



## ***Direct from Shapiro***

### **A Legislative Update From the Capitol** **SENATOR FLORENCE SHAPIRO**

**January 22, 2002**

*Capitol Office:*  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711  
512/463-0108

*District Office:*  
5005 Addison Circle  
Addison, Texas 75001  
972/385-9876

Chair, State Affairs Committee

Member, Education Committee, Redistricting Committee, Intergovernmental Relations Committee, Joint Select Committee on School Finance  
Member, Legislative Audit Committee, Legislative Budget Board, Governor's Task Force on Homeland Security

#### From TAAS to TAKS: Group Identifies Shortfalls in New Educational Assessments

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is completing a three-year effort to redesign the state assessments for Texas public schools. The new tests, known as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), are a replacement of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), and were legislatively mandated in 1999 as part of the statewide effort to end social promotion. The law requires TEA to expand the subject areas on several middle school tests, add assessments to the ninth grade, change the high school graduation test to occur in the eleventh grade, and add new subjects to the graduation test.

In a review by the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF), it was revealed that the new tests have many of the same problems as the TAAS tests and will not meet state performance measures as set by the Legislature and the State Board of Education. Without measuring high levels of achievement, TPPF contends that Texas children will be unable to perform at levels comparable to national and international standards, as required by law.

The report contends that the TAKS tests will only measure what educators believe is currently being taught in classrooms, rather than curriculum standards set by the State Board of Education. Furthermore, the report states that the tests targeted to specific grade levels contain too many questions on subject matter that is below the grade being tested. For example, a test for fifth grade students will contain several third grade level questions.

Among the proposed remedies to this situation, TPPF calls for the TEA to commission an independent, expert audit to validate that TAKS will meet state requirements and public expectations. TEA has taken no action in response to TPPF's recommendations.

Like many Texans, I think it is essential to ensure that our new assessments measure the full breadth of our state curriculum standards, benchmark student performance for Texas at national standards, and are highly accurate. For this reason, I have joined TPPF in asking Governor Rick Perry to require TEA to conduct the audit to ensure that students are taught the full range of knowledge as established by law as minimum requirements.

I am deeply committed to the education of our youth and strongly support Texas' system of education accountability. State assessments are key to both improving student achievement and holding schools accountable for their results.

You can view TPPF's full report and findings at <http://www.tppf.org/>

---

You can visit the website of the Texas Senate: <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/>

Contact Information for Senator Shapiro at the Capitol:  
1400 Congress, Capitol 3E.12  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711  
Phone: 512/463-0108  
Fax: 512/463-7579

Contact Information for Senator Shapiro in the District:  
5005 Addison Circle  
Addison, Texas 75001  
Phone: 972/385-9876  
Fax: 972/385-9877

---

This email is being sent because you requested to receive it, or signed up to receive it at the Texas Senate website. If you would like to be removed from the mailing list, please reply to this email, with the word REMOVE in the subject line, and we will promptly remove your name from the list.