

STATEMENT OF SENATOR LARRY TAYLOR ON SCHOOL FINANCE COMMISSION LEGISLATION

AUSTIN, TEXAS (August 10, 2017) . . . Senator Larry Taylor (R – Friendswood), Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, was joined by many of his Senate colleagues for a press conference to discuss their priorities for meaningful education reform. Senator Taylor said during the press conference, “Our message is loud and clear. We want substantial, meaningful education reform and we want it now.” Taylor went on to add, “the time for tinkering around the edges and applying another band-aid is over. We have a broken system and suggested proposals by some to add one-time money to this system are political campaign gimmicks, not long-term solutions.”

Senator Taylor also quoted from the Texas Supreme Court’s ruling on public school finance, “. . . as we have recognized, more money does not guarantee better schools.” Taylor went on to add that “some people’s idea of reform is to merely spend more money in education. That is not real reform. If we go that route we will find ourselves back in the same cycle of litigation and adding more band-aids.”

The most recent Supreme Court decision has provided a unique opportunity for fundamental reform to design a school finance system from the ground up. Taylor said, “my Senate colleagues and I want to establish a system that includes all the constitutional parameters we know we must meet, yet account for the demands, and the innovations the 21st century offers.”

Senator Taylor outlined the need for a comprehensive, systemic overhaul of the school finance system through the creation of a new Commission comprised of a broad cross-section of Texas business leaders, educators and legislators, not paid education lobbyists in Austin. Taylor added, “we haven’t taken a comprehensive look at school funding formulas since 1984 ... over 30 years ago. Not only has the time come, it’s way past due.”

Observing the recent passing of Texas Governor Mark White, Senator Taylor said, “Governor Mark White was a champion of his time for our public education system and I am reminded of a commission he pulled together. In 1984, when he wanted fundamental comprehensive reform of our public education system. He didn’t just bring together legislators, lobbyists and educators. His appointed chairman was a successful business and community leader, Ross Perot. There is no way that important changes like “no pass, no play” would have ever passed had the education lobby overseen the effort. In fact, many of them opposed the proposals back in the 80’s, even to the point of taking the state to court.”

The Texas Senate has been vigorously working on methods to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our school finance system. Senator Taylor said, “The Texas Constitution requires that we do this adequately, equitably and efficiently. There have been many

discussions regarding adequacy and equity. However, the efficiency requirement is sometimes forgotten. With today's and future budget challenges, we must seek out improved efficiencies and higher productivity out of every dollar we spend."

After the press conference, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said, "Texas senators spoke out on what has been one of my top priorities for over a decade since first serving on the Senate Education Committee and later as Education Chairman. Public education is also a top priority for the majority of Republican senators and they are absolutely right that simply adding more funding without a focus on teachers and educational outcomes, as is being proposed, accomplishes very little."

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