

Texas AFT

Legislative Agenda

CHANGE BEGINS WITH YOU

In the last legislative session, public schools in Texas endured an unprecedented assault on their funding. Teachers and all school employees faced unprecedented attacks on their long-established rights. Those in control at the capitol undermined quality standards, and they continued to distort the educational process by maintaining excessive emphasis on high-stakes standardized testing as the centerpiece of state education policy.



They seized on an apparent fiscal crisis caused by recession, and by their own blunders, to enact a destructive agenda: cutting \$5.4 billion from public education, forcing mass layoffs and pay freezes, inflating class sizes, and chopping vital programs such as full-day pre-kindergarten. They downgraded educational opportunity for students and eroded fairness and respect for education employees.

Now the fiscal alarm has abated. In fact, state revenue is rebounding dramatically, far exceeding the comptroller's estimates—potentially by more than \$7 billion. The Economic Stabilization Fund (a/k/a the Rainy Day Fund) is on course to reach \$11 billion plus. In 2014-2015, still more revenue growth can be expected. The state legislature in 2013 clearly has the means—and the moral obligation—to undo the cuts made in 2011, restore educational opportunity for students, rebuild respect for employee rights in state law, and secure equitable and sufficient long-term funding for our schools.

Texas is a wealthy state. We have the ability--if we have the will--to do more than give lip service to public education as the state's top priority. We can do what's right, preparing the rising generation of students in Texas for productive lives that will be the engine of our state's economy for decades to come.

In 2013, the 65,000 members of Texas AFT are committed to halting the destruction and getting public education in our proud state back on track. Are you with us?

Linda Bridges

Linda Bridges
President, Texas AFT



Call to Action!

Legislators listen best to messages from folks in their home district. Inform yourself about the issues and ask your senator and representative for their support.



Texas AFT

A Union of Professionals

To ID Your State Senator and Representative:

Go to <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us>.

Inform Yourself, Then Speak Your Mind:

Visit us at www.texasaft.org to stay up to date with the Legislative Hotline and Action Alerts, and to write to legislators directly by fax or e-mail.

Texas AFT "Call Direct" to Legislators:

Dial **1-888-836-8368**, give your state senator's or representative's name, and ask to be connected.

Prefer writing a letter?

Senators: P.O. Box 12068, Austin 78711

Representatives: P.O. Box 2910, Austin 78768

Governor: P.O. Box 12428, Austin 78711

(or call the governor toll-free: 1-800-843-5789)

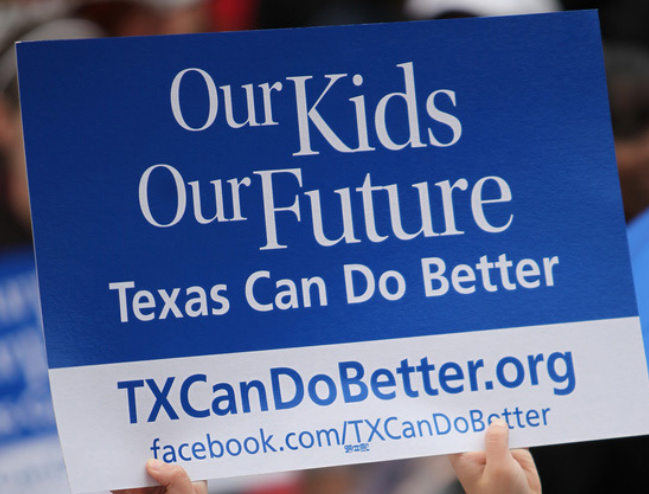
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2013

SUPPORT SCHOOL FUNDING

Restore Funding Now

- Use the state's resurgent revenue (\$7 billion or more) and the overflowing Rainy Day Fund (\$11 billion plus) to reverse cuts in core public services like education and children's health care for 2014-2015.
- Use other resources as well, including earnings from the Permanent School Fund and available federal aid, to restore jobs and core services.

Fix the Structural Shortfall

- To meet the growing needs of Texas students for the long term, build a new revenue structure. For instance:

- End unjustified sales-tax exemptions for business and professional services (but keep “lifeline” exemptions for health care, child care).
- Increase cigarette/tobacco taxes.
- Eliminate loopholes in the business franchise tax.
- Tax the actual value of commercial real estate (mandate

disclosure of sale price).

- Ensure that the cost of supporting public schools is shared fairly among all Texas taxpayers.

Assure Sufficient Funding, Equitably Distributed

- Change outmoded funding formulas to reflect the full cost of educating five million students—60 percent economically disadvantaged, 9 percent with disabilities, 17 percent with low English proficiency.
- Enforce funding equity, so that students' access to educational resources does not depend on where they happen to live.
- Guarantee state aid will keep up with enrollment, inflation, and rising state and federal requirements.
- Restore the authority of elected school boards to raise funds locally without a tax-rate election.
- Provide full state formula aid for community colleges, including employee benefits.
- Block private-school vouchers and equivalent drains on public schools' funding.



HELP OUR STUDENTS SUCCEED

Create Meaningful Accountability

- End reliance on a single, flawed test to measure success.
- Use multiple measures to gauge growth and guide instruction; incorporate measures of social/emotional learning.
- Restore teachers' authority over instructional time.
- Bar use of “value added” statistical models for individual teacher evaluation.
- End punitive sanctions; use supportive interventions.
- Use appropriate tests for students with disabilities, English Language Learners.
- Hold school districts accountable for providing a supportive environment for learning that reflects real employee input and collaboration.
- Build community services for students and families into neighborhood schools.

Improve Discipline, Safety, Health

- Uphold teachers' authority to remove disruptive students free of administrative retaliation; ensure training in proper application of the Safe Schools Act for administrators.
- Increase bus drivers' disciplinary authority.
- Provide school nurses full-time at each campus.
- Fund high-quality disciplinary alternative programs.

Assure Quality Education for All

- Restore pre-K grants; provide universal access to full-day pre-K and kindergarten.
- Restore Student Success Initiative funding; intervene early to help at-risk students.
- Ensure sufficient staffing to serve high-need students in regular classrooms.
- Ensure properly certified teachers in every class; restore funding for instructional aide scholarships.
- Provide mentoring and research-based professional development chosen by teachers themselves.
- Enforce existing K-4 class-size limits; restrict class size in pre-K and higher grades.
- Tighten standards for state-authorized charter schools and for virtual schools.

RESPECT TEACHERS AND SUPPORT STAFF

Guarantee A Voice in Local Policy-Making

- Maintain the ability of school boards to develop policy in consultation with employees' democratically elected representative organization.
- Let school boards bargain with such an elected organization on local contracts—as police, firefighters, and other public employees in Texas already can.

Defend Due Process and Employee Rights

- Define the work day and work year; ensure extra pay for extra work.
- Reverse 2011 attack on employee contract, pay, and due-process rights.
- Ensure basic due process and other employee rights in state law for all education employees, pre-K/16.
- Train administrators to respect employee rights, and penalize noncompliance.

Provide A Living Wage

- Raise average teacher pay to match comparable private-sector jobs in Texas.
- Pay a living wage to all education employees.

Better Pensions and Health Care

- Maintain the defined-benefit TRS pension system.
- Raise the state pension contribution for TRS, with the ultimate aim of enabling all school employees to retire under the Rule of 80 at 70 percent of their active salary with an annual cost-of-living adjustment.
- Provide a catch-up cost-of-living increase for TRS retirees.
- Secure the repeal of unfair federal Social Security benefit cuts that victimize school employees.
- Let education employees and retirees directly elect a majority on the TRS board.
- Boost state health-care funding for all education employees and retirees, aiming toward fully paid coverage for every employee and 50 percent for their families—health coverage as good as the governor's!

