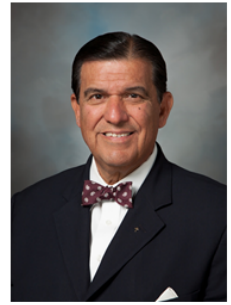




**STATE SENATOR
EDDIE LUCIO, JR.
DISTRICT 27**



Austin Capitol Office
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, TX 78711
512-463-0127

Cameron County office
7 North Park Plaza
Brownsville, TX 78521
956-548-0227

Hidalgo County office
1210 W. Interstate 2, Suite 10
Pharr, Texas 78577
956-787-5227

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Opinion: A Child's Potential Knows No Boundaries

When it comes to education, we have a lot to be proud of in the Valley. Our schools consistently perform near the top of the state in student achievement metrics, despite the multitude of challenges our students face compared to other regions in Texas.

Historically, this educational excellence has been fostered through local efforts of educators and other leaders for education, making our successes truly home-grown. The State of Texas provides resources to carry out locally-developed educational efforts, and I have been present at countless hearings at the State Capitol where Valley educational leaders have testified to share student successes with the rest of the state.

In the past week, regional legislators have been called upon to develop a plan that will change the boundaries of several school districts to match Brownsville's city limits, a plan opposed by neighboring districts who have served affected areas of the county well before Brownsville's territorial expansion over a decade ago. While all parties have valid and representative viewpoints, I pause at the rush to have the Texas Legislature litigate an issue best addressed through local efforts, as provide by law and with respect to voters.

In my experience, educators from across the region have banded together to put the interests of children first, developing innovative programs that pool resources, leverage our best educators, and help students from all backgrounds achieve their fullest potential – all through local initiative.

When it comes to providing the resources necessary to educate all children, that indeed is a role that can – and must – be fulfilled by the state. The issue of equitable school finance has long been a difficult one, plagued by concerns about limited revenue and growing property tax levies. The work during the interim of the Texas Public School Finance Commission and its recently-released report give me hope that the Legislature will take meaningful action this session to deploy additional resources to Valley schools. Rest assured that I will support school finance legislation that will direct more needed funds to the school districts of Brownsville, Harlingen, Los Fresnos, Point Isabel, San Benito, and all the other districts I represent.

Beyond that financing role, and to its credit, the Legislature has largely left local educational decisions to local educational leaders. This deference reflects the widely varying needs of students in different areas of the state, and the need for districts to make plans based on those unique needs. The students of Cameron County would be ill-served by the policies adopted by educators in Brazoria County, and legislators from both areas recognize this fact. After all, when we speak of jurisdictional territories and resources it's important to remember priorities be for the benefit of students first.

I firmly believe that parents are in the best position to determine locally how to provide the educational services that will cultivate our next generation of leaders. I look forward to working with parents, schools, and districts across the Valley to determine how we can provide the best opportunities for every single student in South Texas.

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Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. represents the 27th Senate District of Texas which includes the counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, Kenedy, Kleberg, and Willacy. He is Chairman of the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations and the Vice-Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education.

Contact: Louie Sanchez, Chief of Staff · 512 463 0127 · louie.sanchez@senate.texas.gov · State Capitol, 3S.5 Austin, TX 78711