

## TEXAS PTA

### 2009 END OF SESSION LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES UPDATE

June 21<sup>st</sup> signals the end of the veto period for Governor Rick Perry. Texas PTA is pleased to announce that Gov. Perry did not veto any of the major pieces of legislation that Texas PTA prioritized this session!

The 81<sup>st</sup> session of the Texas Legislature ended Monday, June 1<sup>st</sup>. Texas PTA had a very successful legislative session thanks in **LARGE** part to PTA members around the state who participated in the process by visiting your legislators both in your home towns and in Austin, making phone calls to legislators, testifying before committees, participating in Texas PTA Day at the Capitol.

This session Arnold Public Affairs reviewed every bill filed, over 7,000 bills, 1200 more than were filed last session, and tracked over 605 bills for Texas PTA. Of the 605 bills tracked for Texas PTA, over 100 cards of support were submitted during House and Senate hearings on bills and PTA members represented PTA by giving oral testimony before legislative committees more than 20 times. Texas PTA staff and volunteers came to the capitol to distribute educational flyers and to speak to legislators about PTA priorities throughout the session.

This session Texas PTA secured the passage of:

- ❖ **BOOSTER SEAT BILL** - SB 61, by Rep. Allen Vaught and Sen. Judith Zaffirini, the booster seat law. Texas becomes the 46<sup>th</sup> state to enact legislation that updates Texas passenger safety statutes.
- ❖ **SALES TAX HOLIDAY EXPANSION** - HB 1801, by Rep. Dwayne Bohac and Sen. Florence Shapiro, the sales tax holiday expansion to include basic school supplies.
- ❖ **CELL PHONE PROHIBITION FOR DRIVING TEENS** - HB 339, by Rep. Larry Phillips and Sen. John Carona, the driver education bill that contains PTA's cell phone ban for driving teens.
- ❖ **VOUCHERS** - This session no voucher bill was voted favorably from any committee. Texas PTA hopes to work with staff of Senator Shapiro to identify solutions to the challenge of successfully meeting the needs of students who require institutional placement for autism. At issue is the method of funding for the program.
- ❖ **HEALTHY LIFESTYLES** - As a member of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas, Texas PTA worked to pass several key pieces of legislation:

- SB 891, by Sen. Jane Nelson and Rep. Rob Eissler, creates a standard definition of physical education that applies to all public school physical education curriculum and addresses student-to-teacher ratios in physical education classes.
- SB 892, by Sen. Jane Nelson and Rep. Mark Shelton, requires the inclusion in public school campus improvement plans of an evaluation of the campus coordinated health program.
- SB 7, by Sen. Jane Nelson and Rep. Lois Kolkhorst, (amended onto SB 870) creates an Obesity Prevention Pilot Program
- SB 395, by Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr. and Rep. Eddie Lucio III, creates an eight-member Early Childhood Health and Nutrition Interagency Council to develop an early childhood nutrition and physical activity plan with a recommended timeline for implementation over a six-year period.
- SB 343, by Sen. Jane Nelson and Rep. Jim McReynolds, creates an advisory committee to study and provide recommendations to the legislature regarding the areas of Texas that are underserved in the retail availability of healthy foods and the impact of the limited availability on nutrition, obesity, and chronic illnesses.
- SB 283, by Sen. Jane Nelson and Rep. Mark Shelton, requires school districts to appoint at least 5 parents who are not also employees of the school district to local school health advisory councils and requires SHACs to meet 4 times a year. The bill also requires districts to notify parents in writing if human sexuality instruction will be provided.
- SB 870, by Sen. Lucio Jr. and Rep. Castro, creates the Interagency Obesity Council whose task is to create an evidence-based public health awareness plan.
- HB 1622, by Rep. Helen Giddings and Sen. Judith Zaffirini, creates a grant program to provide children at risk of hunger or obesity with increased access to nutritious foods.
- SB 1027, by Sen. Kirk Watson and Rep. Tim Kleinschmidt, establishes an interagency farm-to-school task force to promote a healthy diet for school children by facilitating the use of locally grown food products in public schools.
- SB 282, by Sen. Jane Nelson and Rep. Rob Eissler, creates a grant program to provide nutrition education to children
- SB 1344, by Sen. Kirk Watson and Rep. Rob Eissler, requires State Board of Education to adopt essential knowledge and skills that address binge drinking and alcohol poisoning for inclusion in Health Curriculum

- SB 161 by Sen. Rodney Ellis and Rep. Linda Harper Brown, creates a new specialty license plate to support Safe Routes to School Program. After deduction of the dept's administrative costs, the remainder of the purchase cost of the specialty plate will go to the Safe Routes to School Program to promote bicyclist safety, education and access through education and training.

❖ **SCHOOL FINANCE:**

- HB 3646, by Rep. Scot Hochberg and Sen. Florence Shapiro, seeks to return to the extent possible to a formula driven public school finance system that improves equity and reduces recapture.
- SB 300, by Sen. Dan Patrick and Rep. Mark Shelton, in its original form this bill removed the 22-1 elementary class size requirement. As finally passed the bill seeks to reduce unfunded mandates on schools by:
  - Allowing a school district to choose between two methods for posting job vacancies rather than requiring a district to use both methods
  - Extending the expiration date of a district-level class size exception from the end of the semester for which it is granted to the end of the school year for which it is granted and removes a prohibition against the commissioner of education's granting an exception for more than one semester at a time
  - Authorizing, rather than requiring, a school district to conduct school bus evacuation training once a year
  - Requiring a school district to establish a long-range energy plan to reduce the consumption of electric energy
  - Repealing a requirement begun in 2007 that a school district board of trustees establish a goal to reduce the annual electric consumption by five percent each year for six years.

❖ **SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY - HB 3**, by Rep. Rob Eissler and Sen. Florence Shapiro, the school accountability system remake bill passed with several components sought by Texas PTA:

- A requirement for high school students to take 1 credit of PE and 1 credit of Fine Arts
- Areas of Distinction for Campuses that include fine arts, physical education, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce Development, in addition to academic achievement
- The addition of a broader array of applied courses and career and technology courses to be eligible for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of math and science
- Allowing student growth to count toward passing and college-readiness standards
- Allowing a waiver so that performance of one sub-population will no longer "fail" a district

- Requiring multiple measures to be used for awards of distinction
- Ending the 65% rule
- ❖ **STATEWIDE SMOKE-FREE LAW FAILS** - One major piece of legislation that Texas PTA supported and that failed this session is SB 544 by Sen. Rodney Ellis/HB 5 by Rep. Myra Crownover, the statewide smoke-free legislation. While there was strong support among members of the House, the chairman of the House committee to which the bill was sent, Rep. Burt Solomons of Carrollton was unwilling to allow it to be placed on the House calendar for debate until the Senate voted the bill out. The chairman of the Senate committee, Sen. Jane Nelson of Lewisville, delayed a vote on the bill in committee and support eroded in the Senate.

**HB 130**, by Rep. Diane Patrick and Sen. Judith Zaffirini, was vetoed by Gov. Perry. Click on this link to read the veto statement:

<http://txpta.org/Legislative%20Articles/2009/June/HB%20130%20veto%20statement.pdf>

- ❖ **For more complete information about legislation tracked by Texas PTA this session visit our website at [www.txpta.org](http://www.txpta.org).**

**IF YOU CALLED OR EMAILED YOUR LEGISLATOR DURING THIS LEGISLATIVE SESSION, PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO CALL OR EMAIL HIM OR HER TODAY TO SAY THANK YOU FOR HELPING TEXAS PTA TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL SESSION.**

Our successes this session would not have been possible without your calls to your legislators and their actions to support PTA's legislative priorities. A quick call or email to say "thank you" reinforces the relationship you are developing with your legislators and reminds them that you are invested in the process and aware of their actions to support PTA priorities.