



**Testimony by Peggy Venable, Americans for Prosperity  
Hearing on *Texas School District Security Act*  
Senate Education and Senate Agriculture, Rural Affairs and Homeland Security Committees  
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School shootings are horrendous and every Texan wants kids safe in schools. Every parent wants to know that safety is a priority to our schools.

Parents need to know their kids are safe in school and students can't learn unless they are safe.

Safety is a key responsibility for our public schools. In 2011-12, Texas public schools spent almost \$331 million on school security and monitoring services. That represents .8 percent of the operating costs and is \$67 per student.

The question we need to ask is whether or not we need a new taxing entity. The answer is simple: we do not.

The *Texas School District Security Act* is well-intentioned legislation. While it appeals to our emotions, this legislation will not make kids in the Lone Star State safer in public schools.

We believe the proposed legislation is a tax increase that is not going to make our kids safer, but simply ignores the problem.

We spend over \$55 billion on education in Texas. These are hard-earned taxpayer dollars which flow to public schools where the school boards and superintendents determine their spending priorities.

We suggest that officials review what is currently being spent on school security – both by ISD's as well as local law enforcement entities – and determine if the funding is adequate or determine if spending priorities need to be shifted to security.

Legislators have made education a priority. We spend more on education than any other item in the state budget. And that spending has grown annually. We want school districts to set spending priorities and security should be one of those priorities.

It would be shortsighted to leveraging tragedy to create a taxing entity that is not needed.

Taxpayers are already paying for security in every school, every city and every county across the state. And, while it may not seem like it due to the massive media attention, statistically, school violence has been declining since its peak in 1993.

Whether the *Texas School District Security Act* provides for a sales taxing or a property taxing jurisdiction, creation of new special purpose taxing districts will not increase school safety. Instead, it will heap one more tax on hard-working Texans already facing a proliferation of these special purpose districts.

According to Texas Comptroller Susan Combs' report Taxing Facts, the biggest increase in property taxing entities in the past two decades has been **special purpose districts**. We currently have more than 4,000 property taxing entities in Texas.

Special purpose districts (SPD's) have accounted for **67 percent** of the growth in local entities levying sales tax since 1993, comprising **6 percent** of these entities in 2002 and **13.1 percent** in 2011.

SPD sales tax collections grew by more than **1,700 percent** between 1993 and 2011 as the number of SPDs increased from **9** to **193**.

Your Money and Local Debt, another Texas Comptroller report, revealed that local government debt has **more than doubled** from 2001 to 2011, with the biggest percentage of increase in debt in special purpose districts. Debt is a burden we are leaving the very kids we are talking about protecting in our schools.

We are leaving our kids a legacy of debt – not the legacy we want to leave them.

The bottom line is this: taxing entities are proliferating in Texas. We don't need another one to protect our kids.

We appreciate the intent of this legislation but do not support the creation of yet another special purpose taxing district for a purpose we are already funding.

*Americans for Prosperity (AFP) is a nationwide organization of citizen leaders committed to advancing every individual's right to economic freedom and opportunity. AFP believes reducing the size and scope of government is the best safeguard to ensuring individual productivity and prosperity for all Americans. AFP educates and engages citizens in support of restraining state and federal government growth, and returning government to its constitutional limits. For more information, visit [www.americansforprosperity.org](http://www.americansforprosperity.org)*