

MCALLEN AFT EYES ON THE BOARD

INFORMATION YOU NEED TO KNOW



A Union of Professionals

February, 2015

Volume 22, issue 6

LT. GOVERNOR PATRICK RECYCLES

Patrick, presiding officer of the Texas Senate, laid out part of his 2015 education “reform” agenda for the Senate on Tuesday, March 3, 2015.

The proposals outlined would simply recycle bad ideas that previous legislatures rejected with just cause.

While Texans have rebelled against the misuse of standardized testing—the answer from some in the Senate is to put even more emphasis on that misuse by using it to facilitate the turn-over of neighborhood schools to charter school chains with a proposal carrying a misleading name.

The “parent trigger” is yet another way for privatizing public education and actually reduces community control of our schools. And assigning our campuses A-F ratings serves to further stigmatize struggling schools that need resources, not labels.

These senators are focusing on policy paths proven to do nothing to help student achievement or provide the support for campuses need to be a foundation for their communities to thrive.

BOND UPDATE

The talk about town is hot and heavy about the bond. Most are telling us that with all the additional taxes being added all across the county it is going to be challenging to vote in favor.

Included in this mailing is a list with pictures of candidates for city commission and the school board.

If the Board of Education wants this bond to pass, they need to increase pay for all employees.

Our members will be getting a survey on line regarding their individual concerns.

Members of the McAllen AFT COPE (PAC) will be meeting soon. A letter will be mailed to each member of the PAC.



CONTINUED

TAX –CUT DEBATE

In Tuesday's tax-cut debate in committee, senators from both parties questioned the wisdom of granting new tax breaks while we are still suffering some of the ill effects of prior tax cuts on state and local budgets for education.

Sen. Kirk Watson, Democrat of Austin, cited the failure of the new business-franchise tax passed in 2006 to deliver the promised amount of revenue, creating a hole in the state budget that has never been filled.

Sen. Kevin Eltife, Republican of Tyler, noted that independent experts predicted the 2006 legislation would leave the state with a structural deficit while blocking the ability of school districts to raise local property taxes.

The bottom line, said Sen. Royce West, Democrat of Dallas: "We still have the structural deficit."

VALUE-ADDED METHODS OF TEACHER APPRAISAL

Unfortunately, the Texas Education Agency under Commissioner Michael Williams seems bent on using VAM scores based on the state standardized test results of a teacher's students as a significant factor in the new state model of teacher evaluation being "piloted" in 64 districts across the state. As Texas AFT's Melina Raab testified, a better description would be "phased rollout," because TEA has a timetable requiring full implementation of the new model in school year 2016-2017.

The agency has been under pressure from the U.S. Department of Education to move in this direction, but that pressure may be about to ease, because the USDE policy has little support in the US Congress.

SHARE MY LESSON

[Share My Lesson](#) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) hosted 45 active and retired teachers in Austin, Texas, last weekend for an around-the-clock session of updating and creating more than 200 lesson plans and teaching resources, covering all subjects and grades.

These resources are now available for free download on www.sharemylesson.com.

Share My Lesson provides online access to free, high-quality, user-generated lesson plans that support teachers, parents and the greater education community.

The "up all night" event spanned 42 hours as educators from across Texas collaborated on resources designed to help teachers and students alike.

Fun activities, prizes and giveaways throughout the weekend kept the energy level high for participants.

To include the larger school community in the weekend event, members of Texas AFT visited Pickle Elementary School where they introduced teachers, school support staff and parents to Share My Lesson and encouraged them to register throughout the weekend.

"Texas AFT stands in solidarity with the education community locally and around the country," said Ana Pomar, Texas AFT's director of educational issues. "Through our community outreach efforts and the contribution of valuable teaching resources to Share My Lesson, we offer solutions for educators searching for innovative ways to keep their students engaged and on a path toward success."