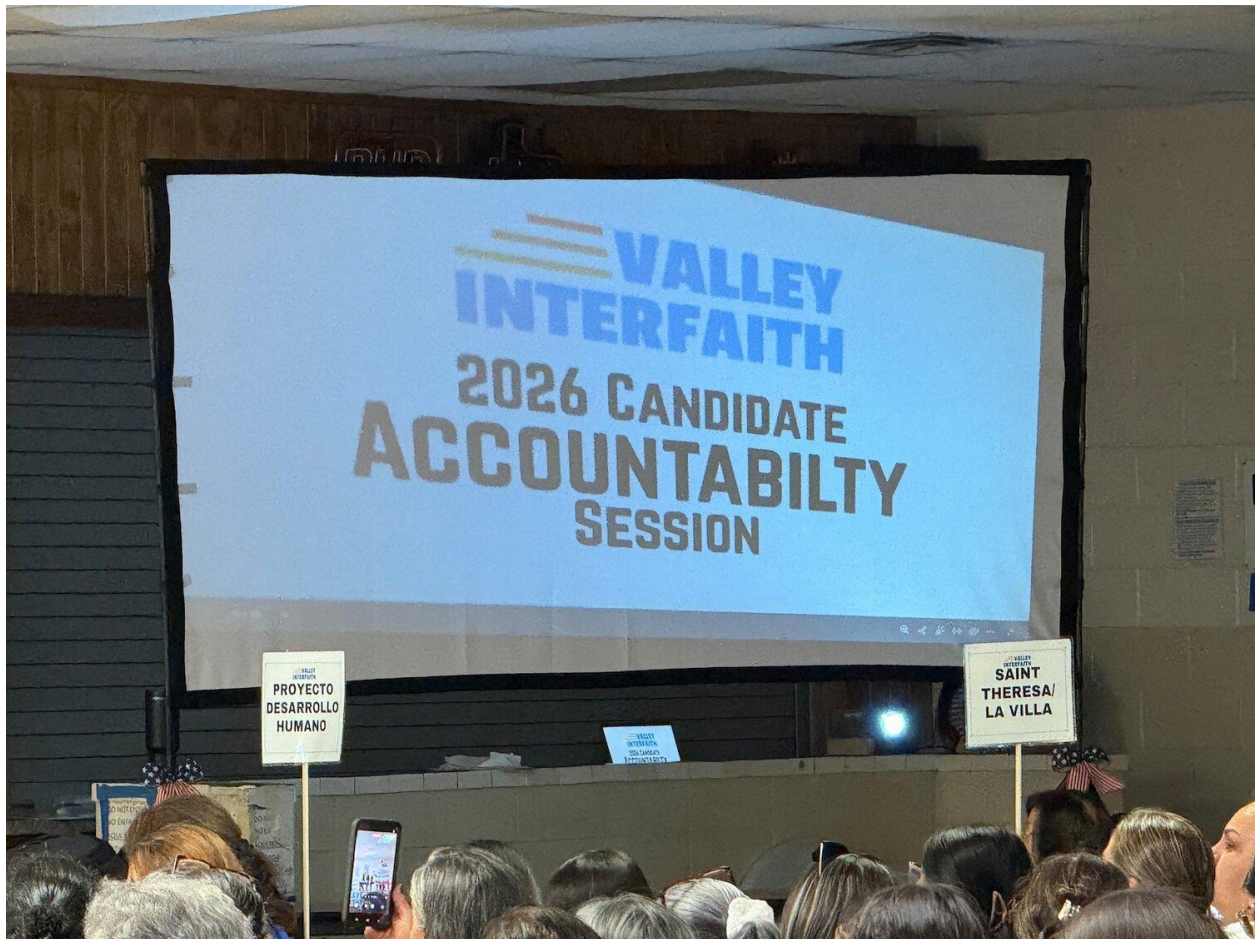


Valley Interfaith unveils its legislative agenda



Valley Interfaith's 2026 Candidate Accountability Session was held at Knights of Columbus Hall in Mercedes on October 11. (Photo: RGG/Steve Taylor)

Posted Monday, October 12, 2026 11:24 am

By Dayna Reyes, Reporter

MERCEDES, Texas - Valley Interfaith has announced its legislative agenda for the next year. The group's top issues include SNAP, affordable health care, drainage and flooding, DREAMers, immigration, and data centers.

Here is their agenda:

Protect SNAP Food Assistance

A new federal law will require Texas to pay approximately \$117 million more each year to administer SNAP. Texas could also face approximately \$709 million in additional annual costs if the state does not reduce mistakes in calculating benefits. Payment errors include both overpayments and underpayments and do not necessarily mean fraud. New work-reporting requirements may also cause eligible families to lose food assistance if they cannot document enough work, training, or volunteer hours. (Feeding Texas)

Valley Interfaith supports:

- Providing the state funding necessary to maintain SNAP.
- Improving the application system and reducing unnecessary delays.
- Protecting children, older adults, and working families from losing food assistance because of paperwork or state errors.

Keep Healthcare Affordable for Texans

A new federal law will require Texas to pay approximately \$117 million more each year to administer SNAP. Texas could also face approximately \$709 million in additional annual costs if the state does not reduce mistakes in calculating benefits. Payment errors include both overpayments and underpayments and do not necessarily mean fraud. New work-reporting requirements may also cause eligible families to lose food assistance if they cannot document enough work, training, or volunteer hours. (Feeding Texas)

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Improve Drainage and Reduce Flooding in the Rio Grande Valley

Flooding repeatedly damages homes, streets, businesses, and public infrastructure across the Rio Grande Valley. The region's flat terrain, slow-draining soil, aging infrastructure, and continued development make many neighborhoods especially vulnerable. (Texas Water Development Board)

Valley Interfaith supports:

- More state and federal funding for drainage and flood-control projects.
- Priority for neighborhoods and rural areas that flood repeatedly.
- Stronger drainage requirements for new development.
- Better coordination, maintenance, and public timelines for projects.
- Keeping roads accessible during major storms.

Stop the Attack on Dreamers

Court challenges continue to threaten DACA and the ability of Dreamers to work legally. For now, current DACA recipients - including those living in Texas - can continue requesting renewals of their DACA protections and work permits. However, the program's future remains uncertain, and new initial applications are still not being granted. (USCIS)

Valley Interfaith supports:

- Permanent legal protections and a path to citizenship for Dreamers.
- Continued work authorization and access to driver's licenses.
- More trustworthy legal assistance for DACA recipients who may qualify for other immigration protections.

Stop Criminalizing Immigration and Improve Our Outdated System

Nearly 71% of people in ICE detention have no criminal conviction. Texas holds more ICE detainees than any other state, with nearly 19,000 people detained on an average day. Families are being separated, and people without attorneys can struggle to understand notices, attend court hearings, and present their cases. (TRAC Reports)

Valley Interfaith supports:

- Focusing enforcement resources on genuine public-safety threats - not hardworking families.
- Fair hearings and greater access to trustworthy legal assistance.
- Ending the unnecessary detention of children and families.
- Modernizing the immigration system so longtime community members can earn legal status

Regulate Data Centers to Protect Communities

Data centers increase noise pollution, risk power outages, and require millions of gallons of water daily, while creating very few permanent high-paying jobs for local residents. We cannot afford to prioritize the cooling demands of tech corporations over the basic needs of our residents, our agricultural neighbors, and our local ecosystem.

Valley Interfaith supports:

- Requiring full public transparency and community input before approval, including disclosure of ownership, tax breaks, electricity and water use, cooling operations, and plans to protect surrounding neighborhoods.

About Valley Interfaith

Rio Grande

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For over 40 years, Valley Interfaith has trained ordinary people to build relationships across racial, denominational, economic and geographic boundaries and have a powerful voice in the decision-making that affects our families. We organize around the issues that shape everyday life from infrastructure and job training to supporting immigrant communities, environmental protections, and blocking corporate subsidies.

In one-on-one conversations, people learn about each other's interests and the pressures facing our families. These pave the way for focused small group conversations, which lead to developing an agenda of issues that leaders advance through local public action.

Valley Interfaith engages in a cycle of leadership development through formal and hands-on training. Training begins within institutions, with core teams that represent the diversity of their communities, and extends to state, regional and national opportunities.

When leaders talk to each other about their interests, develop an agenda of issues, and take action together, institutions and neighborhoods are strengthened. Rio Grande Valley residents can effectively participate in the democratic process, hold government accountable at all levels, and win concrete victories.

Valley Interfaith is an affiliate of the West/Southwest Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a network of broad-based organizations building power to revitalize our democracy for constructive social and economic change. Affiliates are in 33 cities across the U.S. The West/Southwest IAF is the regional network of the national IAF, the oldest and largest organizing and leadership development network in the United States.

IAF organizations are non-partisan. None will endorse any candidate or party for elected office, nor pursue or accept government funding. Each West/Southwest IAF affiliate is comprised of dues-paying member institutions, including religious congregations, schools, civic associations, unions, and non-profits that share a concern for families and a tradition of faith and democracy.