



# TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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## **TSTA: Legislature must give educators relief from rising health insurance costs**

Following still another increase in educator health insurance premiums, the Texas State Teachers Association urged the Legislature to provide some relief by increasing the state's contribution to school employee health insurance costs.

The Teacher Retirement System of Texas board on Thursday approved new premiums for TRS-ActiveCare, the state health insurance plan for active school employees, which will increase premiums for some coverage options as much as 12.8 percent. Premiums for ActiveCare-2, one of the more popular plans, will increase by 5 percent.

"These rate increases amount to a take home pay cut for teachers and other school workers in the TRS system, and it could make it unaffordable for some of our most experienced, highly qualified teachers to remain in the classroom," said TSTA President Noel Candelaria.

"Some employees with families will be paying more than \$1,500 a month – a huge chunk of their paychecks – for health care, while the state will continue to contribute only \$75 a month, an amount that hasn't been increased since 2002," Candelaria added. "It's time for the Legislature to do its fair share to help our educators keep up with ever-increasing health care costs."

Candelaria noted that health insurance premiums for some educators have increased more than 300 percent since 2002, while the state contribution has remained static. School districts are required to cover at least \$150 per month per employee. Some contribute more, but many don't.

The average teacher salary in Texas is less than \$52,000, or about \$6,300 less than the national average. Many other school employees are paid less.

Some of the larger school districts have their own health insurance plans, and they also have experienced significant increases in employees' premiums. The state contributes only \$75 a month per employee to those premiums as well.