



TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION 8716 N. Mopac Expressway, Austin, TX 78759 • 877-ASK-TSTA • www.tsta.org • Fax 512-486-7049

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Contact: Portia Bosse
512.476.5355, ext. 1322

TSTA poll: Most Texas voters want an across-the-board teacher pay raise

Most Texas voters say raising teacher pay is the top priority among education issues for the Legislature to address this year, and they believe lawmakers should provide and fund an across-the-board raise for all teachers rather than leave the responsibility to local school districts, a bipartisan poll conducted for the Texas State Teachers Association shows.

Most voters also want the Legislature to use the extra revenue it has this session to make greater investments in public schools instead of cutting property taxes, the poll indicates. And it shows that voters of both parties overwhelmingly want the Legislature to stop the expansion of charter schools until there is more evidence they are successful.

The statewide survey of 700 individuals who said they likely will vote in 2020 was conducted by telephone Feb. 12-21. Commissioned by TSTA, it was a joint effort of Lake Research Partners, a Democratic polling firm, and The Tarrance Group, a Republican pollster. The 700 voters included an oversample of 200 likely Republican primary voters.

Raising teacher salaries in Texas to the national average was identified as the top education priority by 58 percent of the voters, including 76 percent of Democrats, 53 percent of independents, 50 percent of Republicans and 48 percent of GOP primary voters. At present, the average teacher salary in Texas is more than \$7,000 less than the national average.

Survey respondents also were asked to choose which hypothetical legislative candidate they would most likely support – a candidate who wants to let local districts decide how much to increase each teacher’s pay or a candidate who wants to increase teacher salaries with an across-the-board raise so that all teachers get paid more.

Voters favored the candidate backing the across-the-board raise by a 62 percent to 34 percent margin. The strongest support came from Democrats, 74 percent. Independents favored the across-the-board candidate, 58 percent to 37 percent. Republicans favored the across-the-board choice, 55 percent to 43 percent, while Republican primary voters were split at 48 percent.

Asked if the Legislature should use the additional revenue it has available this session to increase public school funding or cut property taxes, 60 percent of voters said they wanted lawmakers to increase school funding and 36 percent preferred property tax cuts.

The strongest support for more education funding came from Democrats, 76 percent, but independents favored more school funding by a 51 percent to 44 percent margin over property tax cuts and Republicans favored more school funding, 51 percent to 45 percent. Likely Republican primary voters favored more education funding, 48 percent to 47 percent.

When asked if they were more likely to vote for a legislative candidate who will invest surplus funding in schools or one who will cut property taxes, voters favored the candidate who supports more school funding by 70 percent to 27 percent. That support was bipartisan. It was higher among Democrats, 87 percent, and independents, 63 percent. But Republican voters favored the candidate who invests in schools by 61 percent to 36 percent, and likely Republican primary voters backed the school-investment candidate, 58 percent to 39 percent.

Voters overwhelmingly, by 73 percent, said charter school expansion should be put on hold until there is more evidence that charters are successful. That included 87 percent of Democrats, 71 percent of independents, 65 percent of Republicans and 62 percent of Republican primary voters.

“This poll reinforces what we saw from last year’s election results,” said TSTA President Noel Candelaria. “Most Texas voters of all political stripes place a high value on public schools and educators and expect their schools to have the resources necessary to give all children a chance at success. And they want all our teachers to receive pay raises bringing them closer to the national average.”

“TSTA will continue to advocate for a permanent, state-paid, across-the-board pay raise for all teachers and higher pay for all other school professionals and support staff as well. And we will continue to oppose so-called merit raises for a handful of educators,” Candelaria added.

The overall poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7 percent, but the margin is greater for sub-groups.