



TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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TSTA: “Abbott Budget Plan” another Slap at Texas School Children

In what was billed as the first public policy speech of his gubernatorial campaign, Greg Abbott pledged yesterday to pursue a state budget policy that would continue the unconstitutional and inadequate school funding system that he has been defending in court.

“The Abbott plan is another slap in the face of 5 million public school students, their parents and more than 600,000 Texans who work in our public schools,” said Texas State Teachers Association President Rita Haecker. “The Rainy Day Fund, which Abbott wants to “protect,” is awash in cash and continues to grow, while Texas’ school finance system is shortchanging millions of Texas children.”

“Someone who wants to be our next governor should put the needs of our children first, not bow to a political ideology intent on starving public education,” she added. “Instead of putting billions of tax dollars off limits for Texas schools, our next Governor should be working to find a reliable funding source to secure our children’s future.”

According to a recent report – *The Rainy Day Flood* – by the Texas Taxpayers and Research Association, the Rainy Day Fund will grow to between \$8.2 billion and \$11.8 billion by the end of fiscal 2015, depending on whether Texas voters approve constitutional amendments that would tap into the fund for water and highway needs. The report anticipates continued growth, fueled by strong oil and gas production.

But Abbott proposed further restrictions on the Legislature’s ability to spend from the fund. Those restrictions are wrong and unnecessary. Our elected legislators should keep their flexibility to tap into the fund as important public needs arise.

Even as the Rainy Day Fund approaches record balances, the Legislature still hasn’t fully restored the \$4.5 billion cut from public school budgets two years ago. Schools are operating with fewer state dollars than they had during the 2010-11 school year, even though public school enrollment continues to grow by 80,000-85,000 students a year.