

TSTA MEMBERS NAMED TEACHER AND ESP OF THE YEAR • LEADERSHIP CHANGES COMING

Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

Summer 2011

Billions Cut from Schools

CONCERNED TEXANS PROTEST
THROUGHOUT THE STATE



Elections have consequences

We all knew that. Or, we thought we did until the recent legislative session slapped us with a very unpleasant reminder. Texas educators and school kids will be suffering the consequences of the last election cycle for months — maybe years — to come.

By Rita Haecker, TSTA President

Many teachers who were looking forward to well-deserved vacations will be spending much of their summers looking for new jobs after becoming the victims of \$4 billion in budget cuts to the public schools. And students will find more crowded classrooms, fewer electives and a diminished learning environment when they return to school in August.

Cuts of this magnitude are unconscionable, particularly since, at Gov. Perry's insistence, the Legislature left \$6 billion of the taxpayers' money untouched in the emergency Rainy Day Fund.

These are the results of the 2010 elections, which returned an ideologically driven governor to office and swept into the Legislature a host of ideologues — private school supporters, voucher advocates and home-schoolers — intent on shrinking state government and undermining the backbone of our society, our public school system.

Displaying an arrogance reflected in anti-teacher, anti-union crusades across the country, they scoffed as thousands of Texas school employees began losing their jobs. Now, it is time for educators and other friends of the public schools to fight back — and fight back hard.

The next elections for legislative offices in Texas — the March party primaries — are only nine months away, and TSTA soon will be gearing up for a campaign whose outcome will either dig Texas public education — and the state's future — deeper into a hole or begin to restore some political sanity to the lawmaking and budget-setting process in Austin.

TSTA will be supporting — and, in some cases, recruiting — education friendly candidates, men and women of both political parties who value the public schools and are ready to put the needs of school children above ideology and partisanship. We also will be involved in local school board races in which members of our locals can make a difference.

Our potential for success begins with our members, people like you. It requires your commitment to get involved and stay involved in the

political process and, when school resumes, to recruit teachers and ESPs in your buildings to join our membership and our cause.

Are you angry about what the Legislature has done to our public schools? Are you angry about dedicated educators, your colleagues, who lost their jobs? You have every right to be angry, but you also need to channel your anger into political action. Only in that way can we, as educators, produce change.

Thousands of TSTA members participated in our Day of Action events around the state this spring and rallied for the public schools in marches on the Capitol. Those efforts helped raise the public consciousness of the ideological and political campaign against our public schools, but they were just the beginning.

Soon, you can help your locals organize candidate recruitment and screening committees. And, please donate to TSTA-PAC, or, if you already contribute, please consider increasing your donation. You can do that today.

Money is a fact of life in politics. Successful campaigns for state and even local offices are expensive. Remember, our pro-school candidates will be competing with heavy campaign contributions from voucher advocates, virtual school

operators and other would-be educational entrepreneurs whose primary interest in the public schools is to squeeze profit from them.

Later, I will encourage you to volunteer in the campaigns of pro-education candidates and, of course, to vote — and urge your friends, neighbors and the parents in your schools to vote. Parents, when they fully realize the impact of the deep cuts that some of their local legislators have inflicted upon their local schools, will be no less eager for change in Austin.

Elections have consequences, and we must start preparing now for 2012. Our profession, our students' opportunities and our state's economic future depend on our ability — and determination — to change the legislative roster.



STATE CONVENTION: President Haecker encourages delegates to act.



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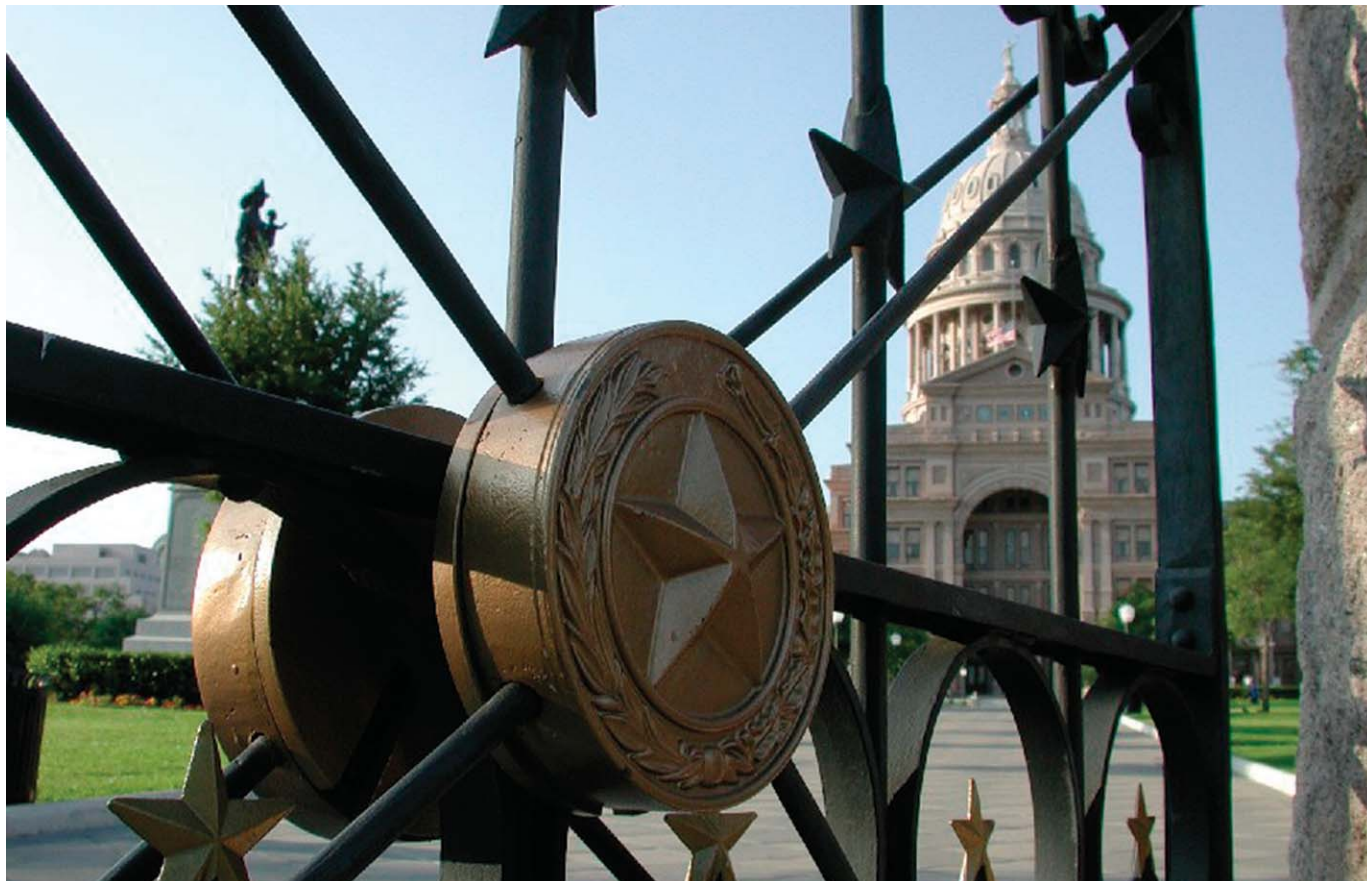
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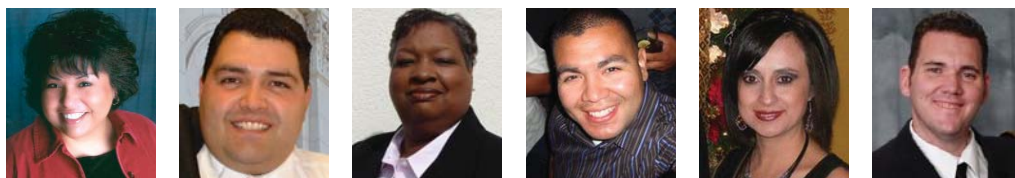


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1 WHY SHOULD EDUCATION EMPLOYEES CARE ABOUT POLITICS?

The regular session of the 82nd Legislature was not unlike a championship volleyball game (just ask Karin Keeney, page 27). Bad bill after bad bill popped up, only to be taken down by kill shots from your ace TSTA government relations team, backed by hundreds of calls and emails from members. Then the regular session ended, and the rules changed. At press time, it wasn't pretty, as you'll see on pages 6-14. Visit our website, www.tsta.org, for an update.



2 TSTA HAS ELECTED NEW OFFICERS

Delegates to the April TSTA House of Delegates in El Paso elected the following to TSTA and NEA positions. You'll read more about them in the fall issue of the Advocate.

- TSTA President: Incumbent President Rita Haecker, elected to a second term
- TSTA Vice President: Noel Candelaria, Ysleta Teachers Association
- NEA Director: Rae Nwosu, Education Austin
- ESP At-Large, TSTA Board of Directors: Bobby Lerma, Ysleta Teachers Association, and Jeanette Garcia-Avila, Donna TSTA/NEA
- Second Alternate NEA Director: Noel Candelaria, Ysleta Teachers Association
- Third Alternate NEA Director: Tony Uzzell, Waco TSTA/NEA

3 NATIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Maryland teacher and National Education Association member Michelle Shearer was named the 2011 National Teacher of the Year by President Barack Obama at a White House ceremony on National Teacher Day. Shearer, a chemistry teacher at Urbana High School in Ijamsville, Maryland, is committed to helping children who have traditionally been underrepresented in science. <http://bit.ly/liID5B>



4 OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IS RETIRING

With E.C. Walker at the helm, TSTA has seen a membership increase of almost 30 percent over the past nine years, in spite of the downward economy. He leaves us with his thoughts on keeping the upward trend going on pages 20-23. If you won't see him at the NEA Representative Assembly, you can still send an email to ecwalker@tsta.org by the end of summer.



5 AND WE HAVE A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR!

E.C.'s successor was chosen at the June 11 TSTA Board of Directors meeting. He's someone you've known for years, first as president of Austin Association of Teachers (now Education Austin), then as TSTA state president, then as TSTA's director of public affairs. Welcome Richard Kouri to his new position by emailing richardk@tsta.org.



6 OUT OF WORK?

Many members and their families have been affected by layoffs and salary reductions. Here are some sites that may help you find a job:

- Work in Texas: The Texas Education Agency and Texas Workforce Commission link job seekers with available teaching and education-related positions. <https://wit.twc.state.tx.us>
- School District Job Search: Search for job openings by address, zip code or city. www.tea.state.tx.us/districtSearch.aspx
- Teachers in Transition: Texas Workforce Commission tells how to file for unemployment insurance and find a new occupation. www.twc.state.tx.us/jobs/teachers-in-transition.html
- Teachers-Teachers: Post an online job application and create an electronic résumé for free. The site then matches your qualifications to available jobs. www.teachers-teachers.com

Remember, NEA Member Benefits may be able to help through financial counseling, mortgage assistance programs, credit card and insurance payment options, and retirement savings waivers. www.neamb.com/assistance

7 TELL THE WORLD ABOUT OUR GREAT PEOPLE

Nominate one of your colleagues to be a classroom superhero and encourage other colleagues, parents and students to post comments of support on Facebook. www.ClassroomSuperheroes.com

9 LEGAL ADVICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

"Allowing students to post directly to your wall is like allowing them to write in Sharpie on your whiteboard when you aren't in the classroom - only worse," warns Brenda Sutton-Wills, staff attorney for California Teachers Association, an NEA affiliate. "Students can and do post to social media sites from their cell phones. By the

time you get to your page, truly permanent damage will be done. You can disable this feature through privacy settings on Facebook."

And how scary is this: "You cannot erase your social media record. It's possible to subpoena an archive of all your posts and all posts made by you." Read more of Sutton-Wills' advice at <http://bit.ly/kvAjAo>.

8 BLACK FRIDAY DEALS EVERY DAY

Take advantage of hundreds of exclusive offers through NEA Click & Save. Register at www.neamb.com to start saving. New offers are added every day — from cell phones to Disney Cruises — and you can set email reminders for your favorite merchants so you'll be notified in advance of upcoming sales and discounts.



Texas State Teachers Association
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10 FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

Did you know TSTA is on Facebook and Twitter? Follow us at www.facebook.com/texasstateteachersassociation and <http://twitter.com/txstateteachers>. And check out our website at www.tsta.org.



Tough session for schools

As TSTA had feared following last November's election, budget cuts to public education during the regular legislative session were deep. Thousands of school district employees will be losing their jobs. Many already have. **By Clay Robison**

And, as the Advocate was going to press, TSTA and other public school supporters were fighting hard to keep the assault on public education from becoming worse. Several proposals attacking an important class size limit, teacher pay and teacher employment rights — all of which TSTA had been instrumental in killing during the regular session — were back on the agenda for a follow-up special session.

The Legislature, driven by Gov. Rick Perry and an overwhelming majority of conservative Republican lawmakers, cut \$4 billion from school finance formulas to help close a state revenue shortfall of \$27 billion. This was in addition to \$1.4 billion in cuts to education discretionary grants for such programs as full-day pre-kindergarten, dropout prevention and teacher bonuses.



MANOR: TSTA President Rita Haecker joined members from Manor and their families at TSTA Headquarters before the March 12 Save Texas Schools rally at the Capitol.

For the first time in at least 27 years, according to the Legislative Budget Board, the Legislature failed to fully fund the school finance formulas and keep up with anticipated enrollment growth. Another 170,000 children are expected to enter Texas public schools over the next two years.

And, despite leaving \$6 billion of the taxpayers' money untouched in the state's emergency Rainy Day Fund, lawmakers did nothing to address the \$10 billion biennial deficit in the school finance budget. This shortfall accounted for more than one-third of the state's budgetary hole. It was the result of the Legislature not fully paying for the school property tax cuts ordered in 2006, and it will continue to plague school districts and their employees.

Working on our own and banding together with Texas Forward, a coalition of advocates for education, health care and other critical public services, TSTA urged the Legislature to soften budget

cuts by spending all \$9.4 billion in the Rainy Day Fund, closing some tax exemptions and finding new tax revenue.

Thousands of TSTA members, their friends and parents from their schools participated in TSTA Day of Action rallies and other events around the state on April 2 to focus media attention on the public schools, and many TSTA members traveled to Austin to join thousands of other concerned Texans rallying at the Capitol for school kids and against budget cuts. The TSTA House of Delegates, meeting in El Paso this spring, also passed a resolution urging the Legislature to spend all the Rainy Day Fund and find new tax revenue.

But the governor, influenced by ideological Tea Party allies intent on shrinking the size of state government, insisted on deep spending reductions. He refused to consider new tax revenue and demanded that most of the Rainy Day Fund remain unspent. And, the legislative majority, many of whom

were elected with Tea Party support, readily complied.

TSTA President Rita Haecker, in a statement to the media, said it was "unconscionable" for the governor and legislators to cut education and other important services while leaving \$6 billion of the taxpayers' money in the bank.

"This budget fails to meet the Legislature's constitutional responsibility to adequately fund the public schools," Haecker said. "It is a shameful disservice to the school children and taxpayers of Texas. It will cost thousands of school employees their jobs, cram kids into overcrowded classrooms and undermine preparations for our state's future."

Had it not been for the outcry raised by TSTA and other concerned Texans, the budget probably would have been even worse. The House passed a budget early in the session that would have cut \$8 billion from the public schools.

But the Senate found additional non-tax revenue and employed accounting tools — including moving state school finance payments from one fiscal year to another — to reduce the cuts to \$4 billion. In the end, House and Senate budget conferees went with the Senate.

Weeks before the final budget was written, many school districts started laying off teachers and other employees in anticipation. According to some estimates, more than 12,000 school employees — teachers, support staff and administrators — had lost their jobs by the end of the spring semester. And, there were predictions of thousands more.

Although school districts were underfunded by the state, TSTA believes districts can take some steps to minimize the loss of educator jobs. Many districts are below the \$1.17 per \$100 valuation cap on maintenance and



SAN ANTONIO, DONNA AND LAREDO (clockwise): San Antonio locals held a huge rally on TSTA Day of Action April 2, and the NFL Players Union donated footballs and soccer balls for people who signed postcards for legislators. In Donna, five area local associations marched. Laredo made its voice heard at the Save Texas Schools rally.



operations taxes and should consider asking local voters to approve tax ratification elections. TSTA believes most parents would rather pay slightly higher taxes than see their children jammed into overcrowded classrooms, electives cancelled or, in some cases, neighborhood schools closed.

Some districts can afford to dip into their reserve funds, and others may have administrative costs they still can trim.

In the near future, some districts are expected to file another school finance lawsuit against the state. Several have been filed over the past 30 years, culminating in court orders that have resulted in a series of school finance changes.

TSTA has spent most of the year so far fighting not only legislators over budget cuts but also school board members and superintendents trying to use the budget crisis to raise class sizes in the primary grades, cut teacher pay and repeal teacher employment rights — all in the name of budgetary “flexibility.” What teachers and parents value as important educational quality standards,

the administrators attacked as burdensome “unfunded mandates.”

The superintendents were supported by key legislative leaders, but TSTA was successful in defeating them in the regular session, thanks to the strong support of teachers, parents and other concerned taxpayers. The fight over some of the provisions was renewed, unfortunately, in the special session that the governor called immediately following the regular session.

The special session was necessary to pass a fiscal matters bill needed to balance the new state budget. The bill had died at the end of the regular session, thanks to a mini-filibuster in the Senate on May 29, during the Memorial Day weekend.

In the special session, which began May 31, much of the fight centered on Senate Bill 8 by Senate Education Chairwoman Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, to allow districts to cut teacher pay and repeal important teacher employment rights. As filed, the bill allowed districts to reduce teacher pay in two ways. One provision allowed districts to order teacher furloughs for as many as six non-instructional days a

year and adjust their pay accordingly. The second provision repealed the salary floor enacted in 2009.

Senate Bill 8 also changed the notification date for non-renewal of a teacher's contract from 45 days before the last day of instruction to 10 days before the last day of instruction. It also eliminated seniority as a factor in determining layoffs during reductions in force.

Senate Bill 8 was approved by the Senate early in the session but was amended to apply furloughs to administrators as well as teachers. It also required public hearings on furlough policies. The bill had not yet been acted on by the House before the Advocate went to press. Please check the TSTA webpage for updates on this bill and other special session developments.

In the House, Public Education Chairman Rob Eissler sponsored legislation to raise the 22-1 class size limit in kindergarten through fourth grade. But, in the face of apparent opposition, he amended his bill early in the session to essentially maintain the current waiver law.

The 22-1 class size limit in K-4 has



SAN ANGELO AND HOUSTON: San Angelo members rallied on TSTA Day of Action, as did 13 area local associations in Houston.

been law since 1984 and is credited with improving the learning environment for the youngest students and raising overall student performance.

Some superintendents had been not-so-subtly trying to repeal this cap for several years, although existing law allows districts, in cases of financial hardship, to seek waivers from the state. Those waivers are almost always granted.

During the regular session, TSTA also waged a strong fight against Senate Bill 4, which would have created a new teacher evaluation system heavily dependent on student test scores. This bill won Senate approval but died in the House.

A proposal to divert tax dollars for a private school voucher scheme popped up late in the regular session, but TSTA and other opponents were able to keep it bottled up.

Also late in the regular session, Sen. Dan Patrick of Houston won the Senate's approval of an amendment to House Bill 6, the instructional allotment bill, allowing the State Board of Education to approve as many as 10 new charters a year. But opposition in the House forced the amendment to be stripped in a conference committee.

TSTA was instrumental in killing another proposal that would have allowed parents to petition the state education commissioner to transform public schools that have been failing for as little as two years into charters.

The proposal was offered by Rep. Mike Villarreal, a Democrat from San Anto-



nio, as an amendment to a non-charter Senate bill, Senate Bill 738, on a Saturday late in the regular session. Villarreal won preliminary House approval of the proposal the first day.

But, alerted by TSTA, other Democratic legislators raised such strong opposition to the amendment a few days later that Villarreal took the unusual step of stripping off his amendment and passing the bill in its original form, without charters.

BILLS THAT PASSED IN THE REGULAR SESSION

The following bills passed during the regular legislative session, but had not been signed by the Governor at press time.

HB 34 requires economics courses to include instruction in methods of paying for college and other postsecondary education, beginning with the 2013-14 school year.

HB 275 spends \$3,198,661,120 from the Rainy Day Fund to help balance the budget for the remainder of the current fiscal year. More than \$6 billion in the Rainy Day Fund is left unspent.

HB 350 allows a judge to sentence someone younger than 17 to community service or tutoring for committing a Class C misdemeanor at a public school.

HB 359 allows parents to sign annual statements prohibiting school districts from administering corporal punishment on their children.

HB 398 prohibits any school district contractor or subcontractor from permitting an employee to work at a school if the worker has been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor that would prevent the person from being employed by the district.

HB 592 increases the county population requirement for establishing a juvenile justice alternative education program from 125,000 to 180,000. Such programs will be permissive for smaller counties.

HB 675 establishes new standards for high school football helmet safety.

HB 692 directs the State Board of Education to allow a student who is unable to participate in physical activity due to disability or illness to substitute one credit in English Language Arts, math, science or social studies or one academic elective credit for PE.

HB 734 allows a truancy case to be filed in a constitutional county court of the county in which a parent resides or in which the school is located if the county has a population of 1.75 million or more. Prior law directed the county must have a population of two million or more.

HB 826 requires a school district to appoint at least one employee to act as a liaison officer to facilitate the enrollment in or transfer to a public school of a child who is the conservatee of the state.

HB 861 requires that at least one member of the Continuing Advisory Committee for special education services be a director of special education programs for a district or for a shared services arrangement of multiple school districts.

HB 942 exempts a school district from security for court costs and appeal bonds when instituting and prosecuting suits. It also allows districts to appeal judgments without giving super-sedeas or cost bonds.



FORT WORTH: Fort Worth members gathered in the TSTA parking lot before the Save Texas Schools rally; an estimated 12,000 people came to the Capitol that day to protest cuts in public education. The local also participated in TSTA Day of Action.

HB 968 requires removal of a student from class to a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) for a felony offense of aggravated robbery. It also provides that a student may be expelled from a DAEP for engaging in documented serious misbehavior while on the program campus.

HB 1061 extends the investment authority of the Teacher Retirement System and limits investments in hedge funds to 10 percent of the value of TRS' total investment portfolio.

HB 1130 concerns reporting of students receiving special education services in various settings.

HB 1224 allows a student to be expelled for breaching a school district's computer security.

HB 1334 states that a certificate or permit is not considered to have expired

if: (1) the employee has completed the requirements for renewal of the certificate or permit; (2) the employee submitted the request for renewal prior to the expiration date; and (3) the date the certificate or permit would have expired is before the date the State Board for Educator Certification takes action on renewal.

HB 1550 includes charter school employees and officers under the contract for travel services procured by the state.

HB 1555 allows districts with student enrollment of 190,000 or more to start school before the mandatory start date using local funds if the campuses are undergoing comprehensive reform or most students at a campus are educationally disadvantaged and the campus is undergoing comprehensive reform.

HB 1610 allows a district to suspend a

teacher or administrator immediately without pay if the district is notified that the person has been convicted of a felony or received deferred adjudication for a felony, or if the person's certificate is revoked for a felony offense. There is no appeal, and notice and hearing requirements do not apply. The bill also makes it a felony offense to engage in sexual contact with a person the employee knows is enrolled in a public primary or secondary school in the district in which the employee works or with a student participant in an educational activity that is sponsored by a school district.

HB 1682 prohibits school board members or school district employees from coercing another employee to make or refrain from making a charitable contribution or to attend a meeting called for the purpose of soliciting charitable contributions.



COLLEGE STATION: Members met at Rep. Fred Brown's office for a rally.

HB 1907 requires immediate notification of teachers and other school employees if a student with whom they have regular contact has been accused of a serious criminal offense.

HB 1942 requires school districts to adopt policies against bullying and for responding to incidents of bullying. It further provides that a district may transfer a student who has been a victim of bullying, or transfer the student who engages in bullying, to another class or another campus. It also requires the State Board of Education to include awareness and prevention of bullying in the curricula for health classes.

HB 2038 provides more safeguards for responding to concussions suffered in school athletics. Students and parents will have to sign forms about concussion awareness, symptoms and treatment before the student is allowed to participate in athletic activity.

HB 2120 requires the governor to appoint one member of the Teacher Retirement System board from a slate of three persons who have been nominated by the following groups collectively: Members from institutions of higher education, members with service credit at public school districts and retirees who are receiving benefits from the retirement system.

HB 2135 provides that a student in grades 5 or 8 who is enrolled in a course above grade level, or for high school credit for which the student will be assessed, is not required to pass the state tests for the grade 5 or 8 state assessment on the same subject.

HB 2366 provides that an open enrollment charter school of a municipality may admit children of the municipality's employees before conducting its lottery, provided that those children are only a small percentage of the school's total enrollment.

HB 2561 redefines the meaning of school year as a 12-month period beginning Sept. 1 and ending Aug. 31 of the next calendar year.

HB 2678 provides for schools to be able to print and issue agency-approved driver education certificates with the certificate numbers to be used for certifying completion of an approved driver education course.

HB 2971 makes confidential teacher evaluations and administrator records in open enrollment charter schools. It also provides that an open enrollment charter school may provide documents evaluating the performance of a teacher or administrator to a requesting school district or open enrollment charter



EL PASO: Clint, Socorro and Ysleta marched at the El Paso State Office Building.

where the employee has applied for employment.

HB 3278 amends a number of statutory provisions relating to memberships of the state commissioner of education and the Texas Education Agency on advisory committees, commissions, task forces and other similar groups.

HB 3506 allows a district to use transportation allotment funds to provide a bus pass or card for another transportation system to students for whom the district's regular transportation system is not feasible.

HJR 109 proposes a constitutional amendment to include in calculating the fund's market value discretionary real asset investments and cash in the state treasury derived from property belonging to the Permanent School Fund (PSF). It also would allow the General Land Office to distribute revenue derived from PSF land or properties to the Available School Fund. The distribution could not exceed \$300 million per year. HJR 109 will be on the Nov. 8 ballot for voters to approve or reject.

SB 27 requires a school board to implement and administer a policy for the care of students at risk for anaphylaxis.

SB 49 requires a school district to provide the parents of a student removed to a disciplinary alternative education program with written notice of the district's obligation to provide the student with an opportunity to complete coursework required for graduation.



KYLE: TSTA members from Del Valle, Dripping Springs, Hays and San Marcos gathered at Gregg-Clarke Park in Kyle.

SB 54 sets certification requirements for teachers of students with visual impairments.

SB 149 allows the state education commissioner and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt rules covering reporting for the school district college credit program.

SB 199 allows the Department of Agriculture to award a grant to a nonprofit organization that partners with a school district in agricultural projects.

SB 226 requires a school district to provide to the Texas Education Agency the results of individual student performance on the physical fitness assessment instrument. The results may not include a student's name, Social Security number or date of birth.

SB 290 requires instruction in personal financial literacy in each mathematics course from kindergarten through eighth grade.

SB 391 states that the notice of the textbook review and adoption cycle must require a publisher of an adopted textbook for a grade level other than pre-kindergarten to submit an electronic sample copy of the textbook.

SB 419 prohibits state funding to public junior colleges for physical education courses offered for joint high school and junior college credit.

SB 471 requires that each school district's improvement plan include a policy addressing sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children. It requires training for educators in preventing and increasing awareness of those problems.

SB 501 establishes the Interagency Council for Addressing Disproportionality to make recommendations for reducing the involvement of minority children in the juvenile justice, child welfare and mental health systems.

SB 729 allows for the election of trustees of an independent school district to be held on the same day as an election for members of the governing board of a public junior college district in which the school district is located.

SB 736 allows a school board to appoint a member from a local domestic violence program to the local school health advisory council.

SB 738 allows parents of students at a failing campus, under certain circumstances, to ask the state education commissioner to repurpose the campus, order alternative management of the campus or close the campus.

SB 764 prohibits a school board from using taxes or other public resources for the design, construction, renovation or operation of a hotel.

SB 778 provides that a campus-level planning and decision-making committee should include, if practicable, at



LUBBOCK: TSTA President Rita Haecker was the guest speaker at Lubbock's Day of Action event at Coronado High School.

least one representative with the primary responsibility of educating students with disabilities.

SB 866 requires certain educators to receive training on dyslexia; requires testing of students for dyslexia; and contains provisions on reassessing dyslexic students in college.

SB 966 allows school districts to issue high school diplomas to war veterans who left school before graduating.

SB 975 allows junior colleges to partner with school districts in dropout recovery programs on the junior college campuses.

SB 1042 prohibits any school district contractor or subcontractor from permitting an employee to work at a school if the worker has been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor that would prevent the person from being employed by the district.

SB 1094 requires the State Board of Education to develop and deliver high school equivalency examinations online.

SB 1106 requires a school district to disclose information in a student's educational records to a juvenile service

provider, as necessary under certain circumstances.

SB 1383 requires the state education commissioner to establish and administer a comprehensive appraisal and professional development system for principals.

SB 1410 requires the Texas Education Agency to identify and report to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board the number of students enrolled in a tech-prep program.

SB 1484 authorizes certain open-enrollment charter schools to be awarded academic distinction designations.

SB 1545 grants immunity from civil liability to unpaid health care practitioners who examine or screen students for participation in athletics or other school-sponsored extracurricular activities.

SB 1557 creates the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium to find ways to improve student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems.

SB 1610 requires school districts to



PFLUGERVILLE: Members marched on Day of Action and rallied with Save Texas Schools.

put seatbelts on buses only to the extent that the legislature has appropriated money for reimbursement.

SB 1619 provides that a school district is not required to pay a student's tuition or other costs for taking a college credit course.

SB 1620 requires the State Board of Education to establish a process for substituting an applied STEM course for a specific mathematics or science course required under the high school curriculum.

SB 1667 makes changes in the administration of the Teacher Retirement System. Among other things, it prohibits anyone who is convicted of causing the death of a member from receiving the benefits of that member, and it allows for earlier retirement with a reduced benefit.

SB 1668 deals with the purchase of Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act credit.

SB 1669 revises the retire/rehire program. The bill allows for an annuity payment if the rehire has been separated from service with all Texas public educational institutions for at least 12 full, consecutive months.

BILLS THAT DIED IN THE REGULAR SESSION

The following bills died during the regular legislative session. However, sponsors tried to resurrect several of them during the special session. At press time, their fate was undetermined. Please check our website at www.tsta.org for updates.

HB 400 would have permanently raised the 22-1 cap in K-4 to 25-1; permanently eliminated the requirement that districts cannot pay teachers less next year than they earned this year; eliminated the state minimum salary schedule and let districts set their own compensation systems with their own rules; permanently allowed school boards to furlough teachers and reduce their salaries accordingly; permanently allowed a district to declare a financial emergency at any time for purposes of doing a reduction in force; permanently deleted seniority as one of the factors used in determining who is terminated if a RIF is implemented; permanently changed the date for notice of non-renewal to the last day of instruction; and permanently eliminated the use of a neutral hearing officer for mid-year terminations and replaced that with a hearing before the board.

HB 936 would have abolished the cap on open-enrollment charter schools.

HB 1076 would have removed the 10-1 ratio on accelerated instruction groups for students who fail to perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument.

HB 1311 would have allowed that, under certain circumstances, new open-enrollment charter schools for students at risk of dropping out could avoid applying for authorization.

HB 1587 would have mandated that a significant portion of teacher evaluation be based on the teacher's student learning objectives and outcomes, including student performance on assessment instruments.

HB 1589 would have established the Center for Financial Accountability and Productivity in Public Education, an independent policy center to represent business, finance, public policy, education and other interests. The center's purpose would have been to increase productivity and cost effectiveness at

the school district and campus levels; rank each district, campus and charter school; and provide annual progress reports and recommendations.

HB 1603 would have allowed 100 additional new charters to be granted every state fiscal year by the State Board of Education.

HB 1632 would have changed the deadline for teachers under probationary, continuing and term contracts to leave a district without penalty from 45 days before the first day of instruction to not later than 60 days.

HB 2506 would have required district employees hired after Sept. 1, 2012, to participate in a defined contribution plan instead of a defined benefits plan. TRS would have changed from a defined contribution plan to a costly defined benefits plan.

HB 2539 would have allowed a school district to suspend a teacher without pay for good cause in lieu of discharge or pending discharge.

HB 2540 would have eliminated a teacher's right to a hearing before an independent hearing examiner until after the teacher was suspended without pay for more than 20 days within a period of one year.

HB 2843 would have required the commissioner to study and implement strategies that provide quality electronic courses to students with special needs. The number of electronic courses a student could take would not be limited, nor would the number of students who could enroll in the state virtual school network. Homebound students could have taken an entire curriculum through virtual school.

SB 1612 would have required TRS to make an annual contribution to the Pension Review Board in the amount of \$0.50 per member, at a cost of over \$650,000.

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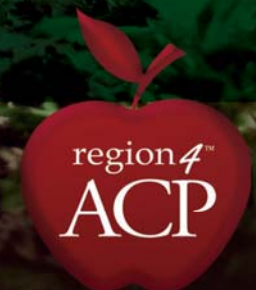
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It starts with an index card

Getting to know every one of her students is a priority for Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year Beth Huckabee

Beth Huckabee's first few weeks of teaching were a crash course on the importance of class size limits.

"It was a disaster!" Huckabee, this year's Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year and TSTA Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award winner, said.

"I waltzed into a situation with 40 percent repeating students. I had six classes, five preps and a seventh period health class of 42 students," she said. "I went home crying the first six weeks."

As a high school and college student, she had the opportunity to help teach her peers, and she enjoyed it so much that it shaped her career path, but this was very different. "Failure was a new experience and an excellent tutor," Huckabee said.

"I learned that knowing the material was not enough. I needed to know my students."

Fortunately, her principal, Ramiro De La Paz, recognized the futility of trying to teach 42 students; he divided her health class in half and taught the second class himself.

"Suddenly, instead of ending the day frustrated, I was able to teach. I would never have gone back that second year if it hadn't been for him," Huckabee said.

With her classes finally at a manageable level, Huckabee gave herself an assignment: to learn something about every student. "My goal became to visit with each student every two weeks about something that really interested them. I also incorporated

real world examples that affected them into my presentations."

In a practice she has continued for 40 years, she asked her students to fill out index cards detailing their clubs, sports, activities, class schedules and a paragraph about their lives. She also asked for one word to describe their career plans; favorite, least favorite and hardest classes; projected grade for her class; best and worst characteristics; heroes; and where they saw themselves in 10 years. She asked to look at every report card, and she tried to attend an activity of interest to each student, such as a sports event, a band concert or a play.

Yes, it's more work, but she said, "Increased attentiveness, zero discipline problems and mutual respect make it worthwhile."

Huckabee began her career in Riviera ISD in 1971, transferring to Flour Bluff ISD near Corpus Christi in 1979. She is a science teacher and department chair at Flour Bluff High School, an Academic Decathlon and Octathlon coach, and sponsor of the Student Council, National Honor Society, Science Club, Key Club and UIL science team.

And she's a kickball coach, an interest that started 28 years ago when she was a parent volunteer for the community kickball league.

"I love watching the girls gain confidence as their skills develop. I love watching the pitchers slow the ball down for the special needs players, regardless of the score, and I love watch-

ing the girls learn how to be good sports, win or lose," she said. "As a high school teacher who has seen first hand the trouble that seems to find unsupervised teenagers, I love the fact that I know where 75 teenagers are and what they are doing three nights a week."

Given her rough first semester in the classroom, it's not surprising that she volunteers to mentor new teachers. "I love teaching. There is nothing else I would rather be doing, and because of this, I feel that I need to do all I can to help new teachers experience that joy," she said.

She shares knowledge, techniques and experiences with new teachers, student teachers and pre-service teachers, then she covers new teachers' classes so they can collaborate and set up their labs.

"Most of all, I try to show them that teaching is fun and rewarding and that they do not have to know everything or have all the answers," she said. "Many of our new teachers feel threatened not only by the hard-to-discipline student, but also by the very bright student. I assure them that they do not have to have all the answers, that they can turn the unanswered question into a teaching moment."

"I love watching the 'lights go on' when a student understands a difficult physics concept or makes a connection with previous material in biology or anatomy or physiology. I love learning new 'stuff' each year. I love that every day and each student is different. I love the challenge of trying to reach each student and help

that student reach his or her full potential," she said. "All too often we define success and failure based on grades or test scores alone. I believe that success for some students is elusive and harder to define. For some students, thinking and not memorizing is success, and for others, developing a curiosity about learning is success."

For Huckabee, one of the greatest rewards of teaching is hearing from former students.

"My students, decathletes and science team members are scattered across the country studying dark matter in California, growing cartilage from stem cells at Rice, researching and using DNA compatibility to design new drugs for a pharmaceutical company in Massachusetts, teaching residents and interns in Arkansas, and working on cutting edge DNA research in Washington. They are veterinarians, computer programmers, district attorneys, physical therapists, nurses and doctors. Many have exceeded beyond even my expectations and work in fields that didn't exist when I taught them," Huckabee said. "Teaching is a way I can touch the future through my students. They are my greatest contributions and accomplishments."

TIP: The Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award rewards and promotes teaching excellence in Texas public schools. All TSTA members who are members of NEA and their local association are eligible. www.tsta.org/news/current/awards.shtml



WHY I CHOOSE TSTA/NEA

Keeping Us Informed

"I am proud to say I have been a member for 40 years. I have seen through the years how much TSTA has done for teachers. I know it must be hard — the endless hours of sitting in on this meeting and that meeting, taking notes, writing up the updates so we can keep informed. That's the power of TSTA: You have strong leaders that get behind their teachers and work for them." —Beth Huckabee, Flour Bluff



‘Never allow anybody to dictate our future’

Yolanda Molina, TSTA’s educational support professional of the year, has changed the lives of migrant students as well as her colleagues.

“My favorite memory of Yolanda Molina goes back to 2008, when she and I were waiting for an airplane at the Austin airport,” John Hand, a TSTA member from San Benito, said. “We had spent two days at a TSTA Board of Directors meeting, and Yolanda had recently returned from Washington, D.C., where she had attended an NEA Board of Directors meeting and lobbied various congresspersons on several important national issues. At the airport, the speaker system was playing a popular song from the 1960s. ‘I bet you remember listening to that song on the radio when you were a teenage girl,’ I said. ‘When I was a teenager,’ Yolanda said, ‘we could not afford a radio.’”

“There is so much about Yolanda Molina in that anecdote,” Hand said. “She was born into poverty and struggled to find a job in education. She was able to balance her life as a wife and mother, and became an important advocate for migrant children in the Mercedes school district. She joined TSTA, became a leader in her local and made herself into a statewide and national leader.

“Instead of an advocate for Mercedes migrant children, she has become an advocate for all children in Texas. Her work on behalf of education at the state and national levels has been recognized by congressmen such as Ruben Hinojosa, as well as two NEA presidents, Reg Weaver and Dennis Van Roekel,” he said.

As a data entry specialist and migrant recruiter for 34 years in Mercedes ISD, Molina handles identification and recruitment, and the New Generation System, a web-based interstate information network that communicates demographic, educational and health data on migrant students to educators throughout the nation.

Mercedes ISD Director of Federal Programs Walter Watson describes her as “constantly on the go and working for her constituents.” She has presented at state and national migrant conferences and brought the needs of migrants to the attention of national government leaders, he said.

“Mrs. Molina has many gifts, among which is the rare gift of

being able to work out issues in an amiable fashion. This gift has opened many doors and many hearts, which in turn has resulted in good things happening for the people she represents,” Watson said. “In Mercedes ISD and the community at large, she is highly respected and known for her ability to make things happen.”

“Yolanda is a visible leader in her local and in her community,” TSTA President Rita Haecker said in presenting Molina with the TSTA Ronnie Ray Educational Support Professional of the Year Award at the April TSTA Convention. “She is involved in the Children of the Fields Project, a coalition that provides emergency educational financial relief to migrant workers and their families, and ensures that farmworker children are protected and given an opportunity to succeed in life. She also works with various community groups to facilitate connections between low income families and support agencies, such as Goodwill, the Salvation Army and the Housing Authority.”

As the child of migrant parents, Molina understands the difficulties her students face. “Her work to help bring these students and families into the education system is more than a job, it is her passion,” Haecker said.

Molina said she often visits the homes of migrant families to help them take advantage of educational and other benefits they may not know are available.

“I always advise parents that we should never allow anything or anyone to dis-

courage us from moving forward in life and never allow anybody to dictate our future,” Molina said. “Working with the parents of the children that attend our schools has prepared me to be an advocate for them, too. These parents, in most cases, are the ones in great need of support from school employees.”

Molina encourages them to participate in parenting sessions, workshops and other school functions. That involvement has encouraged some parents to enroll in school themselves, taking classes that prepare them for teaching, nursing and other professional positions.

She works hard for the Mercedes Educators Association/TSTA/NEA, and has served in positions ranging from association representative, to local president, to NEA Board of Directors member. She currently is the Region 1E president on the TSTA Board of Directors.

“I am a strong advocate for our association because it prepares educational employees to be the best they can be. We, in turn, become better prepared to serve the children that attend our schools,” she said.

“My experience as an ESP at large at the state and the national level has been one that changed my life forever,” she said. “My participation in the 2007 Education International World Congress in Berlin, Germany, was most memorable. TSTA/NEA members, coworkers and people in the community expressed their pride in my attendance. They realize we can accomplish our goals when we work together.”

Molina actively works to recruit more members for TSTA/NEA. “Our teachers and support personnel know who I am and what I stand for. They will approach me and ask for my advice,” she said. “I encourage them to join this great organization and to become part of the 3.2 million members. I encourage them to join our organization and to share with their co-workers that they have become a part of the best professional organization there is. Many of our members have now become leaders in our local organization. I always tell our members, ‘If I can do it, you can do it, too.’”

Recognizing the impact that local politics has on day-to-day life in the schools, Molina is very involved. “I make myself visible while attending school board meetings. Our school board knows my position as a leader of the organization and as an advocate for our students and parents. Our relationship is strong and the respect for each other is mutual,” she said.

She works school board and city elections, and helps the chamber of commerce generate questions and concerns for the school board candidate forum.

Yolanda Molina is retiring this year, marking the end of an impressive career that truly has changed lives. She offers these words of advice to those who follow her: “Do what you can to the best of your ability and when the opportunity arises, do not be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. Always strive for improvement and reach for the brass ring. You will see you can achieve your goal when you set your mind to it.”



WHY I CHOOSE TSTA/NEA

Leadership Training

“Working closely with our school administrators and school board members is something that comes naturally to me because of the training provided by TSTA/NEA. Our relationship is strong and the respect for each other is mutual.” —Yolanda Molina, Mercedes



It still is about the future

Even as he approaches retirement, TSTA Executive Director E.C. Walker is focused on the future of TSTA, explaining how the principles that have guided us for the past decade can take us to even greater success in the years to come. **By E.C. Walker**

In July of 1965, as president of the Missouri Student NEA, I attended my first official NEA Representative Assembly in New York City. Twenty years after that, on July 1, 1985, I began working for the Missouri NEA as director of Government Relations and Research, and my first day on the job was working the PAC (political action committee) at the NEA Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C.

During the 20 intervening years, I taught social studies to seventh, eighth and ninth graders in New Franklin, Missouri (where I also coached some basketball and track, and drove a

school bus). I attended graduate school at the University of Arkansas and Indiana University, and taught at North Dakota State University. I worked for the Indiana Oral History Project, and did research and speechwriting for a gubernatorial campaign in Indiana. I worked, briefly, for the Indiana State Senate and then for the Missouri Senate for six years. I left the Senate staff when I was elected County Commissioner, and did some contract lobbying while serving my term on the Commission. After that term is when I went to work for Missouri NEA.

After working for Missouri NEA for almost 16 years, then spending the last 10 1/2 years as executive director of TSTA, I am finishing my career at the NEA Representative Assembly in Chicago, 46 years after that first one.

There is a great temptation, as I write these words for the final chapter in my career, simply to revisit all of the successes we have had in the past decade. Over the course of those years, I have provided, through various speeches and reports, the details of how we moved the Association from the brink of bankruptcy to financial stability and strength. I have shared with you the changes we have made to strengthen our democratic principles and build the capacity of our locals. I shared the membership success stories from locals around the state, talked about how we ended decades of membership loss and turned it into a decade of membership growth, up by almost 30 percent over the past nine years.

And that's all true — we did all that, or rather you did all that, and I got to report it to you and talk about what was coming next. But I do not want to end my career talking about the past. I always have been more interested in what comes next than in what just happened. Rather than dwell on the past, I would rather draw from that past while focusing on the future.

So what I want to do in this final article is to highlight some of the basic principles we have emphasized over the past 10 years and look at how they will guide you to greater success in the future.

MISSION AND VISION DO MATTER

The Guiding Coalition was active for almost two years and culminated their work with a report to the TSTA House of Delegates in April 2000. This group

of TSTA leaders and staff offered a bold statement of the purpose, the reason for the existence of TSTA: “The Texas State Teachers Association will unite, organize and empower public education advocates to shape public education in Texas thus providing a quality public school for every child.”

That was buttressed by a vision statement of how TSTA would behave while pursuing that mission: by using data, assessment and evaluation to drive

Power is created not when 70,000 members each speak their own voice, but when all 70,000 members speak with one united voice, delivering the message chosen through the collective decision making process.

decisions; focusing on systemic change, rather than individual change; concentrating resources on organizing; and using shared accountability, collaboration and teamwork among all stakeholders to move forward.

I firmly believe that our willingness not just to put those values and beliefs out front for all to see, but also to talk about them as part of what makes this association different from our competi-

tors shifted the focus of our membership efforts in a positive direction. I believe this emphasis on Mission, Vision and Values will continue to serve us well in the future.

It is not contradictory to pursue the economic and employment interests of education employees while at the same time understanding that the top priority for our members is the quality of education they are able to deliver to Texas students — and TSTA is the organization that makes that quality part of our Mission.

MEMBER DRIVEN THROUGH COLLECTIVE DECISION MAKING

I believe another element crucial to our future success is our insistence on being “member-driven” and on understanding what that means when it comes to determining direction and emphasis.

It does not mean that 70,000 individuals each get to determine, independently and separately, what the policies and procedures are for the Association, nor to decide the direction for the Association, nor to dictate what positions the Association will take on issues of importance to our members.

It means that the collective decision-making process — the process that establishes everything from the Mission and Vision statements referenced above, to the Bylaws that determine how the Association will be governed, to the method by which it is determined who will speak for the Association on the local, state and national platforms — begins with those members when they cast their votes to elect the local leaders and delegates that will represent the interests of their local members at the state and national levels.

The leaders elected by the members at

the local level will speak for the members of that local — but only within the parameters and positions set and agreed to by the other elected officers and board members of the locals. If the members believe those local leaders have violated their trust by not speaking up, or by taking positions that are contrary to the expressed interests of the local, then the same members that voted them in could, and should, vote them out in the next election.

Likewise, the delegates elected by those local members to represent them at the TSTA House of Delegates and the NEA Representative Assembly will elect officers for TSTA and NEA, amend bylaws and adopt standing rules to guide the process of governing this association.

That is why TSTA governing documents place such emphasis on ensuring open nominations, secret ballots and other democratic procedures: It is the bedrock for driving the collective decision making process that guides the future of the Association.

And when the election is over, when the policy is set and the position is stated, then every member and leader has the responsibility to support the winners, follow the policy and give voice to the position. The only exception is that they can work internally, through the process described above, to change the leaders, policies and positions. But while they are working internally to change leaders, policies or positions, all members and leaders are called upon by the TSTA Bylaws to support those leaders, policies and positions until they are changed through the appropriate process.

Power is created not when 70,000 members each speak their own voice, but when all 70,000 members speak with one united voice, delivering the message chosen through the collective decision making process.

SELLING PROTECTION WILL BUILD NEITHER A STRONG ASSOCIATION NOR SUSTAINABLE POWER

For many years, TSTA recruited members on the basis of “come join us and we will take care of you.” We emphasized protecting the rights of individual members above all else. And over a 30-year period of using this approach, we had membership losses in 27 of those years. We didn’t lose those members because we weren’t any good at protecting members; on the contrary, we were very successful at getting the legislature to pass laws providing better working conditions for education employees and at enforcing those rights at the local level, especially through grievances and “bringing in the lawyer.” We were the best at it — and still are.

The problem is you cannot build strong local associations based solely on selling and providing protection to members. It simply is not enough. Fewer than 10% of the members ever need that protection! There are too many other issues that have to be dealt with, too many other interests that members have waiting to be met, to focus only on this one thing.

At the same time, this does not mean that we don’t have to provide protection. It may not be what we should sell, but there is no question we have to provide it. One of the first responsibilities of a union is to protect its members, especially leaders; this is even more important in Texas where we are part of an education system that is becoming increasingly dysfunctional every year. We must protect our members from this dysfunctional system to the best of our ability and to the limit of the resources available for that purpose.

But if all we do is protect members from that system, how are we going to

change the system? And if we don’t change the system to get rid of the dysfunction, there will come a point when the protection needs of individual members will overwhelm our ability to meet those needs.

You cannot remove the dysfunctions in the system merely by protecting members. You must build power — real power — at the local level. TSTA must focus resources on building strong, powerful local associations capable of standing toe-to-toe with other powers within the community in order to provide a quality public school for every child in that community!

And the irony in all of this? The strongest protection for the rights of individual members is a powerful local association.

BUILDING POWERFUL LOCALS IS THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR TSTA SUCCESS

Much of the recent success of TSTA stems from the renewed focus of the state association on building strong, powerful local associations. While this focus was in the documents from the Guiding Coalition, real shape to the effort was provided by the recommendations of the Collective Bargaining Task Force, established pursuant to an NBI from the 2003 TSTA House of Delegates, calling for TSTA to develop and implement a plan to achieve collective bargaining for education employees in Texas.

The Task Force determined that the best way to get collective bargaining, eventually, was to build enough powerful locals capable of pushing for exclusive consultation rights with their school districts. If that happened in enough locals, eventually the legislature would have to act (as they eventually did when they gave meet-and-confer rights as a local option to police officers and firefighters).

The Task Force then went on to provide something of a “road map” for locals seeking to build this kind of power in the form of the “power profile continuum.” Over the next few years, various locals began to build plans based on this power profile, and to make significant progress both in increasing membership and in building power.

Based on what was learned from those experiences, several “tweaks” were made in the documents and it came to be called the “Full Capacity Local” plan. The TSTA Bylaws were amended to require adoption and implementation of a Full Capacity Local plan in order for a local to receive the full rebate from TSTA, making the plans a part of the minimum standards for TSTA locals.

Building strong, powerful locals with a culture of organizing is the key to any future success for TSTA. We have demonstrated in several places, in different sized districts and locals, that creating and implementing a Full Capacity Local plan is a successful way to build such locals.

As TSTA moves forward, the primary way we can cause positive change for public education in Texas is by having more and more local associations adopt and implement such plans to achieve power.

LEADERSHIP PIPELINE: KEY TO TSTA'S FUTURE

One of the key concepts inherent in a successful culture of organizing is the idea that every member is partly accountable for the success of the organization and is expected to contribute to achieving that success. In fact, for us to be successful, those who join the organization need to view themselves not as members, but as citizens of our community.

As with any successful community,

finding and training the right leaders is necessary to ensure not only success today, but sustained success in the future. To that end, TSTA has developed and now is implementing a “Leadership Pipeline” based on the concept of “Every Member a Citizen, Every Citizen a Leader.”

During the tough times for TSTA in the 1980s and 1990s, TSTA lost sight of the importance of a robust leadership development effort in sustaining the future of the organization. As we began the task of rebuilding the strength of TSTA by following the efforts of the Guiding Coalition, we began to re-emphasize the value and necessity of a strong leadership development program.

However, it was the vision of the Leadership Pipeline brought by current TSTA President Rita Haecker that caused us to accept the reality of leadership development in an organizing culture, which is that we need all members to accept their citizenship and become engaged in building the success of the association.

The vision of a “pipeline” as the mode of this kind of leadership development emphasizes the “intake” point of the act of joining — every person who joins becomes not only a citizen but a potential leader. Not all citizens have the same talents, circumstances or interests, so there must be a system for “funneling” the citizens through the pipeline and its series of filters to identify the strengths and interests of each citizen and making sure that those citizens with the right circumstances, talents and interests are able to move forward through the right series of trainings, workshops, educational programs and experiences to emerge as leaders of the community, holding those positions that fit their talents, time and commitment.

It is a daunting task to build the curriculum for this pipeline, and to create and implement a system of tracking and matching, with appropriate communication and selection processes, to produce the desired result: a core of leaders with the right knowledge, skills and understanding, supported by a base of citizens all committed to achieving the mission of TSTA. While I’m sure that this program will continue to need changing and improving as we move forward, I am confident that we now have the Leadership Pipeline in place and are ready to become, once again, the most credible source of leaders in the education community in Texas — and, accordingly, the education association with the best leaders in the nation.

FINAL COMPONENTS: PASSION AND COMMITMENT

The final and, in some ways most essential, components of strong leadership are two elements that cannot be taught in workshops or learned in courses, yet they are the two most essential elements for sustained success: passion and commitment.

The most successful leaders for TSTA (or, truly, for any organization) are those who are totally passionate about the mission of the organization and completely committed to achieving success — for the organization. While strong leaders often bring an element of personal ambition, the best leaders never let their personal ambition take precedence over association success, and it is their commitment to and passion about the mission that ensure the proper perspective.

With these thoughts I bring my working career to a close. Perhaps there could be an epilogue or two, or maybe all that is left is an epitaph. In either case, I ask that you remain: committed to each other, committed to the future.



Going green in Wichita Falls

With a student achievement or professional development grant from the NEA Foundation

"If I won the lottery tomorrow, I think I would continue to teach just for fun," Patti Golden, a fifth grade teacher at Southern Hills Elementary in Wichita Falls, said.

What she loves is using her creativity when she plans lessons. "The TEKS provide a framework, a set of standards and goals for my diverse learners to strive toward, but the creative process for me is matching skills, students, learning styles and materials," she said.

How does she fund this creativity? Grants. In seven years, her students and her school have been awarded grants totaling almost \$25,000, including two \$5,000 grants from the NEA Foundation.

"Grants allow me to meet the needs of my diverse learners," Golden said.

"Students engage in learning when they have an interest in the topic and can connect what they learn to their everyday lives," she said. "The NEA Foundation's \$5,000 grant this year for our 'Go Green' project made it possible for my fifth graders to gain hands-on experience with technology and to gain new experiences through field trips. We integrated science, social studies, math and language arts skills in authentic learning experiences."

Students used iPods to listen to podcasts and view videos on what it means to "go green" and why it's beneficial. They brainstormed a list of green topics using an interactive white board, then broke into research groups by chosen topic of interest. Their work was stored in an electronic portfolio.

The students took three field trips — to Wichita Mountain Reserve Nature Center, River Bend Nature Center and Quartz

Mountain Nature Park — recording their experiences on their iPods and uploading onsite field trip reports to the school website on topics such as alternative energy sources and the environmental impact of consumer choices.

Students then surveyed their school and community on attitudes about and knowledge of green topics, analyzing the results and presenting them in graphic form. They reflected on the results through blogging, texting and podcasts.

At the end of the project, students worked in teams to design lesson plans for younger students based on their experiences and held a "Go Green" fair for their school and community. Booths displayed student work for the year and included interactive electronic experiences. Local organizations and businesses also hosted booths and held seminars at the fair.

Golden is the language arts part of the fifth grade team; others are Doni Kaufold, science; Robin Carruthers, math; Tom Brox, social studies; and Willis Hogan, fifth grade aide.

When she receives a grant, not just the fifth grade team but the whole school is involved. For the "Go Green" grant, Golden's student teacher, Andrew Mosely, wrote several lesson plans; counselor Diane Lockard shared a short movie by her granddaughter about going green in the Metroplex; and support professionals from other grade levels volunteered to help with the field trips.



How do you apply for an NEA Foundation grant?

The NEA Foundation offers grants in two categories: Student Achievement Grants such as Golden's that fund initiatives to improve academic achievement, and Learning and Leadership Grants that enable educators to take part in quality professional development activities.

Since 1999, the foundation has awarded more than \$7.5 million in grants, including almost 100 grants to Texas educators. Here's what the grants funded in Texas in the 2010-11 school year alone:

- Andrea Tejada, a science teacher at Columbia Heights Elementary in San Antonio, led students in planning and cultivating a school garden so they could observe the life cycle of plants and the origins of the vegetables they eat. Rain barrels were installed to teach students about rainwater harvesting and water conservation.
- Jimmie Walker, a teacher at Cambridge Elementary in San Antonio, attended the Connecting the Mind, Brain and Education Institute on brain research at Harvard University. While there, she worked with experts to design and plan specific ways to use cutting edge research to improve classroom instruction. After the institute, she led a staff development session at her school.
- Anthea Lavergne, a fourth grade teacher at Boone Elementary in Houston, enrolled her special needs students in an accelerated writing and publishing institute where they produced, designed and marketed books using digital technology. A copy of each author's completed manuscript was sent to the Library of Congress to be cataloged in the archive.
- Amanda Ronan, an elementary teacher at NYOS Charter School in Austin, got a grant for a course to teach her school's K-5 vertical team how to improve students' writing skills.
- Carolyn Jordan, a sixth grade ESL teacher at Elmore Middle School in Houston, created a campus paper recycling program. Students collaborated to create PowerPoint presentations, design and produce poster ads, and decorate recycling bins.
- Lydia Renfro, a science teacher at Gorzycki Middle School in Austin, created a native habitat and weather station to teach students how to acquire, record, process and evaluate data for scientific research and discussion.

Descriptions of current and past NEA Foundation projects, online application forms and an instructional video can be found at www.neafoundation.org.



WHY I CHOOSE TSTA/NEA

Teaching and Learning

"The NEA Foundation's \$5,000 grant this year for our 'Go Green' project made it possible for my fifth graders to gain hands-on experience with technology and to gain new experiences through field trips. This is the second NEA grant I've received." — **Patti Golden, Wichita Falls**



Hays and Del Valle stop dangerous language

Take a good look at your contract. You may have agreed to work up to 300 days without additional compensation.

Here is the troubling contract language, as recommended to school districts statewide by the Texas Association of School Boards: “The District shall pay you according to the compensation plan adopted by the Board each school year. Your salary includes consideration for all assigned duties, responsibilities, and tasks, regardless of the actual number of hours or days (including days not designated on the school calendar) that you work during this contract. Your salary shall be reduced for absences in excess of authorized, paid leave.”

When Del Valle Education Association members noticed the language in their contract for next year, they took action. Their lobbying and organizing efforts led to a board proposal to have teachers sign an addendum to their term contracts that would delete the exploitive language. The Del Valle school board on April 19 voted 8-1 to approve the addendum.

Hays Educators Association/TSTA soon followed suit, negotiating a statement of clarification with the district superintendent

which prevents the exploitive language from being interpreted in a literal way for the 2011-12 school year.

“Due to the concerns raised by the Hays Educators Association/TSTA (HEA), the Hays Consolidated Independent School District hereby provides a statement of clarification regarding 2011-12 employee’s professional contracts,” Superintendent Jeremy Lyon wrote in a May 27 letter to education association representatives. “The statement in section 6.1; ‘(including days not designated on the school calendar),’ will not result in a change of current practice regarding employee work days and hours during the 2011-12 school year. The statement; ‘(including days not designated on the school calendar),’ will be removed from professional contracts issued for the 2012-13 school year.”

HEA sent an email on the issue to all teachers in the district, with a link to a video by local president Esperanza Orosco: “Hays Educators Association (HEA), your local affiliate of the

Texas State Teachers Association, has won a great victory on behalf of the teachers in Hays CISD,” the email said. “Several weeks ago, HEA raised concerns about new language that was inserted into the teacher contract for the 2011-12 school year. This language opened the door to teachers working up to 300 days without a penny of additional compensation.”

Watch the video at <http://bit.ly/mGCOwm>.

HAWKS SOAR TO 5A CHAMPIONSHIP

“Did I think we were going to win it? I wouldn’t say that, but I knew we had the ability to win it all,” coach and TSTA member Karin Keeney said. Her Hebron High varsity volleyball team in Lewisville ISD won the 5A state championship this year.

The Hebron Hawks ended the season 44-7, and injuries plagued the team during the district race. “It definitely hurt us, but this group of kids put it together when it counted,” Keeney said. “This team had a ton of talent and, after losing last year deep in the playoffs, they also had the drive and desire to do it. We went the entire playoff run — seven matches — without dropping a single set. This has not been done at the 5A level since rally scoring came in 2004.”

Ten members of Keeney’s team graduate this year, her biggest group ever. It’s a loss on both a professional and personal level.



“Many of these seniors had older sisters that played in the program in earlier years, so I have known them since they were in elementary school,” she said. “I knew when these kids were freshmen that this was the next group that had a chance to win it all. Most of the core group were on varsity their sophomore year.”

Hebron volleyball team visited the Capitol in Austin March 9, where they were honored with a resolution on the Senate floor. “I have some great kids who deserve all the recognition they can get!” Keeney said.

TSTA-STUDENT PROGRAM: ELECTIONS, AWARDS

TSTA-Student Program held its 55th Annual Conference and House of Delegates March 25-27 in Austin. Delegates

and member participants engaged in association business and professional development sessions, and celebrated at an awards banquet that featured NEA Student Program Chair Tommie Leaders of the University of Nebraska-Omaha as the keynote speaker.

The newly elected state leadership team for 2011-12 includes President Danielle Thorp, University of Houston-Downtown; Vice President Kevin Jackson, University of Texas at Austin; and Secretary Lisa Benson, Texas A&M University at College Station.

All participants had the opportunity to attend three of the following professional development sessions:

- How to Build Your Classroom on a Budget: Renee Angelilli, presenter



WHY I CHOOSE TSTA/NEA

Legislative Action

“I have been a TSTA member for 20 plus years. I am sorry to say I have been to only one local meeting, but I stay involved by calling and writing those who are in office when the Legislative Alerts go out. I appreciate all that TSTA does for all of us in education!” — Karin Keeney, Lewisville



READING ACROSS AMERICA (clockwise from top left): Education Secretary Arne Duncan, First Lady Michelle Obama, and NEA President Dennis Van Roekel read at the Library of Congress; Association of Brownsville Educators members and students march in the local Charro Days parade dressed in Cat in the Hat costumes; TSTA-Retired members, including JoAnn Peschel of Houston, return to school to read; Socorro Education Association and Slider Middle School PTO host a celebration at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, including performances by the school choir and mariachi group; High Pointe Elementary in Cedar Hill ISD holds a storybook parade, followed by readings by Dads of Great Students — including former NEA-Dallas president Dale Kaiser, wearing the hat.

- Dinosaur Games: Heather Cato, presenter
- Why Didn't I Learn This in College: Kimberly Endsley, presenter
- Contract Interventions for ELL Students: Noel Bezette, Ph.D., presenter
- Bilingual and ELL: Closing the Achievement Gap: Paty Marquez, presenter

TSTA-SP invited former TSTA-SP president Chris Padron of La Porte ISD and former TSTA-SP Executive Committee members Katy Staff-Harris of Hearne ISD and Nicole Smith of Spring Branch ISD to lead a discussion on their experiences as first-year teachers. The discussion was moderated by former TSTA-SP President (now an organizational development specialist with TSTA) Clinton Gill.

At the Awards banquet, the following were recognized:

- Local Excellence: Large Chapter, Texas A & M University; Small Chapter, Lone Star College-Kingwood
- CLASS Projects: Lone Star College-Kingwood; Lone Star College-North Harris
- Outstanding Local Leader: Margie Potter, Lone Star College-Kingwood
- Outstanding Underclassman: Jennifer Beauchamp, Lone Star College-Kingwood
- Outstanding Local Advisor: Noel Bezette, Ph. D., Lone Star College-Kingwood

OH, THE BOOKS YOU'LL READ

First Lady Michelle Obama, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington and NEA President Dennis Van Roekel welcomed a star-studded lineup of readers and 400 local schoolchildren

to the Library of Congress for NEA's Read Across America Day, March 2.

Among the celebrity readers were Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Superbowl champion Donald Driver, Top Chef host Padma Lakshmi and chefs Carla Hall and Mike Isabella, designer Camila Alves, journalists Norah O'Donnell and Luke Russert, and actors Jessica Alba, Bridget Moynahan, Jeffrey Ray Valdez and Mehcad Brooks.

Across the nation, more than 45 million people participated in one way or another in the celebration.

"What began as a few reading parties 14 years ago has grown into a huge national literacy event," NEA President Dennis Van Roekel said. "While we take a fun and lighthearted approach to our Read Across America celebrations, we do so with a serious purpose in mind: to encourage a love of reading.

As educators, we know that children who read — and are read to — do better in school and in life."

Read Across America promotes literacy year-round, but each year on Dr. Seuss' birthday, NEA hosts a major event to pay homage to the beloved children's book author and to get young people excited about reading.

In New York City, Target hosted a takeover of Bryant Park and the New York Public Library, filling an enormous sculpture with books for the city's public school students.

In Orlando, two lucky elementary school classes visited Universal Orlando's Islands of Adventure for a day of Seussian storytelling and celebrations, including a cast of favorite Seuss characters and a VIP reader, Nick Anderson from the Orlando Magic.

Deployed troops wore red-and-white stovepipe hats to record "The Cat in the Hat" for their children and families back home.

NEA's Read Across America has attracted some of the biggest names in politics, entertainment and sports to help children discover the joy of reading. Past celebrity participants have included Carrie Underwood, Gwyneth Paltrow, Alex Rodriguez, Serena Williams, Selena Gomez and Shaquille O'Neal.

Did you miss the party this year? Check out www.nea.org/readacross for ideas on putting together your own local Read Across America celebration in 2012. The website also has reading tips and book lists for year-round use.

NEWS FROM TSTA-RETIRED

In the March elections, there was one nominee for each TSTA-Retired office: Johnetta Williams of Dallas for president and Jay-Ann Rucker of El Paso for vice president. They were automatically elected to two-year terms that

begin July 15. The other officers are Secretary Paul Haupt of El Paso and Treasurer JoAnn Peschel of Houston, whose terms will end in 2012.

TSTA-Retired Annual Meeting: TSTA-R met at the public library in downtown El Paso on April 13-14. Attendees welcomed a newly formed group from the Austin area, the Capital Area Retired Educators (CARE). After the business session Wednesday, members enjoyed a meal with entertainment by the Ysleta High School dance group, "Dancing With The Stars." On the second day, two workshops were held. One was by Ronald Reeves, a local high school teacher who frequently performs at a comedy club, on "Laughter in Your Life." The second workshop, by Antonio Galindo of NEA Member Benefits, was a detailed presentation of benefits available to retired members.

Members collected funds for the Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Fund, operated by the NEA Foundation. The scholarship is given annually to a student in the NEA-Student Program, TSTA's affiliate for college students. If you are interested in making a donation, make your check payable to the NEA Foundation and mail it to TSTA-R, attention Bianca Espinoza, 316 West 12th Street, Austin 78701. The TSTA-R donation will be presented at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting.

TSTA House of Delegates: Retired members elected 24 representatives to the TSTA House of Delegates, where they presented an amendment to the TSTA Legislative Program to increase to full certification the minimum requirement for holding any supervisory or administrative position. The amendment passed without opposition. Retired delegates collected pre-retired memberships and gave prizes to two lucky recipients. For fundraising, a drawing for an Exxon/Mobil gas card was held. Retired delegates participate in interregional activities by acting as mentors to TSTA-Student Program del-

egates and advisors to the Texas Faculty Association delegates.

NEA-Retired West Regional Conference: This event was held April 9-11 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel Resort and Spa in Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico (Albuquerque). Six Texans attended. The president and TSTA staff person attended training on Saturday; other attendees joined the conference Sunday and Monday. There were opportunities for personal growth and fun, as well as association growth and stability. Social networking and membership growth were primary themes of the conference. Geraldine Smith-Palmer of Dallas won a free room, provided by NEA-Retired for a newly involved member.

Upcoming events:

- The June 8-9 TSTA-R Board of Directors meeting was cancelled.
- The June 27-29 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in Chicago is at the Swisshotel. The meeting is open to all NEA-Retired elected delegates, NEA-Retired members and guests.
- June 30-July 5 is the NEA Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly. See details in the spring issue of the TSTA Advocate.
- Sept. 9-10 is the next TSTA-R Board of Directors meeting at TSTA Headquarters.
- Tickets for the Quilt Give-A-Way will go on sale in September. The tickets are for a chance to win a throw-size quilt made by a retired member out of donated TSTA and NEA T-shirts. Watch for more information.

You can help form a unit in your region. Help is just a phone call away. Contact Bianca Espinoza at 800-324-5355 or biancae@tsta.org or email President Williams at townview@swbell.net.



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2011-12 ENROLLMENT FORM

Please return this completed form to your Association Representative or mail to TSTA Membership Department, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701-1892. If you have questions, call **877-ASK-TSTA**.

<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
NAME			SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER		DATE OF BIRTH
<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>
ADDRESS			LOCAL ASSOCIATION		HIRE DATE
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		
CITY	STATE	ZIP	NAME OF ISD		
<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>		
EMAIL AT HOME			CAMPUS/WORKSITE		
<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>		
EMAIL AT WORK			POSITION (I.E. CLASSROOM TEACHER, LIBRARIAN, BUS DRIVER, ETC.)		

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
AREA CODE	HOME PHONE	AREA CODE	WORK PHONE

✓	ANNUAL DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS	AMOUNT
1.	Professional Dues—TSTA/NEA (Active)	\$460.00
	Professional Dues—New to the profession	\$314.00
2.	Educational Support Dues—Full-time	\$242.50
	Educational Support Dues—Part-time	\$126.50
3.	NEA Fund for Children and Public Education (suggested amount \$15.00)	
4.	TSTA-PAC (see disclaimer below)	\$ 9.00
5.	Region Dues	
6.	Local Association Dues	

TOTAL DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS*

NOTE: Membership must include local and region dues if eligible.

ETHNICITY/GENDER

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
☐ Black ☐ Unknown
☐ Hispanic ☐ Multi-ethnic
☐ Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin) ☐ Other
☐ Asian

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

This information is optional and failure to provide it will in no way affect your membership status, rights or benefits in NEA, TSTA or any of their affiliates. This information will be kept confidential.

METHOD OF PAYMENT/PAYROLL DEDUCTION AUTHORIZATION (BELOW)

I hereby authorize the _____ School District to deduct the total amount of the annual obligation as set by the appropriate Association governance bodies in _____ equal payments in order to pay my dues to the professional associations and organizations listed and for political action contributions indicated. The authorization will continue in effect for this school year and future years, including any increase that may occur, until I give written notice to the local by September 15 to revoke. I further authorize any unpaid annual balance to be deducted from my final check. The Local Association or TSTA/NEA will notify School District officials of the annual dues amounts for all levels of the Association each year.

_____ Please check if you would like to receive TSTA's electronic newsletter, the *TSTA Briefing*, which is distributed by email at least once a week.
Send to: ☐ home email address ☐ work email address

The TSTA Political Action Committee (TSTA-PAC) and the National Education Association Fund for Children and Public Education collect voluntary contributions from Association members and use these contributions for political purposes, including, but not limited to, making contributions to and expenditures on behalf of friends of public education who are candidates for federal office. Only U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents may contribute to the NEA Fund. Contributions to the NEA Fund are voluntary; making a contribution is neither a condition of employment nor membership in the Association, and members have the right to refuse to contribute without suffering any reprisal. Although The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education requests an annual contribution of \$15, this is only a suggestion. A member may contribute more or less than the suggested amount, or may contribute nothing at all, without it affecting his or her membership status, rights, or benefits in NEA or any of its affiliates.

Contributions or gifts to The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, TSTA-PAC and local PACs are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.

Federal law requires political committees to report the name, mailing address, occupation, and name of employer for each individual whose contributions aggregate in excess of \$200 in a calendar year.

Federal law prohibits The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education from receiving donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families. All donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families, will be returned forthwith.

"I decline to contribute to TSTA-PAC and I understand this will not in any way affect my membership status or rights." _____

INITIAL

Former student member?
____ YES ____ NO

**To respond to the nationwide attacks on teachers and teacher associations, delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly will be voting on an additional \$10 dollar increase for the Ballot Measure/Legislative Crises/Media Campaign. If it passes at the July meeting of the NEA Representative Assembly then dues will increase by \$10.*

Membership is open only to those who agree to subscribe to the goals and objectives of the Association and to abide by its constitution and bylaws.

Dues payments are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Dues payments (or a portion) may be deductible as a miscellaneous itemized deduction.

Legal Liability Coverage: Members of TSTA/NEA are automatically covered by \$6 million for most legal claims (\$300,000 for civil rights claims) while acting in the scope of employment. \$1 million is underwritten by the AIG Companies or successor provider selected by NEA. \$5 million excess is underwritten by United National Ins. Co., an A.M. Best Rated A+ (superior) carrier or successor provider selected by TSTA. Coverage is subject to the terms, conditions and exclusions of the policies which are available to members upon request by calling the TSTA Help Center at 877-ASK-TSTA. Notice required by Art. 21.54 of the Texas Insurance Code: These insurers may not be subject to all the laws and regulations of Texas. The insurance solvency guarantee fund may not be available to you or to TSTA.

Employment Defense: To be considered for legal services for job protection, membership is required for at least 30 days before the member knew or should have known of the events or occurrences leading up to the action complained about. Pre-existing conditions will not be pursued, except by discretion of TSTA.

MEMBER SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____ LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE _____

For the latest news, go to www.tsta.org.

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