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May 2009- May 2010

AG: No PAC auto deductions from Teacher Pay, May 17, 2010 [Watch Press Conference](#) This is the story behind the [Texas Attorney General's \(AG\) Opinion \(GA-0774\)](#) prohibiting school districts from withholding PAC contributions from teachers' payrolls. This ruling means that the only way that teachers unions will be able to raise political contributions is by asking teachers to write a check (or debit their credit card). [More](#)

Fighting for Our Children's Minds, Fox News March 17, 2010 Do you know what your children are reading, what is being tried, what's being scrapped, what's the final grade going to be. [More](#)

Plan B: Skip College, NY Times May 17, 2010 Richard K. Vedder of Ohio University and Robert I. Lerman of American University, the political scientist Charles Murray, and James E. Rosenbaum, an education professor at Northwestern would steer some students toward intensive, short-term vocational and career training, through expanded high school programs and corporate apprenticeships. [More](#)

Teacher Appreciation Week. What are you doing to show your teachers you appreciate them? Ideas here from Austin ISD for [you](#).

What's all this State Board Of Education stuff in Texas? William Lutz Lone Star Report "Rather than believe the confused rantings, here's a better idea: Read the standards and let them speak for themselves. The Texas Education Agency has posted the standards for public review. A simple reading of the standards show they are a vast improvement and that the al...armist rhetoric doesn't reflect reality." See [More](#)

Read for yourself and you decide Social Studies TEKS The State Board of Education (SBOE) has legislative authority to adopt the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for each subject of the required curriculum. SBOE members nominated educators, parents, business and industry representatives, and employers to serve on the review committees.

Districts and campuses recognized by Texas Education Agency for reducing dropouts and improving college readiness [more](#)

Parents Are Responsible to Deliver a Child Who Is Ready to Learn by Bob Schoolfield, March 30, 2010 Centralized legal dictates are shackles for teachers and principals as Mr. Howard's March 25 op-ed "Why Freer Schools Are Better Schools" states but the real problem with public education is parents have been stripped of authority, choice and responsibility. Because our current public education system is based on dictates and entitlements and because children are entitled to an education regardless of how badly they behave, solving education woes within this current system is like hoping to put the square peg in the round hole.

A free-market accountability system would encourage common sense and avoid many current dictates because it is a voluntary-contract system where parents are then empowered to deliver a child who is ready to learn. Under a free-market system tuition or scholarships must be paid creating a system of parent and student responsibility and accountability. Free-market systems mean the school teaches the academics and values desired by the parents. The free-enterprise system by its very nature solves Mr. Howard's public education complaints. Read [more](#)

Why the Texas Textbook Wars Matter to Everyone Kelly Shackelford, Fox News

An unelected review panel attempted to push through a number of highly questionable changes to the standards, removing Independence Day, Neil Armstrong, Daniel Boone, and Christopher Columbus- from them. They dumped Christmas and replaced it with Diwali. After a huge outcry from citizens and strong leadership by the conservatives on the SBOE each of these changes was reversed. Read [more](#) [Legal Liberty Institute](#)

LLI [Blogging from the SBOE Meeting](#)

Clearing up rumors about school requirements and the Texas Board of Education Gail Lowe February 1, 2010 If a lie is repeated often enough, at some point people will start to believe it. Such is the case with the State Board of Education [read more](#)

[Fox News is Wrong TEA Press Release](#) SBOE is meeting today, TEA says Fox News is getting it wrong. March 10, 2010

You're Fired Drastic step by school superintendent, focuses on educating kids in low performing school read [here](#) March 8, 2010

Small Town Gets High Tech Dave Munday [www.examiner.com](#) You might expect to see this in a private school or even college. It's at work in one of the smallest and poorest school districts in Texas [more](#)

Battle Brewing Over Textbooks in Texas March 8, 2010 What happens in the Lone Star state may have a direct impact on what US children learn about America's heritage and basic science Read more [here](#)

School Choice Yearbook 2009-10 Andrew Campanella and Ashley Ehrenreich March 1, 2010 The past year presented the school choice movement with unprecedented challenges and unique opportunities. Because of state-level budget crises and electorally emboldened adversaries, the school choice movement fought a seven-theatre war to protect educational opportunities for low-income children. It was a rollercoaster ride of strong advocacy, emotion, uncertainty, and nonstop hard work for school choice supporters in every state. [More](#)

FEBRUARY 2010

Chicago Democrat Embraces Vouchers February 25, 2010 A fascinating WSJ article about Rev. James Meeks, a black pastor, who is also a leading voice for the Illinois Democratic Party, choosing to force reform on the Chicago public schools. [More](#)

More Evidence of 'What Works' for American Education February 8, 2010 Three highlights from a WSJ article about research in favor of vouchers. "In 2008 the graduation rate for voucher students was 77% versus 65% for the nonvoucher students..." The voucher students receive less than half the public funding that the public students receive. [More](#)

Studies Reveal Why Kids Get Bullied and Rejected Kids February 4, 2009 We encourage you to daily ask your child questions "how was your day?" or "what was the sunny and cloudy part of your day," or, "if you had the ability to change one thing about your school day, what would it be?" Listen, then ask, "how could you have handled that better," or "how can you improve the situation?" Then help your student to work through problems without over-reacting. Read the news story below for more information. When necessary, be proactive with your school teachers and counselors about issues with which you'd like their help. Teachers can not identify problems on the bus, with the campus security, in the lunch room or in the hallways before you the parent do. Schools are interested in helping all children be successful, afterall, many have their own children in the school system. They expect their children's school will be on top of problems, too. Even the best schools have problems, teach your child that's part of life and over-reacting can magnify a problem. How you handle problems can make a world of difference in the outcome for your child and his/her friends. Elementary, Middle and High School can be difficult. Transitions can be even more difficult. As a parent of a new middle schooler, I shutter to think our son could have become a discipline problem had we chosen to ignore his request for our help. I can tell you first hand, schools work diligently with you to ensure that all children have the opportunity be successful. Help your teacher and school administration start a campaign for a friendly, respectful, bully-free campus. Studies Reveal Why Kids Get Bullied and Rejected Kids who get bullied and snubbed by peers may be more likely to have problems in other parts of their lives, past studies have shown. And now researchers have found at least three factors in a child's behavior that can lead to social rejection. Read story [here](#)

Texas students struggle on early versions of end-of-course tests December 3, 2009 TERRENCE STUTZ / The Dallas Morning News AUSTIN – ...Preliminary results indicate a large number of students will have trouble passing the exams. High school students will be required to pass the battery of 12 end-of-course tests beginning with freshmen entering high school in the 2011-12 school year. But many districts are already giving early versions of the tests to their students, and some are even using them as final exams in Algebra I and four other courses. Read more [here](#)

**Texas education head warns of 'federal takeover' Austin** AMERICAN-STATESMAN  
Thursday, December 03, 2009 Texas Education Commissioner Robert Scott said Wednesday that

the Obama administration is marching toward a federal takeover of the nation's public schools and Texas should fight it [Read](#)

PTA Launches campaign to involve parents Education Week Dec 1, 2009 The National Parent Teacher Association has received a \$1 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to begin organizing parental support for setting more uniform academic expectations. In debates over education policy, parents tend to be a "forgotten voice at the table," said Erin Hart, the director of strategic alliances, partnerships, and programs for the Chicago-based National PTA. "We're interested in holding the school districts accountable and being the collective voice of the community that says, 'This is important.'" Read [more](#)

Charter schools could expand under rule change. Education commissioner seeks change and apologizes to Austin superintendent for the timing on Pearce announcement. By Laura Heinauer AMERICAN-STATESMAN November 04, 2009 State Education Commissioner Robert Scott announced Tuesday that he intends to make it easier for high-performing charter schools to expand in Texas. Scott made the announcement during a round-table discussion on education held by the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce. At the event, he also apologized to Austin Superintendent Meria Carstarphen for the timing of the closure of Pearce Middle School and discussed possible changes when dealing with districts about schools that have failed to meet state standards for multiple years. Read [more](#)

**NEW** Alex Barton was voted out of his kindergarten class, in his new school he is excelling. Just like kids and schools and clothing, one size doesn't fit all. Move over NEA parents are pushing for vouchers. Options make all schools better, more successful. If a student is successful in public schools he will stay but the time has come to recognize the government can't maintain a monopoly in edu and be successful. Read [more](#)

**NEW** Gov. Perry Applauded Sam Houston Math, Science and Technology Center's Success October 14, 2009 Texas Insider [read story](#) [Go to TEA Best Practices Website](#) for ideas to improve your school

**NEW** Texas' 8<sup>th</sup> grade African-American students tie for first place on NAEP mathematics test, TEA Press Release October 14, 2009 Eighth-grade African-American students in Texas tied Massachusetts for first place on a national mathematics exam. African-American students in these two states earned an average scale score of 272 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a higher score than was earned by students in 40 other states for which data is available. [More](#)  
Harmony Science Charter School tops list of public middle schools September 21, 2009 By Amy Johnson KVUE.com A new report from the Group "Children at Risk" analyzed schools in Central Texas and ranked them. Researchers based their methodology on a number of factors - including college readiness - TAKS test results, attendance and class size. [More](#) on KVUE  
Prepared Remarks of President Barack Obama  
Back to School Event Arlington, Virginia  
September 8, 2009 [watch here](#) [read here](#)

Listen now E-Townhall w/ AISD and RRISD Supt. very positive, "thanks for choosing AISD" Carstarphen said! Parents, let's start some positive dialog! Listen [here](#) (click on second segment)  
NH Court orders Christian homeschooled girl to attend public school [more](#)  
K-12 Education Tax Credits Instead of School Vouchers  
by Bob Schoolfield July 29, 2009  
Education tax credits are better than vouchers to deliver parental choice in education  
read commentary [here](#)

#### Find A School

Our online Education Options Resource Center maintains one central place for Texas parents looking for a K-12 public, private, charter and home schooling info click [here](#)

Texas Education Agency school ratings being released tomorrow, find out how your school did, check back on this news page!

Daily salary and bonus for incoming and outgoing Austin ISD superintendent Austin American Statesman June 26, 2009 Outgoing Superintendent PF will get a check on his last day of work for \$215.3K...[more](#)  
Indiana [now has tax credits for K-12 education!](#) Will Texas follow?

High School Dropout wouldn't hang on to helping hand San Antonio Express News June 7, 2009 Lindsay Kastner Seventeen and a sophomore, Yolanda Sanchez started the school year weeks behind her classmates, but with a world of possibilities extending before her.

On her first day back, a banner near the entrance of Brackenridge High School proclaimed, "Vision is not seeing things as they are, but as they will be."

Yolanda had dropped out at the end of the previous school year but decided to return to school after then-Mayor Phil Hardberger knocked on the door of her South Side apartment one Saturday morning in early September. [More](#)

[A win for Texas students published in Speaking Freely, Texas Public Policy Foundation May 27, 2009](#)  
Amid all of the craziness at the Capitol this session, the Texas Legislature recently passed a bill that will help students have more education options than their assigned public school. This legislation is now on its way to the governor.

[HB 1423](#) by Rep. Ryan Guillen and Sen. Florence Shapiro allows junior colleges and community colleges in Texas to open a charter school. The colleges would still have to go through a rigorous application process at the Texas Education Agency and with the State Board of Education to be approved. Many Texas community colleges already collaborate with charter schools across the state. For example, Houston ISD and Houston Community College collaborate with two early college high schools and at an [academy for international studies](#), while Texas State Technical College in Waco collaborates with the [Rapoport Academy](#). See the full list on page 7 of our research on [charter schools](#).

Senior universities already have the ability to open charter schools in Texas. Currently, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Houston, Stephen F. Austin State University, and Texas Southern University either operate or collaborate with a charter school.

Charter schools run by senior universities are exempt from the state cap on charters of 215. This bill also exempts junior colleges and community colleges from the cap.

Charter schools are helping more than 110,000 Texas students. With this new opportunity for community colleges, imagine how many more Texas children can be helped.

Texas Poised to Expand Charter Schools June 1, 2009 SRN Bob Schoolfield, president of Let's Choose Schools, a Texas-based school choice advocacy organization, approves of all aspects of SB 308 and SB 1830 and thinks they will pass. Two of the top 100 public schools nationwide are Texas charter schools—IDEA Public Schools in the Rio Grande Valley and YES Prep Public Schools in Houston. Opening more charter schools in Texas would serve all students statewide, he said.

"The percentage of Texas charter schools that rate exemplary is more than twice the percentage of exemplary traditional public schools," Schoolfield said. "The percentage of charter schools missing the federal adequate yearly progress targets is 25 percent less than the percentage of traditional public schools missing the targets. Charter schools have 35 percent more minority students than traditional public schools. So the claim that charter schools cream off the best students from traditional public schools is simply not true." [More](#)

**NEW** Texas Considers Special Needs Vouchers SRN June 1, 2009 Teacher unions opposing school choice in Texas say the programs will drain valuable dollars out of public schools, but several studies show the opposite to be true. These include one released earlier this year by the Georgia Public Policy Foundation (GPPF) when a universal voucher bill was introduced in the Peach Tree State.

According to an explanation on the group's Web site by Executive Vice President Kelly McCutchen, when children use vouchers, "local tax revenues, which account for more than 40 percent of school funding on average, are not affected. As a result, funds available for the students still in that school system are increased because the funding that would have been spent on the students who are no longer there can be spread out among the students who remain.

"In short, local school systems will still get paid for students they do not teach," McCutchen noted. [More](#)

**NEW** Threat of Special Session Still Looms

San Antonio Express News June 1, 2009

The Texas House and Senate sent Gov. Rick Perry a compromise bill that revises the public school accountability system. It would lessen the importance of standardized testing and use end-of-course exams in high school to measure college readiness. The House also approved a compromise to spend an additional \$1.9 billion on public schools over the next two years. But many other bills got caught in legislative maneuvering. [More](#)

**NEW** Profound shift in kind of families who are home schooling their children USA TODAY May 30, 2009

The new figures come from the U.S. Department of Education, which found that 36% of parents said their most important reason for home schooling was to provide "religious or moral instruction"; 21% cited concerns about school environment. Only 17% cited "dissatisfaction with academic instruction." [More](#)

**NEW** Supreme Court to Address Meeting the Needs of Special-Education Students By TAMAR LEWIN May 30, 2009

In a case with potential financial repercussions for school districts and families alike, the [United States Supreme Court](#) will soon decide when public schools must reimburse parents of special-education students for private-school tuition.

The case before the court involves a struggling Oregon high school student, identified in court documents only as T.A., whose parents enrolled him in a \$5,200-a-month residential school after he became a heavy marijuana user and ran away from home.

Although his guidance counselor had noticed his difficulties and arranged an evaluation, the boy, who had angry outbursts and a history of behavioral problems, was found ineligible for special-education services at his high school in the Forest Grove School District.

"The district evaluation looked only at whether he had learning disabilities," said Mary Broadhurst, the lawyer representing the boy. "Even though staff notes mentioned suspected attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, they never evaluated him for it. So they refused to help." [More](#)

#### **NEW** Texas Legislature Considers Extending Pre-School Funding [read](#)

#### **Head of State Education Board Denied Reappointment Associated Press May 29, 2009**

Senate Democrats on Thursday blocked the reappointment of the conservative head of the state board that sets standards and policies for Texas public schools.

The 19-11 vote was shy of the two-thirds approval needed to support Gov. Rick Perry's nomination of Don McLeroy as chairman of the State Board of Education. [More](#)

#### **USA TODAY REVERSES ITS ANTI-VOUCHER RHETERIC Our view on improving education: Despite success, school choice runs into new barriers USA Today May 19, 2009**

Few national images are more shameful than those of innocent, low-income kids milling through decrepit public schools, uncared for, unsafe and barely educated. In Washington, D.C., alone, 173 schools — 67% — fail to meet federal standards of learning.

So it was curious that when President Obama recently allowed 1,716 of Washington's neediest schoolchildren to keep, until graduation, the [vouchers they use to escape their failed public schools](#) for higher-quality private ones, he also closed the program to new applicants. All this occurred as the Education Department reported that voucher participants show superior skills in reading, safety and orderliness. The news was buried in [an impenetrable study](#) released without a news conference. [More...](#)

#### **House's About Face on SBOE Sunset**

May 06, 2009 | KVUE.com Elise Hu

First it narrowly passed. Then it was narrowly defeated.

A rare verification vote was called on the House floor after state Rep. Patrick Rose's [HB 710](#) to put the controversial State Board of Education under sunset review failed on third reading, 71-73. The House had given the measure tentative approval yesterday in a squeaker, 74-68. (Agencies under sunset review are subject to a top-to-bottom audit every 12 years and can be abolished after an unfavorable review.)

State Rep. Valinda Bolton, D-Austin was out sick, so she couldn't vote in favor. State Rep. Dawnna Dukes, D-Austin, wasn't on the floor. Meanwhile, at least two R's (Eissler, McCall) who voted in favor of the measure yesterday flipped their votes.

The conservative group, Free Market Foundation, which is against putting the board under sunset, issued the following statement:

"A serious attack on the rights and role of voters was averted today. House members chose wisely and left the right to 'review' the State Board of Education where it belongs - with the voters. These voters in 15 districts across the state will decide at the ballot box if the SBOE is effective, just like we do with other state elected officials," said FMF's Jonathan Saenz.

FMF's nemesis organization, the Texas Freedom Network, issued a counter-statement:

"This was a common-sense, good-government bill, and House members who voted against it totally ignored the interests of parents and other taxpayers," said TFN President Kathy Miller.

"No wonder so many people are disgusted by politics. There was no reason to oppose this bill except to bow to the demands of pressure groups that keep dragging our public schools into the culture wars."

Pilot vouchers won't fly

April 20, 2009 by Bob Schoolfield

The Lone Star Foundation

The "pilot voucher bill for certain students" strategy used

for the last 15 years has failed in Texas because the right approach is a universal bill that has something for every citizen in the state.

Pilot voucher bills benefit only sub-groups of students like those in failing inner-city school districts or autistic students and have failed to pass even though a school choice program would clearly help these students or dropouts.

The pilot approach is one of sympathy, "These kids are suffering and no strategies within the public

school system have yet to work. We should try vouchers with these kids. It couldn't hurt them, perhaps it could benefit them." Pilot approaches protect status quo, "Pilot vouchers are just for a small percentage of public school students, they cannot hurt the overall public school system." Supporters of pilots believe pilots are morally or philosophically difficult for legislators to oppose.

A voucher bill was debated on the floor of the House during the 2005 regular session and the supporters of the bill used this pilot sympathy approach. But opponents complained, "You want to 'impose' school choice on my inner-city district, but not impose it on your own district."

Motivated by a fear of public school lobbyists supporters of the pilot approach are delaying the many positive impacts that a universal voucher will make.

More...