



Texas Association of Community Schools

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TACS VOTING UPDATE

We hope you have enjoyed your brief respite from our weekly voter updates, but we are back now encouraging you to continue (or begin) creating a culture of voting in your districts. The general election is a short 9 weeks away, and early voting begins in 7 weeks. If you are like most Americans, you are exhausted from the length and tenor of this year's presidential election, but please don't let frustration with the top of the ballot deter you from getting people out to vote for down-ballot races. School board, city and county leaders, state board of education members, state representatives, senators, and federal officials all have an important role in governing. In fact, the closer your government is to you, the more influence they have over your daily life, work life, and education. Curriculum is decided at the SBOE; decisions on funding, vouchers, testing, accountability, and unfunded mandates come straight to you from your elected officials in Austin, and you certainly know the importance of having a supportive school board and support for bond elections! Even if you don't love your choices, the act of voting creates a habit that will pay off when a candidate you love comes along. Meanwhile, in each race, there are always at least "less bad" candidates for public education and sometimes really good ones!

If there is any question about who decides the things that affect superintendents, principals, teachers, and students, here is a partial list of issues that will be discussed next week in Austin. I am listing the events I'll be attending, because there are too many happening at once to attend them all! I've been on the lookout for a "time turner" like Hermione Granger had in Harry Potter, but I think all of you superintendents have snatched them up since you are used to being in so many places at once!

Monday, September 12th:

TACS San Antonio Conference:

-Preview of the 85th Legislative Session with Representatives Gary VanDeaver, Ken King, and Dan Huberty (All respected members of the House Public Education Committee, which will be getting a new chairman in January.)

-Commentary from Evan Smith, CEO of The Texas Tribune

Tuesday, September 13th:

Senate Education Committee hearing:

-Broadband

-Alternative measures of assessment to meet high school graduation requirements.

Wednesday, September 14th:

Senate Education Committee hearing:

-School Choice – What have other states done? What is best option for Texas?

-State Interventions in public schools with Academically Unsuccessful ratings

-Districts of Innovation (You can be sure Schlitterbahn and Six Flags will be there...)

-Minimum Number of Minutes of Instruction (Is it providing flexibility or is TEA dictating what was intended to be local control?)

Monday-Friday, September 12th-16th:

State Board of Education marathon 5 day meeting will hit on many items including:

-TEKS

-Instructional Materials

-Permanent School Fund

-Certificate of High School Equivalency

-Charter Schools

-Discussion of pending litigation

The Senate hearings will be available to be watched remotely (link to watch: <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/bin/live.php>), as will the SBOE hearings (link to watch: <http://www.adminmonitor.com/tx/tea/>). If I had to pick which ones would be most exciting (controversial), I'd go with the Tuesday and Wednesday Senate Ed hearings. I've decided to treat those like a soap opera and I may begin bringing popcorn to them. I'll send a legislative update with key nuggets from the events, but please attend, send a representative to testify on issues of particular concern, or just watch and realize how important voting really is to selecting who sits on these committees and who makes vital decisions about public education in Texas.

As always, thanks for all you do for the kids of Texas!

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