



ROCKDALE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. BOX 632 ♦ ROCKDALE, TX 76567
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May 21, 2009

Senate Public School Education Committee
Texas Senate

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you concerning the opportunity to return school finance to a formula driven system and to create a more equitable funding system. I realize that Senate Bill 982 will not be considered for Senate approval as time for the session to end is nearing. House Bill 3646 is the only school finance bill that has been passed out of the House awaiting Senate approval and/or changes. You and other members of the Senate can still have an impact on a greater opportunity for equity in school funding by placing the driver and funding levels in SB 982 (a phase up to the Austin ISD wealth level) as the Senate version that will be substituted for the House version. It is important to Rockdale ISD and other school districts around the state that the Texas legislature seeks to remedy the current inequity in school funding. The standard driver and funding levels from Senate Bill 982 accomplishes equity across the state and is **affordable**.

Rockdale ISD is incurring tough times due to the closing of the Alcoa plant, the layoffs of over 1100 employees, and the trickle down effect the layoffs place on housing and commerce. At the same time of this huge layoff we are locked into a Target Revenue system that is based on values from 2006. Rockdale's Target Revenue is just over \$4700 per WADA which is significantly under the state average. If our values were recalculated today our Target Revenue would be greater than the state average and it is very likely we would not need to layoff employees as a district or cut programs for students. **Schools in the state of Texas need a standard driver that produce funding levels that will break us out of the Target Revenue funding disaster.** We have greater inequity in the funding system today than we did when House Bill 1 was adopted.

Currently our projected budget **shortfall** (after cutting staff and programs by a half of a million dollars) under the Target Revenue System is a little over 1 million dollars in a 16 million dollar budget. We need relief and we need it now, not in 2 or 4 years.

Conducting a Tax Rollback election to increase our M & O revenue is not an option in our community. We have a **high unemployment rate and businesses that are closing.** I am more than happy to discuss our situation with you and explain the importance of the driver that Senate Bill 982 offers and its inclusion in House Bill 3646.

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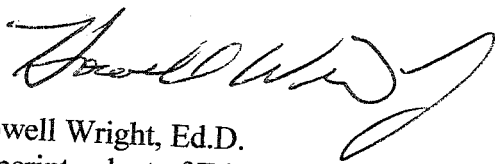
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I want you to understand that HB 3646 in its current form provides Rockdale ISD more funding over the next two years than SB 982, but I am a firm believer in equity and it is my belief that the standard driver and funding levels found in SB 982 deliver this opportunity for all Texans and not just a few of us. Our motto in Rockdale is "Building for tomorrow, starting today". SB 982 allows us the flexibility to plan accordingly for tomorrow so I am requesting that all of you take a stand to provide the children of Texas the same opportunity.

Again, thank you for your time and efforts representing the children of Rockdale ISD and the children of the Great State of Texas.



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