



# TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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**February 1, 2012  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TSTA urges special session on Rainy Day Fund**

The Texas State Teachers Association today urged Gov. Rick Perry to call the Legislature into special session now to appropriate \$2.5 billion from the Rainy Day Fund and head off another round of harmful cuts in local public school budgets for the 2012-2013 school year.

“It is time to stop the bleeding and stop the cuts, now!” said TSTA President Rita Haecker, who appeared at a state Capitol news conference with State Rep. Donna Howard of Austin.

Last year, the governor and the legislative majority slashed \$5.4 billion from public education for the current, two-year budget period, including \$4 billion in formula funding obligations to school districts and another \$1.4 billion in Texas Education Agency grants to districts.

An estimated 32,000 school employees – including 12,000 teachers – already have lost their jobs, and more than 8,200 elementary classes are larger than the cap set by state law. Ultimately, these cuts and crowded classrooms harm our students’ learning environment.

Just last week, the Dallas school board voted to close 11 neighborhood schools, and other districts soon will begin planning budgets for the next school year. Further cuts can be avoided if the governor and the Legislature act now to appropriate \$2.5 billion in Rainy Day funds. That would approximately cover the education cuts for the second half of the budget period.

TSTA believes there is enough money in the Rainy Day Fund to restore the school cuts and leave a substantial balance to address other important needs. The comptroller has estimated the fund will have a balance of \$7.3 billion by the end of this budget period. Other experts believe it may grow even larger, because of higher oil prices and increased production.

Gov. Perry insisted that the Legislature leave a large balance in the Rainy Day account, even while making deep cuts in state services, during last year’s sessions. TSTA will be circulating petitions, urging the governor to do the right thing now and call lawmakers to Austin. Texans also can sign the petition at:

<http://www.tstaweb.net/forms/2012cutsPetition.html>

“It is time for the governor to cut the politics and stop cutting away at our children, their education and our state’s future,” Haecker said. “He can call a special session, stop the cuts and do what’s right for Texas.”