



# TSTA NEWS

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## **TSTA suspects legislative scheme to ignore federal directives for stimulus funds, including much-needed education money**

On Thursday, the House Appropriations Committee is scheduled to hear House Bill 2021 by Chairman Greg Bonnen to create the Board on Administration of Federal Funds, a six-member panel that would be empowered to reallocate or even refuse to accept federal funds when the Legislature is not in session. It would include the lieutenant governor, the speaker and the chairs and vice chairs of the Senate Finance and House Appropriations committees.

The Texas State Teachers Association suspects this proposed board is little more than a ploy by state leaders to ignore the intentions of President Biden and the congressional majority when it enacted billions of dollars in federal stimulus aid for Texas, including \$12.4 billion earmarked for public education, in the American Rescue Plan. Another \$5.5 billion in federal money for public education was allocated to Texas under the last COVID stimulus bill enacted in December when Donald Trump was still president, and it remains unspent.

“Congress intended for almost \$18 billion in federal funds to be spent for Texas public schools and school kids, to help schools reopen and operate safely during the pandemic and cover some of their millions of dollars in extra, emergency expenses,” TSTA President Ovidia Molina said.

“Congress did not intend to help the Legislature balance the next state budget by using the federal funds to replace state education dollars or use education stimulus money for other programs. The Senate Finance Committee yesterday approved its version of a new state budget without including any federal stimulus funds for schools, leaving the issue to ultimately be decided in the budget conference committee or maybe by this new proposed board.”

“If all this maneuvering is what we think it is, it is a slap in the face for Texas school children, their parents and their educators, who have performed heroically during this pandemic, often at great risk to themselves and their families,” Molina added. “If legislators are looking for extra money to balance the budget, they should start with the Rainy Day Fund and its \$11.6 billion balance, not pick on our school children.”

About six in 10 likely Texas voters (59 percent) 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 bipartisan poll that TSTA recently commissioned.

“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.”

HB2021: <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/87R/billtext/html/HB02021I.htm>