

MCALLEN AFT NEWS

1500 Dove, McAllen, TX 78504

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LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Texas AFT Tele-Town Halls for the Legislative Session

You are invited to participate in our Tele-Town Hall. Texas AFT will conduct Tele-Town Halls on the second Thursday every month from February thru May. Please register on the Texas AFT website: <http://www.texasaft.org/townhall/>

On the day of the event, you will receive a call from us to join the Tele-Town Hall. You will join thousands of public school employees across the state and receive real-time updates on important issues, hear from special guest speakers such as elected state officials, and have your questions answered during the event.

Registration is FREE. We CALL you. You receive the POWER of knowing what is happening at the state Capitol. So get on the phone for our Tele-Town Hall events.

Upcoming Texas AFT Tele-Town Halls:

Thursday, March 9
Thursday, April 13
Thursday, May 11

All are welcome to participate!

GET ON THE BUS!



McAllen AFT invites all educators and support staff to join us in Austin on the first Monday of spring break, March 13, for the 2017 Texas AFT Lobby Day. It is our turn to educate the legislature about our priorities and tell them to do what's right.

Our first message to lawmakers: "Texas can do better. Our kids shouldn't have to wait for fair and full funding for education!"

Texas AFT will provide a legislative orientation and lunch. Hundreds of school employees will be mobilized for this event to rally for our public schools.

You do not have to be a member of AFT to participate—all are welcome! If you haven't already RSVP'd, please do so. You can stop by our office at 1500 Dove Ave, McAllen, TX 78504 to sign up. This trip is free and we provide you with a McAllen AFT T-shirt, breakfast, lunch and dinner. Bus leaves at 4:00 a.m. and return approximately 11:30 p.m.

What's the Schedule

March 13

11 a.m. to noon: Lunch on the Capitol grounds
Noon : Rally on the South Steps
Afternoon: Visits with lawmakers

Legislation targets teacher dues payments in attempt to silence protests against privatization, lack of school funding

Teachers across the state—some in disbelief, some voicing anger—are hearing again that some lawmakers want to diminish their freedom to voluntarily support their professional organizations through payroll deduction.

Senate Bill 13 (Sen. Joan Huffman, R-Houston) and HB 510 (Rep. Sarah Davis, R-Houston) would eliminate payroll dues deduction for teachers and other school personnel, nurses, correctional officers, child protection workers, and other public-sector workers at the state and local level. These bills single out these public employees but would continue to allow payroll deduction for police and firefighters and other deductions of choice that go to hundreds of other organizations, many of which lobby at the Capitol. SB 13's author, Huffman, has said that it's because those employees are "different."

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has declared outlawing payroll deduction a top priority for the legislative session, and Gov. Greg Abbott included it as a priority in his State of the State speech this month. Both say private-school vouchers are their top education priority. A similar bill outlawing payroll deduction for public employee union dues, SB 1968, passed the Senate last session but did not move out of committee in the House.



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House Budget Writers Signal Readiness to Use Reserve Fund as Intended to Cover Shortfalls

The one must-pass bill in the current legislative session is the budget, which holds the key to equitable and adequate funding of public pre-K/12 and higher education. Now that House committees have been named by Speaker Joe Straus (R-San Antonio), the House Appropriations Committee has been quick to start its hearings on the drafting of a budget for fiscal 2018 and 2019. Texans who hope, as we do, for a budget that covers needed education spending and other key priorities such as health care can take some encouragement from the initial House budget discussions. It seems clear the House budget writers are prepared to tap the Economic Stabilization Fund (also known as the Rainy Day Fund) for billions of dollars needed to cover the cost of educational and other vital services.

Given the importance of the Appropriations Committee, it is a good idea to get familiar with the roster of 27 committee members who will be doing the budget drafting for the House. Here's the lists of our local representatives on the committee.

- Oscar Longoria, Vice-Chair (D-Mission)
- Sergio Munoz, Jr. (D-Palmview)

Texas AFT: How We're Different

1) Texas AFT is more than legal protection and benefits (although we offer the best of those too!). Being a member of a union means you are part of a family of educators and other workers with a shared vision for public education.

2) Texas AFT is the only Texas school employee organization with a significant number of local unions and Associate Member Program offices organized to provide direct representation for educators and school employees.

3) With more than 65,000 members, Texas AFT is a statewide organization encompassing 38 local unions and regional offices in school districts across the state. We are also affiliated with the 1.6-million-member American Federation of Teachers and the AFL-CIO, with 12 million members.

4) Texas AFT staff also cut through red tape and help resolve thorny issues at your workplace. Our attorneys work with representatives in the field to defend your rights under state law.



We are at a critical moment when we must reclaim the promise of public education—not as it is today or as it was in the past, but as it can be—to fulfill our collective obligation to help all children succeed.

Reclaiming the promise...

Join Texas AFT as we reclaim the promise of public education. For current members, that means taking a stand to let elected officials know that we are professionals who will work to ensure a quality education for all our students, and a respectful working environment that inspires us to spark the love of learning in the children we educate.

Stop Taxpayer Money Going to Private Schools

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has put passage of a private-school voucher bill in the mix for his top legislative priorities this session. The key bill on that agenda is SB 3 by Sen. Larry Taylor (R-Friendswood), which would create so-called education savings accounts and tuition tax credits to funnel scarce taxpayer dollars to unaccountable private-school operators, all in the name of "parental choice." Also filed are HB 1184 by Dwayne Bohac (R-Houston) and SB 542 by Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston), both providing for tuition tax credits, and HB 1335 by Ron Simmons (R-Carrollton), setting up education savings accounts primarily for special-education students.

It's time to start ramping up resistance—including some common-sense points you can relay to your lawmakers—to stop these bad bills.

Here are some of the key points to consider when talking to your representative and senator about vouchers:

- Vouchers would segregate our students into the haves and have-nots and would primarily benefit upper-middle-class families that could afford the extra money needed to pay high private-school tuitions.
- Vouchers eliminate public accountability. Vouchers channel tax dollars into private schools that do not face state-approved academic standards, do not make budgets public, do not adhere to open meetings and records laws, do not publicly report on student achievement, and do not face the public accountability requirements contained in state and federal laws, including special-education laws.
- Vouchers divert attention, commitment, and dollars from public schools to subsidize private-school tuition for a few students, including many who already would attend private school, creating new costs for taxpayers. A dollar spent on a tuition voucher is a dollar drained from public education.
- Vouchers leave behind many disadvantaged students because private schools may not accept them or do not offer the special services they need.