

# Just say “No” to school vouchers

Twice now, the Boerne Star has printed a press release on the governor’s push for “school choice” (once in the March 22 issue, and again on March 29), with absolutely no information on opposition to such programs.

Vouchers, folks. The governor is talking about vouchers—even though the word didn’t appear in either press release.

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.

The Kendall County Democratic Party (KCDP, and the Texas Democratic Party) vehemently oppose school voucher programs. We will do everything in our power this legislative session to ensure all Texas kids are able to receive the free public education they deserve.

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 sug-



gests, assist wealthy families.” The governor often touts “parent choice” to support voucher programs, but the editorial correctly points out, “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 Houston Chronicle also came out against 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. {The Editorial Board’s} problem is with the idea of using taxpayer dollars to subsidize private and religious schools.”

According to Pastors for Texas Children, an independent ministry to support public education opportunities for Texas children, “Taxpayer funds used for religious content or services violates the establishment clause of the first amendment and tramples the separation of church and state.”

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 has been inserted into one of the major proposed bills (SB 8) 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.) BISSD might be “shielded,” but other public schools will suffer from the diversion of funds. With fewer students, there will be insufficient enrollment left to fund some programs. Students might need to travel even further to attend school, and there may not be enough students for desired classes to fund them, reducing choices—bad outcomes for everyone.

KCDP 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](http://www.kcdems.us).

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