



TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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TSTA poll: Hispanics take school cuts personally

Hispanic Texans in the three major border population centers have a strong, personal connection to their public schools and believe they and their children were personally hurt by the \$5.4 billion in state budget cuts two years ago. These are among the findings of a new Latino Decisions survey commissioned by the Texas State Teachers Association.

The poll also shows it is unlikely that Hispanics, who have watched enrollment in their local schools grow rapidly since the cuts, will give lawmakers credit for only partially restoring the funding, as provided so far in both the House and Senate versions of the new state budget.

Some 75 percent of respondents favor tapping the Rainy Day Fund to increase school funding.

“The importance of public education to border area Texans should not be underestimated,” said poll director Sylvia Manzano. “Our findings demonstrate education policy commands significant attention and concern.”

She noted that three incumbent Republican legislators who voted for the school cuts in 2011 were unseated by Latino Democratic challengers in 2012 after the specific, negative results of the cuts became defining campaign issues.

Some 67 percent of border Hispanics, according to the poll, knew about the budget cuts and cited specific negative consequences for their children, including fewer teachers, crowded schools and cuts to after-school and extracurricular programs.

More than 90 percent of Hispanic parents want to see their children at least graduate from college, and more than 60 percent want their children to attend graduate school or obtain a professional degree. The education funding cuts, Manzano said, “are seen as an obstacle to the high aspirations they hold for their children.”

Some 77 percent of border Hispanics, according to the survey, have children currently or previously enrolled in local public schools. Nearly 40 percent have close family members or friends who work for their local school district. Most volunteer and raise funds for their schools, and 82 percent attend school-sponsored events, making public schools the heart of their communities.

Latino Decisions – a respected, national Hispanic research firm – interviewed 400 Latino adults in El Paso, Laredo and the Rio Grande Valley. The poll was conducted March 14-24 with respondents selected at random in both landline and cell-phone only households. Interviews were conducted in Spanish and English at the subject’s discretion.

The poll’s margin of error is plus or minus 4.9 percent.

For more on the poll, see Latino Decisions blog at:

<http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2013/05/06/for-hispanics-in-texas-border-communities-politics-isnt-just-local-its-personal/>