



TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GOVERNOR FAILS TO ADDRESS PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING NEEDS

Delivering his State of the State address to a joint session of the 81st Texas Legislature today, Gov. Rick Perry laid out three priorities to “reach our goal of ensuring every student graduates from Texas high schools with a strong foundation in math, science and English”:

“First, they deserve the best teachers. ... Second, we must hold our schools accountable for student performance. ... Third, let’s keep improving our math and science education, and continue preparing our young people, especially low-income and minority students, for a productive life after high school.”

The oldest education organization in Texas applauds Perry’s goals. But the 65,000-member Texas State Teachers Association has to question the governor’s commitment to achieving them.

The governor applauded previous Legislatures for not raising taxes and called on current legislators to do the same.

“Unfortunately, that has drastically limited the amount of new state money available to public schools to meet rapidly changing needs,” TSTA President Rita C. Haecker said.

Further, the governor again called for expanding and increasing tax cuts rather than increasing funding for public schools.

“As he runs for office yet again, this governor once again wants public schools, their students and their employees to pick up the cost of his re-election campaign gimmick. Instead of providing new money to our hard pressed public schools, whose funding is frozen at 2006 levels, Gov. Perry wants to further reduce the resources available to provide even that insufficient level of funding,” Haecker said.

Perry said he wants “quality education” for all young Texans. Yet in the 10 years that he has been governor, Texas has dropped from 25th in the nation in per pupil expenditure for instruction to 45th. In Texas, 50,000 classrooms do not have appropriately certified teachers.

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“The governor failed to address the greatest need our Texas public schools, their students and their employees today face – the need for a school finance system that is sufficient and flexible to meet the growing, ever-changing needs of public education. Without that, the state simply cannot meet the governor’s goals, particularly retaining and recruiting the very best teachers in the nation to teach our students,” Haecker added.

“Texas today ranks 34th among the states in average teacher pay, \$6,129 below the national average. Gov. Perry proposed absolutely nothing to raise that. So we call on the many friends of public education in the 81st Legislature, in both parties, to do what the governor would not do: figure out how to sufficiently and flexibly pay for his three public education goals we applaud. This is the investment in the future Texas very much needs, an investment that ultimately will benefit all Texans,” the TSTA president emphasized.

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