



TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 22, 2015

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TSTA urges TRS to ask Legislature to double state contribution to educator health care

The Texas State Teachers Association today urged the Teachers Retirement System of Texas to join educators in asking the Legislature to double the state's \$75 monthly contribution to health insurance costs for school employees to \$150. The contribution hasn't been changed since the program was created in 2001.

"Employee premiums have increased 10 times since 2003 – by as much as 238 percent for some employees – at a time when budget cuts have left Texas teacher pay stagnant, \$7,000 below the national average," TSTA President Noel Candelaria said at a TRS town hall meeting on educator health care.

"Meanwhile, the \$75 per month state contribution for school employee health care has not increased –not even by a penny," he added.

Depending on the level of coverage, Candelaria said, insurance for an entire family can cost some school employees more than \$1,300 per month – more than a mortgage payment for most TSTA members. Consequently, many educators are delaying medical treatment, waiting to start a family or leaving the profession.

"After 14 years, how long must we wait for the state to do its fair share to make sure Texas teachers and public school employees have affordable, high quality health care coverage?" Candelaria asked. "Will you, the TRS board, join us in asking the Legislature to double the state contribution for educator health care?"

School districts are required to cover at least \$150 per month of each employee's health insurance premium. Some districts contribute more, but many don't, saddling employees with most of their rising health care costs.

TSTA believes this also is a fairness issue. The state of Texas covers virtually the entire cost of health care for state employees, while educational employees have seen health care premiums take bigger bites out of their paychecks, year after year.