



## Texas Association of Community Schools

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### TACS Voting Update and More

#### END OF TEXAS PRIMARY VOTING SEASON

Politicians on both sides of the aisle have historically been happy to use their power to draw district maps to favor one party over another, and the Texas legislature is no exception. This explains why primary elections are so important in Texas as many of the candidates chosen in the primary will be the ultimate winner in the general election. In addition, voter turnout is often low in primaries, and extremely low in runoff elections. The March 1 primary had high voter turnout (relative to historic levels, although very low relative to the rest of the country), but the May 24 runoff elections had very low turnout levels. Turnout numbers reported were between 1% and 2% for democratic runoffs and just around 3% for Republican runoffs. Every vote really counted!!!

Perhaps the most closely watched runoff election was the SBOE District 9 seat being vacated by Thomas Ratliff. Mary Lou Bruner, a former educator and Tea Party favorite almost won the primary outright, but was forced into a runoff. Ms. Bruner's controversial comments drew national media attention and her meetings with educators drew educator attention. The way educators engaged in this race is a shining example of what educators can do through civic engagement. They met the candidate, argued with her false statements, and got themselves to the polls. Ms. Bruner was defeated by Lufkin School Board President, Keven Ellis, by a wide margin. We are confident that educators really turned the tide in this election. Kudos and thanks to educators for voting!

There were quite a few senate and house races of particular importance to the education community as well. Unfortunately, the senate races didn't turn out victors who are as strong supporters of public education as their opponents were, but some of the house elections turned out strong public education victors.

In the race to replace Senator Kevin Eltife in Senate District 1, Representative Bryan Hughes beat Representative David Simpson. Representative Hughes had strong backing from many "education reform" leaders who are enthusiastic about vouchers and school choice. Also supported by Empower Texans was Dawn Buckingham who defeated Representative Susan King for the Senate District 24 seat. These senate election results suggest it will be even harder to get pro-public education legislation passed in the Senate in the upcoming legislative session.

In the house, several Texas house candidates endorsed by Texas Parent PAC won their primary election runoffs on May 24: Ernest Bailes (HD18), Scott Cospers (HD54), Justin Holland (HD33), and Lynn Stucky (HD64). However several of these races were extremely close, demonstrating the importance of each and every vote. Scott Cospers won by 43 votes out of 4,939 votes cast. Justin Holland won by 99 votes out of 7,955 votes cast. Jay Misenheimer was defeated by Cole Hefner for the HD5 seat. Representative Doug Miller was defeated by Kyle Biedermann for his HD73 seat, and another incumbent, Representative Wayne Smith, was defeated by challenger Briscoe Cain for HD128.

A recent article in the Quorum Report stated that education reformers spent \$3.2 million to defeat pro-

public education candidates, including those that support Speaker Joe Straus. While educators generally don't have millions of dollars to throw into elections, they do have upwards of 700,000 votes, which can and should carry as much weight as pure dollars. We are grateful for the culture of voting that has been developing across the state, and we will need to continue to cultivate it for the general election and in years to come. Only when all educators use their hard earned right and privilege of voting, will we be able to fight the vast amount of money being poured into elections by education reformers that lines the pockets of business and slowly kills public education as it is imagined in the Texas Constitution.

## **ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION TO BE HELD IN AUSTIN**

TACS is pleased to help sponsor the **Annual Conference for Middle Level Education (AMLE2016)**, which will be held in Austin on **October 10-12, 2016**. This will be a wonderful opportunity for middle school educators to meet with peers from across the United States to "compare notes" and to learn practical, innovative ideas that can be used immediately in our nations classrooms. The event organizers expect several thousand middle level teachers and administrators to descend upon Austin for this event!

By helping AMLE2016 "get the word out" about the conference, TACS helps meet three of our Associations core values: (1.) TACS will work to improve instruction in the Community Schools of our state, (2.) TACS will provide means by which educators may seek self-improvement by participating in professional development programs, and (3.) TACS cooperates with other organizations that are dedicated to similar purposes.

The AMLE2016 Annual Conference will provide Texas middle level educators with a wonderful opportunity to learn new ideas and techniques to benefit your students. And the enthusiasm and passion they will bring back with them to your school will definitely enhance the learning environment! The conference will provide over 500 sessions on more than 60 topics delivered by some of our nation's leading educators. For complete information about the conference, the program, its speakers, and to register, just go to [www.amle.org/annual](http://www.amle.org/annual). For you Early Birds, there is a significant discount for any participant registered by June 10th. Also, all educators in ESC Regions 12, 13, and 20 may receive a discounted rate by registering through your ESC!

How often does a conference of this magnitude come to Texas? Be sure your middle school students, teachers, and administrators benefit from this experience!! Register them today!

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