

Say 'No' to school vouchers ... again

Last week, the governor indicated that a special session of the Texas Legislature will begin on Monday. He has specified the focus of this third special session will be "school choice," aka, school vouchers.

The Kendall County Democratic Party and the Texas Democratic Party strongly oppose any kind of school voucher program that will redistribute tax dollars from working families to line the pockets of ultra-wealthy campaign donors.

We will do everything

PROGRESSIVE VIEWS

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in our power during this special session to ensure all Texas kids are able to receive the free public education they deserve.

School vouchers will divert your tax money into private schools and subsidize wealthier people sending their kids to elitist schools.

The governor's school

voucher plan defunds public schools, funds private and religious schools, funnels dollars away from struggling schools, and widens the education inequality gap.

Schools accepting vouchers do not need to accept that voucher as full payment. In fact, most schools accepting vouchers will cost more (sometimes much more), leaving middle-class and poor students unable to attend and removing that funding from public schools.

According to Article 7 of the Texas Constitution, "it shall be the duty of the Legislature of the State to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools." Public free schools, not private ones.

According to a recent guest column in the Rio Grande Guardian, State Sen. Juan Hinojosa (D-McAllen), said, "Vouchers will have a negative impact on our economy. By taking away funds from public schools, we are depriving them of the resources necessary to provide a quality education.

"This, in turn," he continued, "will hinder our

ability to attract businesses and industries that rely on a well-educated workforce. Investing in public education is an investment in our state's economic future."

In an editorial published on February 3, the San Antonio Express-News stated that the "voucher plan would decimate public schools. It would be a seismic change in policy that would defund public schools, shift tax dollars to private schools and, research suggests, assist wealthy families."

The governor often touts "parent choice" to support voucher programs, but parents already have plenty of choices for their children's schooling.

"They can choose to send their children to traditional public schools, sometimes even outside of their district. They can also opt for public specialized magnet schools or independently run public charter schools, or they can home-school," the Express-News article said.

The Houston Chronicle also came out against the school voucher program in a February editorial. "Blessed with an unprecedented budget surplus this

legislative session, the governor's priority seems to be diverting a sizable amount of taxpayer dollars to private schools rather than paying hard-working public school teachers what they deserve during these challenging times in the classroom. 'School choice,' they call it. Our problem is with the idea of using taxpayer dollars to subsidize private and religious schools."

Taxpayer dollars going to private schools is an attack on transparent, accountable governance, as private schools are largely unregulated -- both in how funds are spent and what is being taught.

Private schools are not required to hold public meetings, have boards elected by taxpayers, or publicly disclose spending or other records the way public schools must.

According to Axios, "Texas provides funding to public schools based on attendance, so any students switching to private schools would mean reduced funding for public schools."

In past legislative sessions, voucher bills have gone nowhere, primarily due to strong opposition from rural lawmakers, as

vouchers would harm rural school districts the most.

To address those concerns, language was inserted into one of the major proposed bills during this year's regular legislative session to "shield" any school district with a student population of less than 20,000 from adverse funding effects. (Per their website, Boerne ISD has a student population of slightly over 10,000.)

Even with that exemption, that legislation was defeated during the regular session by a coalition of rural Republicans who strongly oppose vouchers.

The Kendall County Democratic Party encourages everyone to contact Sen. Donna Campbell (512-463-0125) and Rep. Ellen Troxclair (512-463-0490) to express your opposition to school vouchers in any form.

For more information on how to get involved with the Kendall County Democratic Party, visit www.kcdems.us.

Laura Bray is the chair of the Kendall County Democratic Party. The Texas Democratic Party and J.C. Dufresne contributed to this article.