CAPITOL HALL
REPORT

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And, while Mesquite says the state absorbed last year's increase, it is also accurate to say that in the previous years when property tax values dropped in the district, the state increased its share of revenue to meet the per pupil expenditure needs of the district.

Again, I am in complete agreement that the current education funding process, including all aspects of the funding formula, all of its out dated band-aids, and Robin Hood has to change.

There has been no willingness by the House to seriously address any change in how schools are funded. Thankfully the Senate insisted that HB 21 include a new bipartisan commission to address fixing the broken system we now have. I was one of the Senators who led the effort to amend HB 21 so we could stop kicking this can down the road. To continue the current funding system is just plain irresponsible.

I will be working with the Commission on School Finance created during the session to look at both the revenue and expenditure side of the school finance formula to ensure we have the appropriate amount of funding available for all school districts.

Question: ***There continues to be debate among the legislators in Austin regarding publicly funding student vouchers or creating education savings accounts (ESAs). One of the Senate proposals this last legislative session recommended an $8,500 allotment per student which is higher than the basic student allotment of $5,140 for public schools. As a senator, what is your stance on vouchers? Please provide us with information supporting your beliefs and views on the topic.***

Senator Hall: We adults, not just legislators but all adults, have not just a responsibility but a duty to do all that we can to ensure that all children have an equitable access to a knowledge-based education that meets their needs regardless of their zip code.

To achieve that knowledge-based educations, our classroom teachers need to have the tools and authority necessary to maintain a good learning environment in which the students can best learn. Our teachers are the backbone, engine and workhorse of education. As such they deserve to be paid at least on par with administrative staff.

I am on record as being in support of both ESAs and tax credit scholarships to better ensure that all children regardless of income level, ethnicity or mental/physical challenges have the opportunity to receive a quality education.

As your senator, I am responsible, for representing all of my constituents (which includes administrators, teachers, parent and students) and balancing between the needs of the differing constituency.

Sometimes that means looking at needs of individual students versus wants of the education establishment. I believe that the majority of our students receive a valuable education in the public setting, and I believe that setting should be fully and equitably funded.

I also know that no one single setting is perfect for every child. For the family whose child is not doing well in a public setting – for whatever reason – I support funding education services for the child, rather than the system so long as appropriate safeguards are in place to prevent fraud.

Texas public education is supposed to be about providing for the equitable and efficient education of all children. That means meeting every child's education needs, not institutional wants. School choice has been in many states for several years and the data clearly shows it is a win-win-win opportunity for students, teachers, and taxpayers.

School choice is upholding our basic principle of individual liberty and is ensuring that every child has the opportunity to receive the best knowledge-based education that meets his or her unique needs. The data also shows that when done right, school choice improves graduation rates, reduces dropout rates, reduces incarceration rates, and improves the teaching environment and teacher salaries.

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