

# **Under The Dome – Texas PTA Legislative Priorities**

## **Here's what you need to know:**

**Texas PTA has identified the following issues for focused and consistent advocacy efforts during the upcoming Texas Legislative Session. Priorities of Texas PTA are not limited to these listed below.**

### **Strengthen Child Passenger Restraint Laws**

Upgrade the current Child Occupant Protection Law governing the use of child safety seat devices to require children to be in booster seats from the time they outgrow a car seat until they are 57 inches tall or 8 years old.

### **Support Healthy Lifestyles**

Promote the health, education and welfare of the whole child by addressing Healthy Lifestyles through increased physical education/activity, rigorous implementation of the existing Texas Public School Nutrition Policy as well as School Health Advisory Councils, support for comprehensive tobacco prevention and cessation programs, and support for the arts.

### **Expand sales tax holiday exempted items to include school supplies**

Expand the current sales tax holiday to include school supplies.

### **Restrict Use of Cellular Technology by Teens While Driving a Motor Vehicle**

Restrict the use of wireless communications devices, including cellular phones, by youth under the age of 18 while operating a motor vehicle.

### **Secure Passage of a Smoke-Free Workplace Law**

Pass a comprehensive statewide smoke-free law to protect the health of Texas workers, especially our youth, from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

### **Reform Accountability System in Texas Public Schools**

Reform the current school accountability system to focus on what children know and are able to do, without overemphasis on one single test score, holding schools accountable for ensuring that all children succeed. The system must acknowledge the arts, music, literature, dance, drama, and visual arts as central to learning, key to the development of students and an essential component of a comprehensive education.

### **Support Programs that Make Schools Safer**

Promote safe schools for students and staff through programs such as the Crime Stoppers Safe Schools Program and others.

### **Improve Indoor Air Quality of School Buses**

Increase allocations to the Texas Clean School Bus Program from the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP) and other appropriate revenue sources to clean up the air our children breathe on school buses, by retrofitting middle-aged buses using advanced filter technology to clean up diesel exhaust.

### **Oppose Vouchers**

Oppose voucher systems or tuition credits for nonpublic school tuition and other education-related expenses, and require home schools and other nonpublic schools to meet the same educational standards as public schools.

***Please Note: In order for Texas schools to be successful in their mission to educate all students regardless of socio-economic status, ability, and legal status, schools must be adequately funded. Texas PTA supports state funding for state-mandated programs and supports increasing the state's share of funding to local school districts. Texas PTA serves as the voice for Texas children, maintaining the focus on their health, well-being, and educational opportunity.***

### **Here's what you can do:**

- Share these documents with other members of Texas PTA.
- Become familiar with the issues. In addition to the brief statements above, there are 2 documents that will assist you in your grassroots advocacy efforts –
  - Priority Bullets Final -***  
<http://www.txpta.org/Legislative%20Articles/September%202008/Priorities%20bullets%20final.pdf>
  - Background on Each Legislative Priority 2008-2010 -***  
<http://www.txpta.org/Legislative%20Articles/September%202008/Background%20on%20Each%20Legislative%20Priority%20for%202008-2010.pdf>
- Invite your State Senator and your State Representative to your local or council PTA meetings **this fall** so that they can talk to you about the legislative issues they will pursue and so that you can present the Texas PTA Legislative Agenda and seek their support.
  - To find your state representative:  
<http://www.house.state.tx.us/members/welcome.php>

To find your state senator:

<http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/members.htm>

- Set up small group meetings with your State Senator and your State Representative in your hometown. Share Texas PTA priorities and ask your legislators to support the Texas PTA Legislative Agenda.
- Write letters and emails and make calls encouraging your legislators to support Texas PTA's legislative agenda and include a copy of the priorities in your communication.
- Begin planning to bring a group of PTA members to Austin for Texas PTA Legislative Day at the Capitol on February 26, 2009. Watch for emails and for website announcements to help you plan your trip.