



MCALLEN AFT NEWS



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KEEPING YOUR INFORMED

On Monday, March 2, the Texas House Appropriations subcommittee on education funding will be making preliminary decisions on funding for elementary, secondary, and higher education. We will monitor the action and report significant developments.

On Tuesday, a subcommittee on educator quality of the House Public Education Committee will hear invited testimony on teacher appraisal and measures to improve the quality of teaching. Texas AFT will testify.

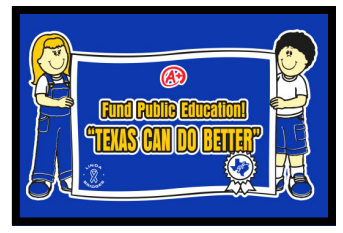
Meanwhile, in the Senate Finance Committee, further deliberation on the state budget will be set aside in order to devote the week to hearings and possible action on assorted proposals to cut taxes. Monday the committee will discuss 15 bills to cut property taxes. Tuesday the committee will hear about 18 bills to reduce business taxes. Wednesday the floor will be opened to public testimony. Texas AFT and allies will be making the case all week that the legislature should not be handing out tax breaks before it reckons with the

cost of meeting the state's obligations to provide key public services such as public education for the state's 5.15 million students.

ADDITIONAL PRE-K FUNDING

On February 26 Rep. Dan Huberty, Republican of Humble, introduced a bill creating a new pre-kindergarten grant program. Huberty's HB 4 would give additional pre-K funding to a school district or charter school that met certain quality criteria for its pre-K offerings. The bill's single-digit number indicates that it is a House leadership priority. HB 4 is modeled after proposals by Gov. Greg Abbott. It does not require that increased funding be used to provide full-day pre-K, as many advocates—including Texas AFT—have urged. An identical Senate companion bill, SB 801 by Sen. Judith Zaffirini, Democrat of Laredo, also was filed Thursday.

Rep. Jim Keffer, Republican from Eastland, introduced a bill Thursday to authorize a 13th check for TRS



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retirees, if the Teacher Retirement System determines it can be done while preserving the actuarial soundness of the TRS pension fund. Keffer's HB 1967 would provide for a supplemental payment equaling the amount of the retiree's August 2015 monthly pension check (up to a cap of \$2,400).

Rep. Garnet Coleman, Democrat of Houston, has filed HB 1938 to require that parents be notified when their child's school lacks full-time nurse staffing. This health and safety measure is an identical companion bill to SB 69 by Sen. Rodney Ellis, also a Houston Democrat.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

The U.S. House leadership apparently misjudged just how much resistance there would be to its faulty legislation to replace the No Child Left Behind Act. On Friday, February 27, after two days of debate on a host of amendments to the bill (H.R. 5, misnamed the "Student Success Act"), it was abruptly withdrawn from consideration on the House floor. The bill encountered stout opposition from the Democratic minority in the House, which objects to the removal of important guarantees that funding will flow to schools with high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students. At the same time, Republican House members on the party's far-right wing want federal funding for private-school vouchers, which the bill does not provide.

The initiative on education policy in Congress may now shift to the U.S. Senate, where there could be

more room for bipartisan compromise between the Republican majority and Democratic minority. There is already broad bipartisan agreement in Congress that the extreme emphasis of the No Child Left Behind Act on standardized testing has been a mistake. There also appears to be little congressional support for the current U.S. Department of Education policy pushing states to emphasize students' scores on standardized tests as a major factor in teacher evaluation and employment decisions.

MEXICAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE

We know that educators create amazing lessons to guide children through literacy development as well as cultural discovery every day. We would like to highlight the talent of our Texas educators by inviting you to submit a lesson designed around a Tomas Rivera Children's Book Award winner from 2006-2015. All lessons will be published on our [Share My Lesson website](http://www.sharemylesson.com). **The deadline to submit your lessons is Saturday, April 3, 2015. Please e-mail all contest submissions to: apomar@texasaft.org. Winners will be announced on May 5.**

