



TSTA NEWS

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TSTA poll: Legislature should use federal stimulus money to increase public education budget, not replace state funding

About six in 10 likely Texas voters believe public schools need more funding on top of what they received two years ago, and they say the federal stimulus funding allocated to Texas is the best way to provide that, according to a poll commissioned by the Texas State Teachers Association.

“Voters agree with educators that these federal funds were earmarked for school kids, not to help the Legislature balance the next state budget by replacing state education dollars,” TSTA President Ovidia Molina said.

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents to the bipartisan survey of 700 likely 2022 voters want more funding for public education, and 49 percent believe the Legislature should use the federal stimulus money to increase, not replace, the funding gains realized under House Bill 3 during the 2019 session.

Only 26 percent of the poll respondents said the federal funding should replace state education dollars and help cut school property taxes. Thirteen percent said the federal money should be used to replace state education funding and free up the savings for other state programs.

Texas is expected to receive \$12.4 billion for public education under the American Rescue Plan signed by President Biden last week. The Legislature also has yet to decide on how to budget another \$5.5 billion allocated for Texas schools under a federal stimulus bill enacted last year.

“Texans recognize that the funding gains for our schools under last session’s school finance law were just a start toward fully and equitably funding public education,” Molina said. “Voters expect state lawmakers to use the billions of dollars we are receiving in federal stimulus funds to build on those gains.”

In addition to normal funding needs, which increase every year, Molina pointed out that Texas’ schools are wrestling with a host of extra costs because of the pandemic, including the need to update HVAC systems and other facilities, purchase protective equipment for students and staff, bridge the digital divide and restructure their teaching processes.

“More funding is essential for the future of public education in Texas, and that is why Congress and President Biden provided these critical stimulus dollars,” she said.

The telephone survey was conducted Feb. 8-15 by Lake Research Partners (LRP) and The Tarrance Group.