

# Survey of Voters in Texas on Budget and Public School Issues

February 2013

- Sample Sizes -- n=800 Statewide  
-- n=200 Republican Primary Voters
- Eligibility: Likely Voters
- Interview Method: Telephone (69% Landline and 31% Cell)
- Margin of Error: n=800: Plus or minus 3.5%  
n=200: Plus or minus 7.0%
- Interview Dates: February 19-25, 2013
- Prepared for: Texas State Teachers Association
- Conducted by: FrederickPolls and Voter / Consumer Research

# About the Pollsters

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## **Keith Frederick** **Owner, FrederickPolls**

Arlington, Virginia-based Keith Frederick has conducted hundreds of polls for Democratic candidates, municipal candidates, labor unions, teachers groups and independent committees during the last 34 years. Past clients include Virginia Governor Mark Warner and Maine Governor John Baldacci. Frederick has deep experience in Texas politics and provided polls to State Representatives Craig Eiland and Chris Turner in 2012.

Phone: 703/528-3031

Email: [keith@frederickpolls.com](mailto:keith@frederickpolls.com)

## **Jan van Lohuizen** **President, Voter/Consumer Research**

Since 1978, Dr. van Lohuizen has directed public opinion research projects for hundreds of political campaigns. Clients have included President George W. Bush, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senator John Cornyn and former Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. Voter/Consumer Research maintains offices in the Woodlands and in Washington D.C.

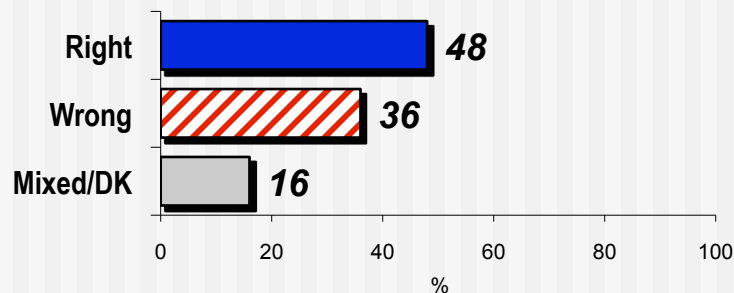
Phone: 202/546-8990

Email: [jan@vcrdc.com](mailto:jan@vcrdc.com)

***Note: Both pollsters have extremely busy schedules at the moment, so they may be unable to respond to news media inquiries in a timely fashion.***

# Political Mood: State Direction and Governor Perry Rating – Voters remain happy with the status quo; only Democrats are negative.

## State Direction



### Trend 2011

%

49

36

15

### -Party-

#### Dem

%

39

46

15

#### GOP

%

56

32

13

#### Ind

%

49

33

18

### GOP Primary

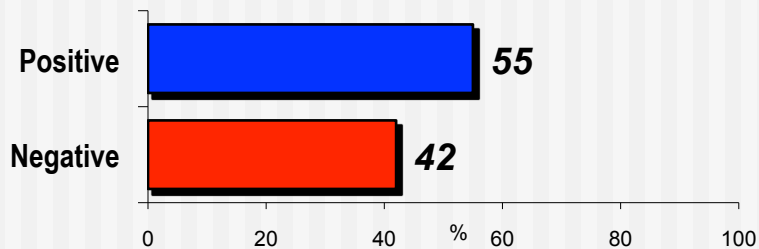
%

70

20

11

## Job Rating of Governor Rick Perry



### Trend 2011

%

54

42

### -Party-

#### Dem

%

28

70

#### GOP

%

79

19

#### Ind

%

55

42

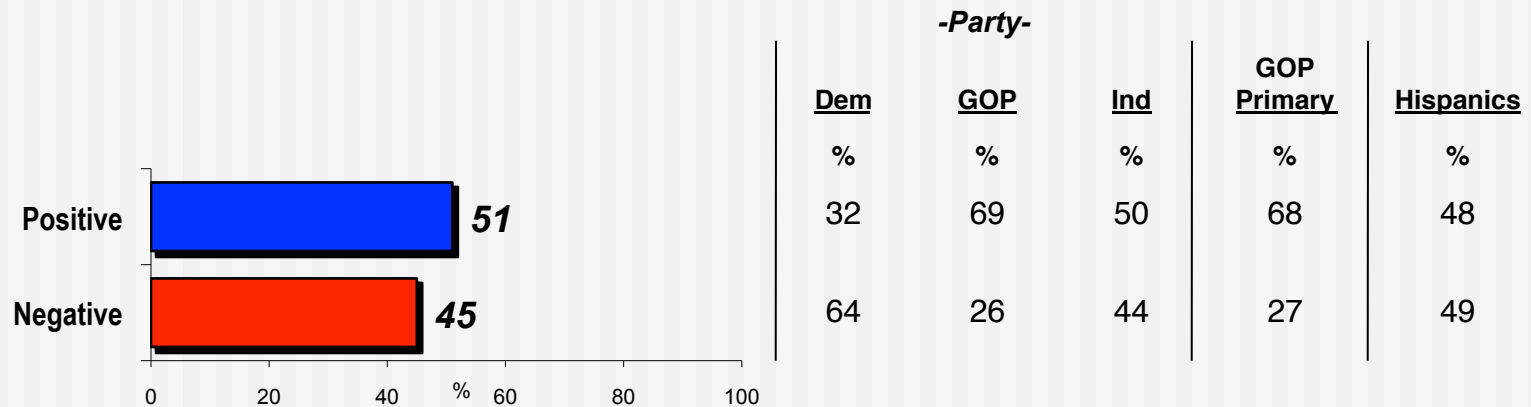
### GOP Primary

%

81

18

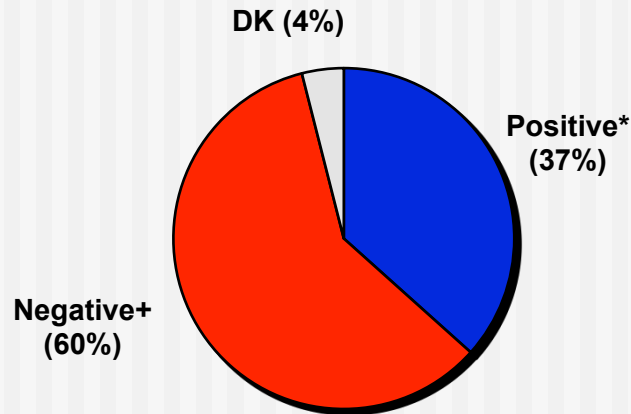
# Rating of Texas State Legislature – As with Perry, a majority are positive toward the Legislature with Republican voters leading the way.



**Public Schools Rating: Statewide vs. Local** – A 60% majority are negative about the state’s public school system as whole, but opinion is reversed on local schools where 58% are positive. Parents with kids in school are 55% negative toward the statewide system but more positive than others (68%) about their local schools.

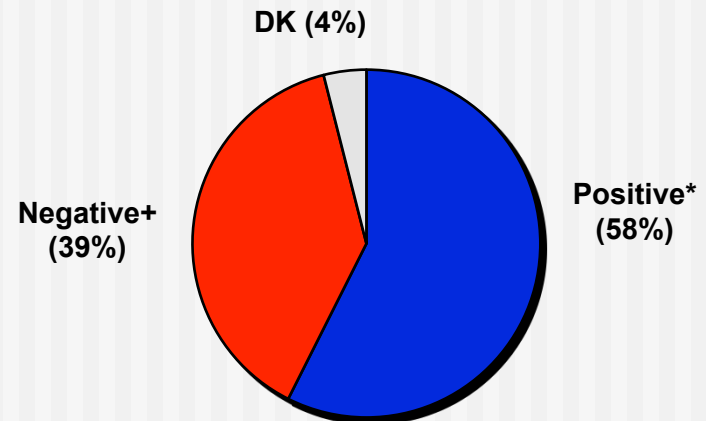
**Texas Statewide:**

*Overall, how would you rate the job the Texas public school system is doing – excellent, good, not so good or poor?*



**Local:**

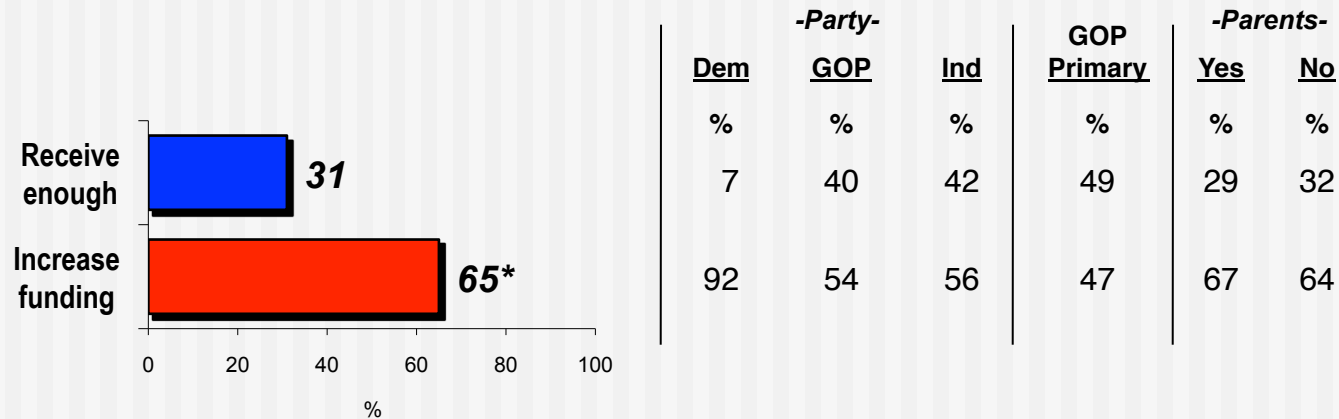
*And, how would you rate the job your LOCAL public schools are doing – excellent, good, not so good or poor?*



\* Positive = excellent & good  
+ Negative = not so good & poor

**Texas Public School Funding** – By 2:1, a 65% majority say “increased funding” for Texas public schools is needed. A majority of Republicans (54%) and Independents (56%) agree with no difference between parents of school age children (67%) and non-parents (64%). Republican Primary voters split (49% enough, 47% increase).

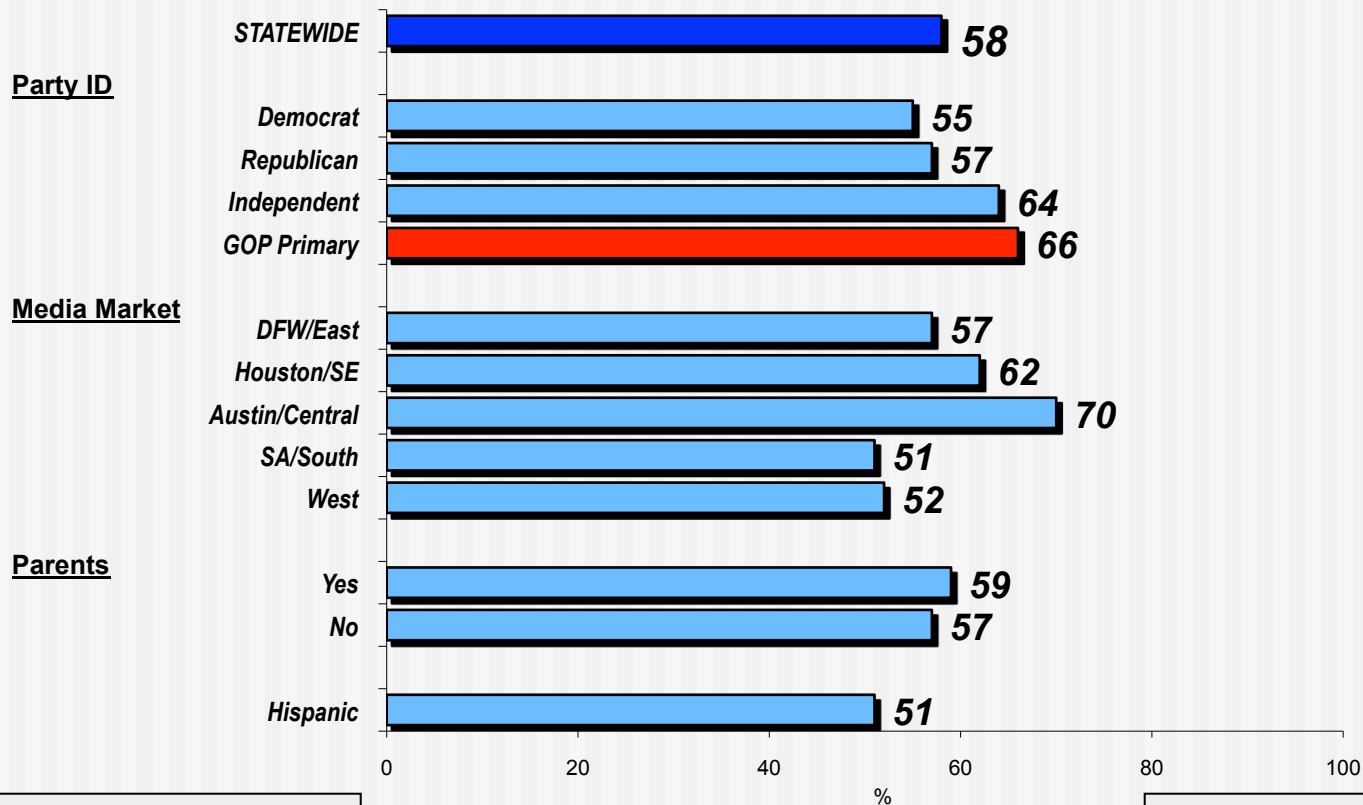
*Do you feel Texas public schools receive enough funding to provide a quality education or do you think increased school funding is needed?*



\* 2011 Wording: 61% “Texas state government spends too little on education” vs. 34% right amount & too much.

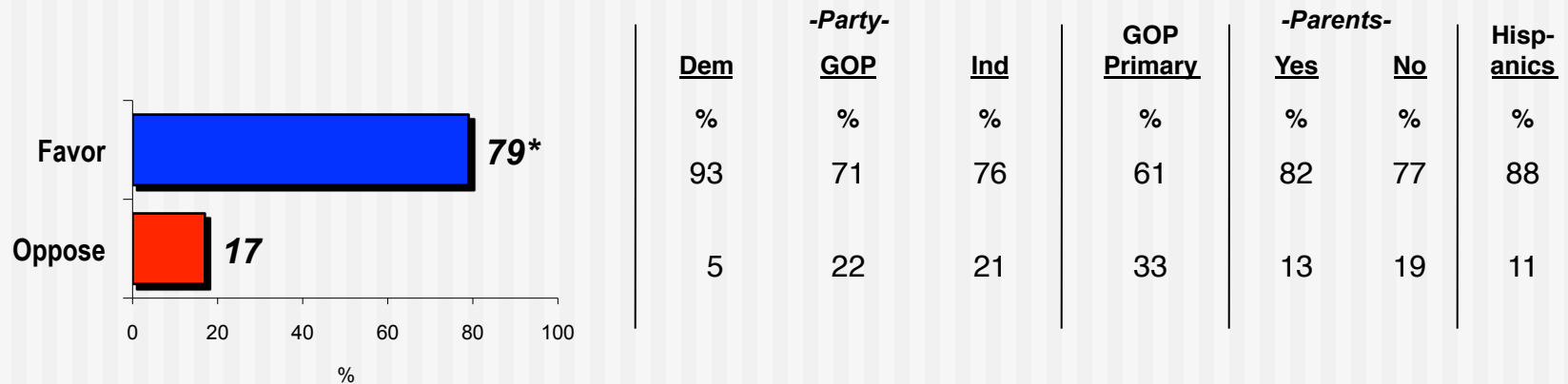
# Awareness of 2011 Education Budget Cuts – A 58% majority claim recall of the \$5 Billion school funding budget cuts of 2011. Independents (64%) and Austin market (70%) voters are most aware as are Republican Primary voters (66%).

*In the Legislative session two years ago, over 5 Billion dollars was cut from Texas public school funding -- equal to about 500 dollars per student. Were you aware of this or not?*



# Restore \$5 Billion in Public School Funding – Over three-fourths (79%) favor restoring the 2011 school budget funding cuts now that the state’s Rainy Day Fund is nearly \$12 Billion. 71% of all Republicans and 60% of Republican Primary voters also favor as well as 76% of Independents and 88% of Hispanics.

*Next, some background information about this. Two years ago, the Texas Legislature CUT over 5 Billion dollars in public school funding in order to balance the state budget while at the same time maintaining 6 Billion dollars in the state’s reserve Rainy Day Fund. Since then, the Texas economy and tax revenues have grown so that now the state’s surplus Rainy Day Fund is now nearly \$12 Billion. Given this, would you FAVOR or OPPOSE having the Texas State Legislature restore the 5 Billion dollars they cut in public school funding by putting that money back into public schools?*

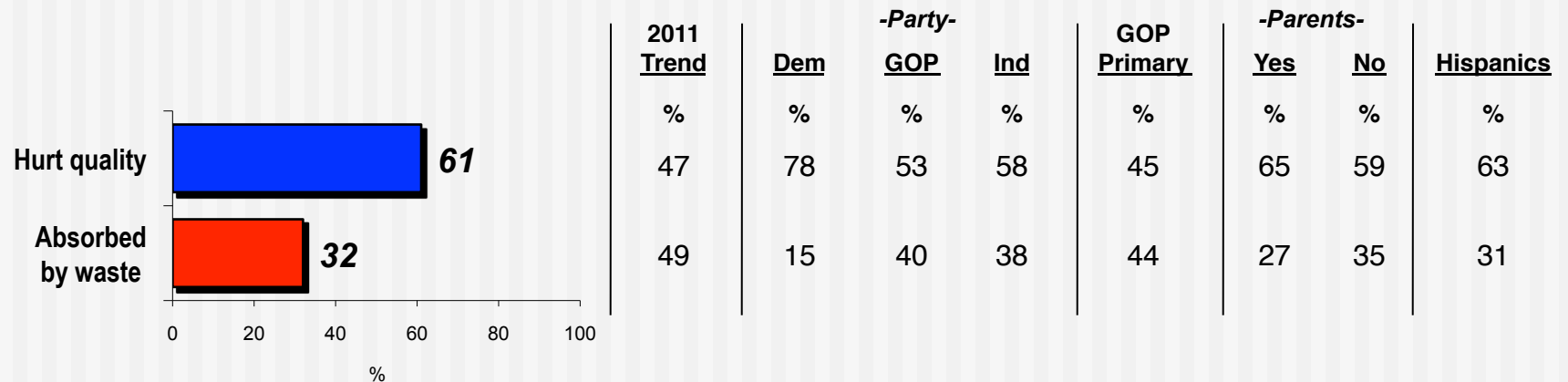


\* In October 2011, 61% disagree with Legislature’s cut of “over 4 Billion in state public education spending.”

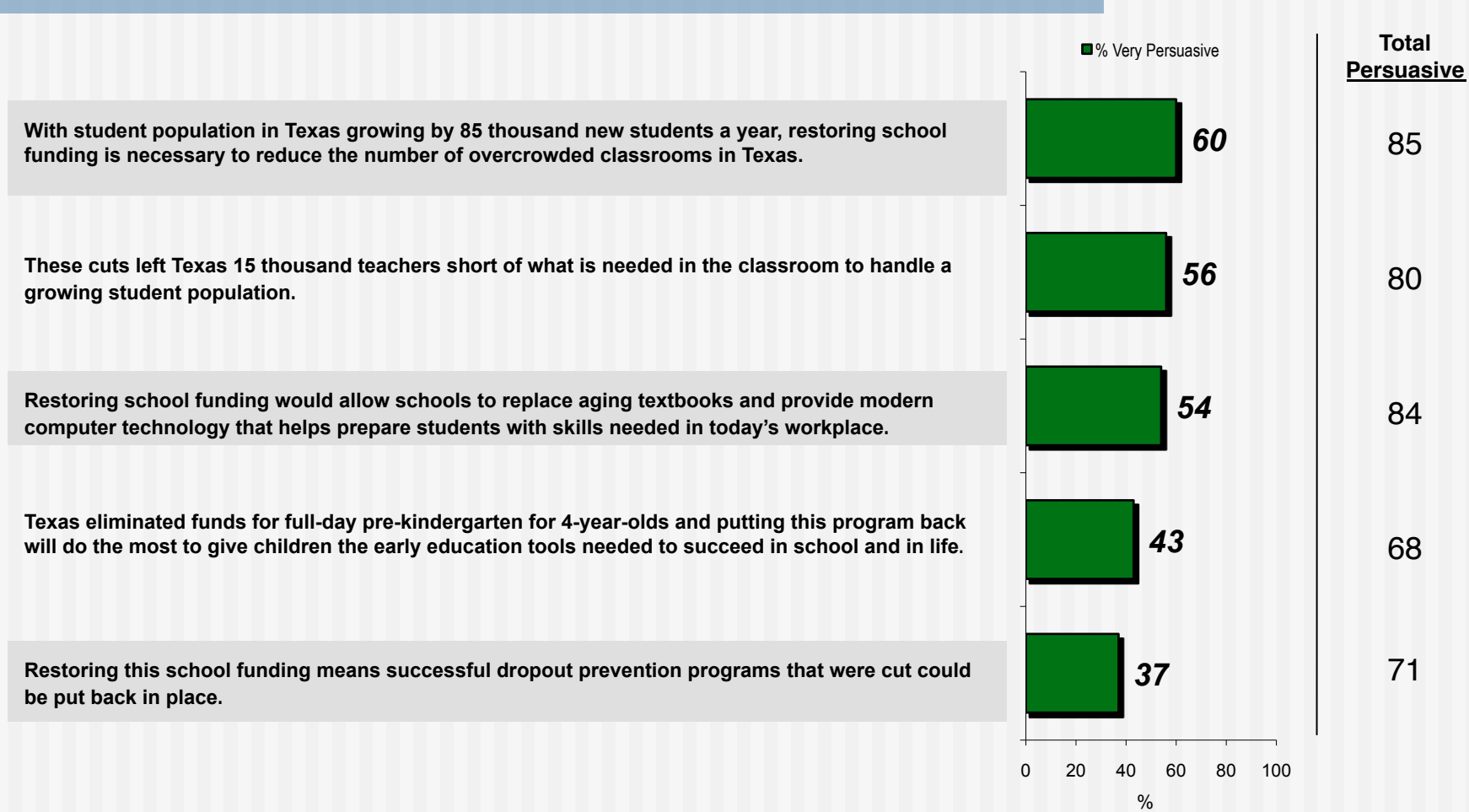
**Impact of 2011 Public School Budget Cuts** – By a 61% to 32% margin, voters now believe the 2011 cuts hurt the quality of classroom instruction; a 14-point gain in the “hurt quality” response from the projected impact in October 2011. This overall 2:1 “hurt quality” spread is wider for Democrats, Hispanics, and parents, but more narrow for Republicans (53-40) and Independents (58-38). Republican Primary voters split (45-44).

*Which is closer to how you feel about the impact the 5 Billion dollars in spending cuts had on Texas public schools over the last 2 years?*

- *These cuts hurt the quality of classroom instruction*  
OR
- *These cuts were absorbed by cutting waste and overhead without really harming the quality of education Texas students receive*



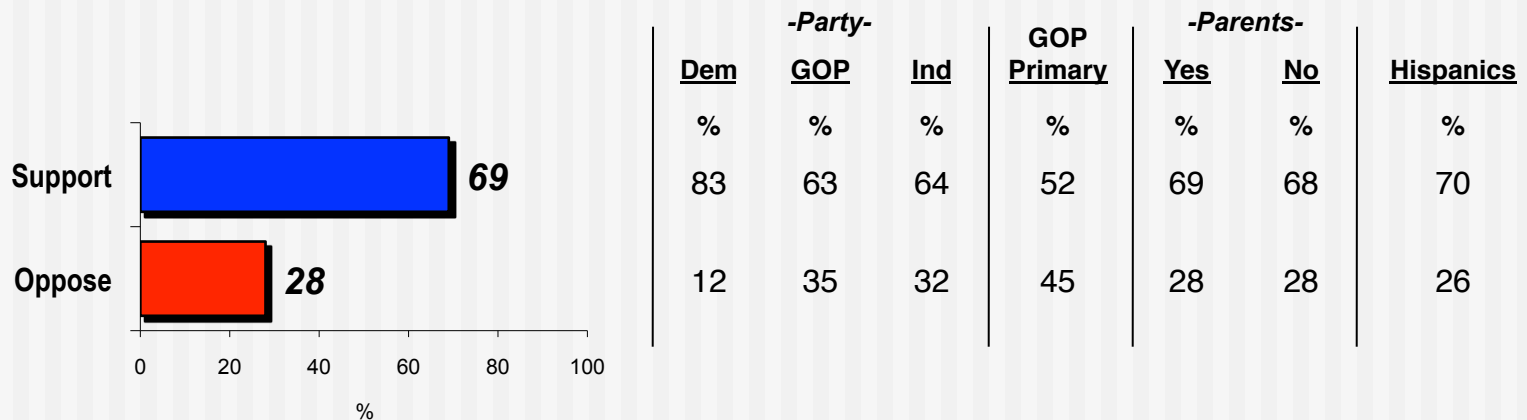
**Reasons to Restore Public School Spending** – Growth/overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortage, aging books/computers all score over 50% “very persuasive” as reasons to restore public school funding. Over 80% find these at least “somewhat persuasive” reasons. About 70% are also persuaded by pre-school and dropout prevention messages.



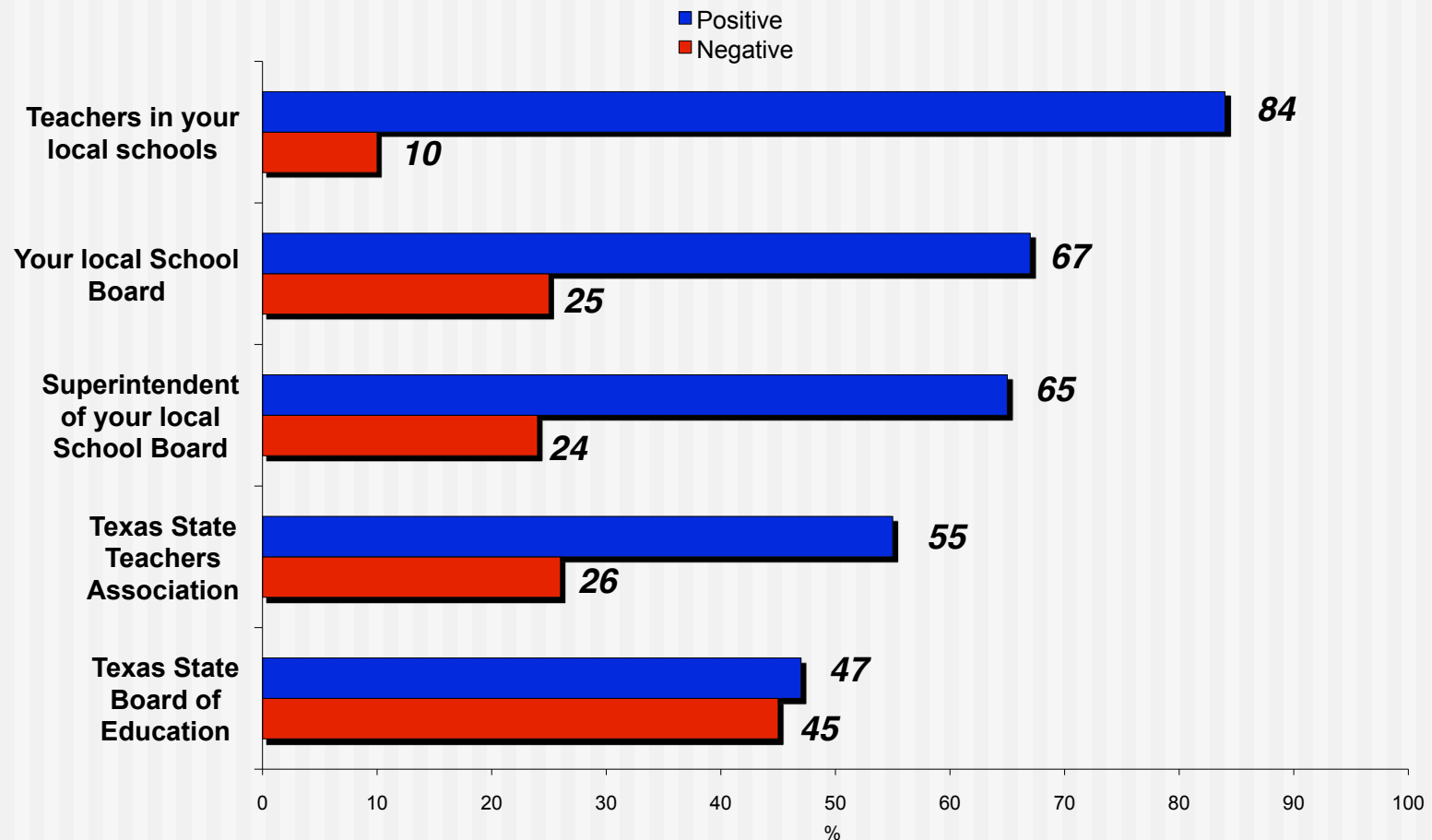
## Summary Opinion on Restoring School Funding – By a lopsided 69% to 28% margin, Texas voters support restoring public school funding cuts when given messages on both sides. Even Republicans support restoration of cuts by a 63% to 35% margin -- Republican Primary voters support by a more narrow 52% to 45% margin even when told it could “cause future tax increases.”

*On this school funding issue, some members of the Texas State Legislature have proposed using some of the nearly 12 Billion dollars in the state’s surplus Rainy Day Fund to restore the 5 Billion dollars in school funding cut two years ago. In general, do you...?*

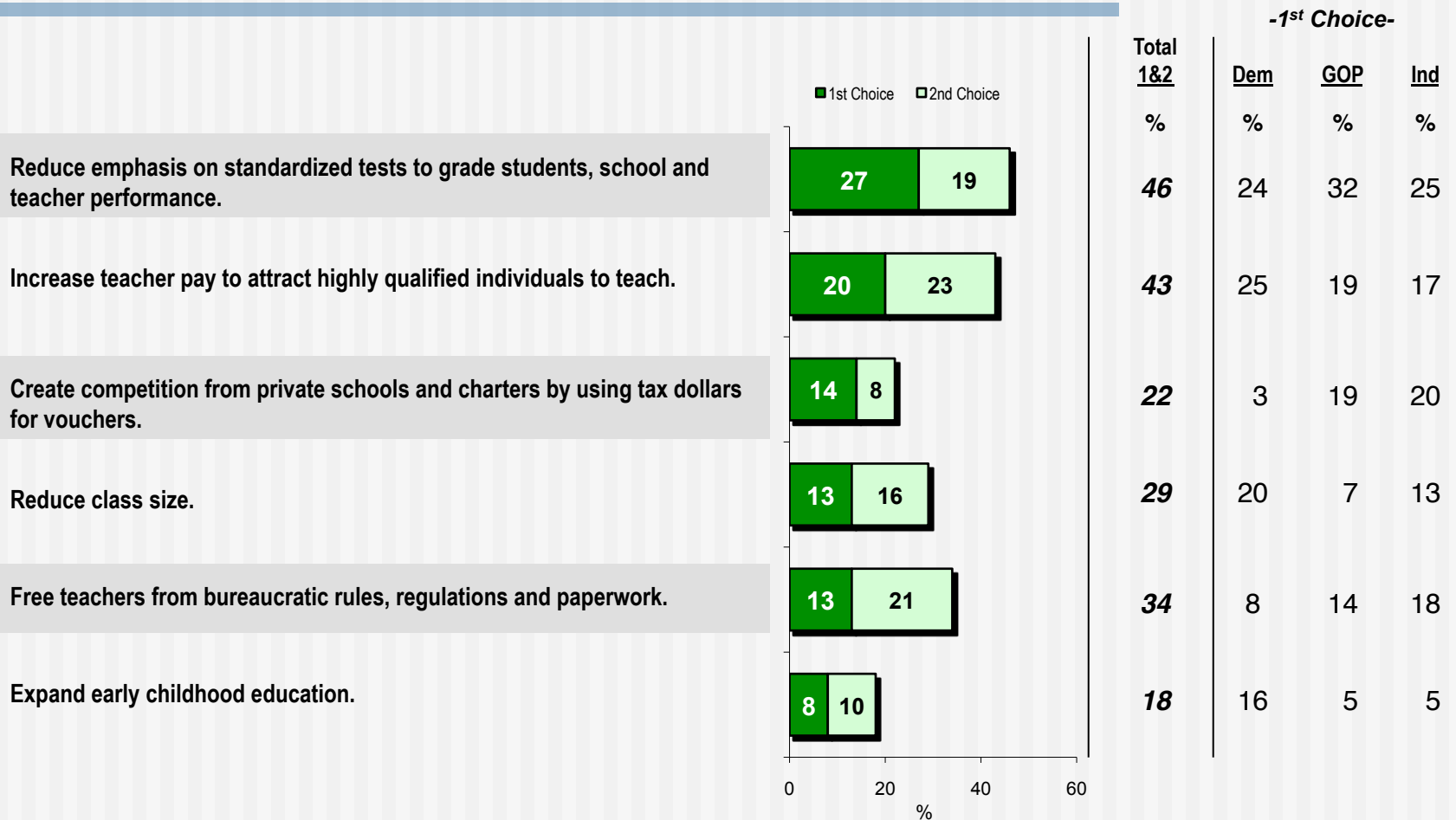
- *SUPPORT this to hire more teachers, reduce class size and restore important academic programs cut two years ago.*  
--OR--
- *OPPOSE it because such an increase in school spending could cause future tax increases and because the school system should first do a better job of cutting waste, bureaucracy and overhead.*



**Opinion of Various School Related Groups** – Texas’ teachers are by far the most popular group in the public school world (84% positive). Local School Boards (67%) and Superintendents (65% positive) mirror the overall 62% positive rating given to local school performance. TSTA is 2:1 positive (55% to 26%) while the State Board of Education gets mixed ratings (47-45).



**Preferred Action to Improve Public School Quality (Fixed Choice)** – The two most popular actions to improve Texas education are: reduce emphasis on standardized tests and increase teacher pay. When two choices are combined, free teachers from regulations and paperwork scores third. But with Republicans and Independents, vouchers scores in their top 3 mix while reducing class size is in the top mix for Democratic voters.



**Opinion on School Issues and Policies** – Reducing standardized tests is supported by nearly 90% across the political spectrum. Holding privately run charter schools to same standards as public schools is supported by 85% and broadly across party lines. A teacher pay increase to bring Texas up to national average is supported by 80% with 74% of Republicans in support while over 70% across all party lines support a COLA for retired teachers.

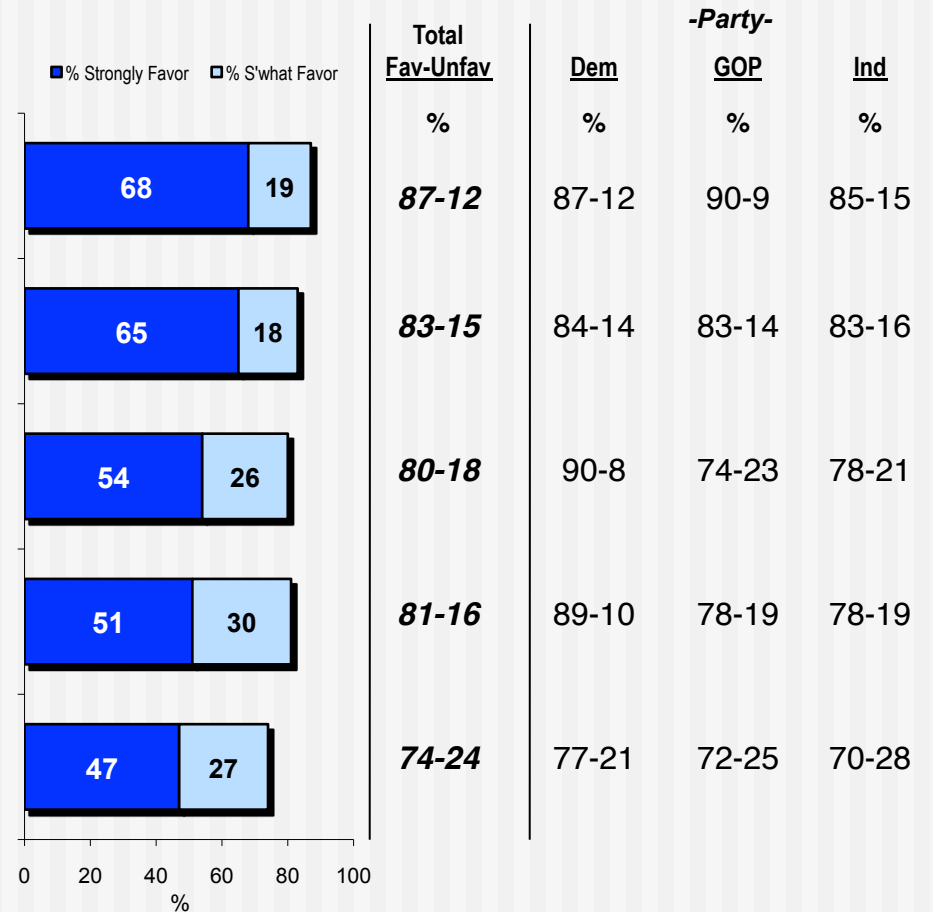
Reduce the number of standardized tests and the time spent on testing so teachers are free to teach and students are free to learn.

Require that privately run charter schools are held accountable to the same performance standards that public schools have to meet.

Raise teacher pay by 7 thousand dollars per year to equal to the national average.

Provide retired teachers with the first cost of living increase in their pensions in 12 years.

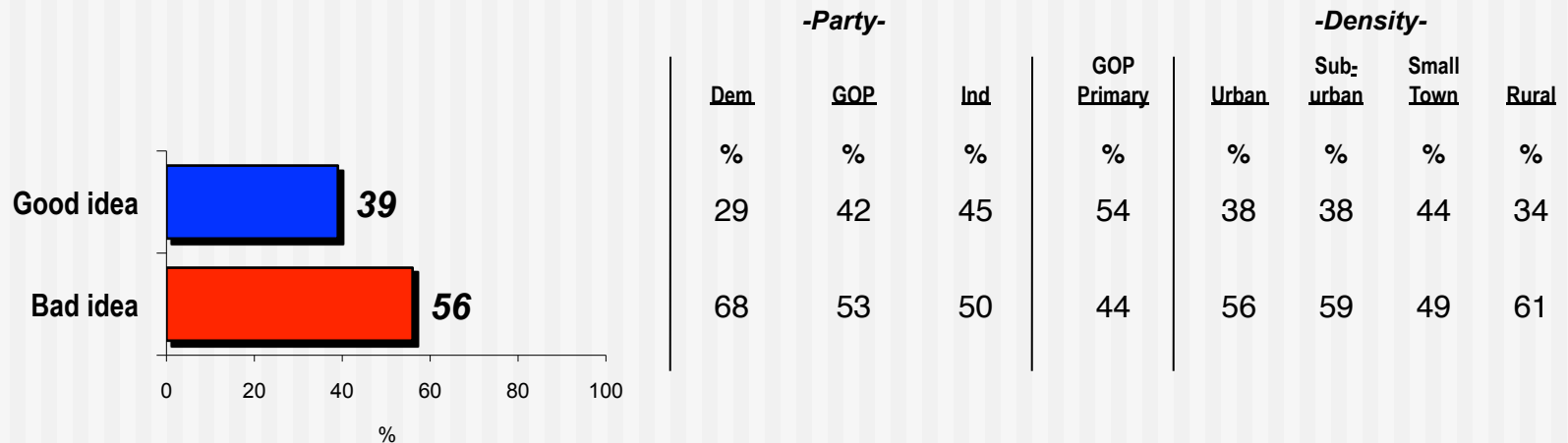
Stop School Districts from using standardized test scores to determine teacher performance and award bonuses to educators.



**Tax Credit Scholarships** – This idea is rejected statewide by 56% to 39% but embraced most by Republican Primary voters (54% support) which contrasts with all Republican voters (53% oppose). Rural voters (61% oppose) especially do not like any voucher program.

*One last question on education. Some in the Texas State Legislature have a plan that sets up a Tax Credit Scholarship plan to help parents pay for the cost of their child's tuition to the private school of their choice. These tax credit scholarships would be funded by Texas businesses who voluntarily choose to have their tax payments go into this scholarship fund instead of the state's general revenue fund that pays for Public Schools. Which of the following statements is closer to the way you feel about this plan?*

- *It is a GOOD IDEA because it will provide competition to public schools and give parents the choice to move their child out of a failing public school.*
- OR
- *Since Texas public schools educate 90 percent of the state's students, it is a BAD IDEA to take money public schools badly need and divert it to Vouchers that subsidize private and religious schools.*



**Preference for \$12 Billion Rainy Day Fund** – Two-thirds (66%) of Texas voters wish to use the Rainy Day Fund surplus to restore public school funding. This includes 39% who'd “single shot” education funding over roads (4%) or water (5%) plus 27% who'd fund all three projects with the state's \$12 Billion surplus.

*Which option do you prefer for the state's 12 Billion dollar Rainy Day Fund?*

- Restore the previous cuts to K thru 12 public EDUCATION funding.
- Increase funding on WATER development and conservation projects.
  - Increase funding on ROAD and transportation projects.
  - Increase funding on all 3 of these.
- OR--
- Spend none of it at this time saving it for future emergencies.

