



Under the Dome - Texas PTA End of Legislative Session Update

June 8, 2009

TEXAS PTA END OF SESSION LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES UPDATE June 8, 2009

The 81st session of the Texas Legislature ended Monday, June 1st. Texas PTA had a very successful legislative session thanks in **LARGE** part to PTA members around the state who participated in the process by visiting your legislators both in your home towns and in Austin, making phone calls to legislators, testifying before committees, and participating in Texas PTA Day at the Capitol.

This session, Arnold Public Affairs reviewed every bill filed, over 7,000 bills, 1,200 more than were filed last session, and tracked over 605 bills for Texas PTA. Of the 605 bills tracked for Texas PTA, over 100 cards of support were submitted during House and Senate hearings on bills and PTA members represented PTA by giving oral testimony before legislative committees more than 20 times. Texas PTA staff and volunteers came to the capitol to distribute educational flyers and to speak to legislators about PTA priorities throughout the session.

This session Texas PTA sought and secured the passage of:

- **BOOSTER SEAT BILL** - SB 61, by Representative Allen Vaught and Senator Judith Zaffirini, the booster seat law. Texas becomes the 46th state to enact legislation that updates Texas passenger safety statutes.
- **SALES TAX HOLIDAY EXPANSION** - HB 1801, by Representative Dwayne Bohac and Senator Florence Shapiro, the sales tax holiday expansion to include basic school supplies. This bill awaits Governor Perry's signature.
- **CELL PHONE PROHIBITION FOR DRIVING TEENS** - HB 339, by Representative Larry Phillips and Senator John Carona, the driver education bill that contains PTA's cell phone ban for driving teens. This bill awaits Governor Perry's signature.
- **VOUCHERS** - This session, no voucher bill was voted favorably from any committee. Texas PTA hopes to work with staff of Senator Shapiro to identify solutions to the challenge of successfully meeting the needs of students who require institutional placement for autism. At issue is the method of funding for the program.
- **HEALTHY LIFESTYLES** - As a member of the Partnership for a Healthy Texas, Texas PTA worked to pass several key pieces of legislation. All these bills await Governor Perry's signature:
 - SB 891, by Senator Jane Nelson and Representative Rob Eissler, creates a standard definition of physical education that applies to all public school physical education curriculum and addresses student-to-teacher ratios in physical education classes.
 - SB 892, by Senator Jane Nelson and Representative Mark Shelton, requires the inclusion in public school campus improvement plans of an evaluation of the campus coordinated health program.

onto SB 870) creates an Obesity Prevention Pilot Program.

- SB 395, by Senator Eddie Lucio Jr. and Representative Eddie Lucio III, creates an eight-member Early Childhood Health and Nutrition Interagency Council to develop an early childhood nutrition and physical activity plan with a recommended timeline for implementation over a six-year period.
- SB 343, by Senator Jane Nelson and Representative Jim McReynolds, creates an advisory committee to study and provide recommendations to the legislature regarding the areas of Texas that are underserved in the retail availability of healthy foods and the impact of the limited availability on nutrition, obesity, and chronic illnesses.
- SB 283, by Senator Jane Nelson and Representative Mark Shelton, requires school districts to appoint at least 5 parents who are not also employees of the school district to local school health advisory councils and requires SHACs to meet 4 times a year. The bill also requires=2 0districts to notify parents in writing if human sexuality instruction will be provided.
- SB 870, by Senator Lucio Jr. and Representative Castro, creates the Interagency Obesity Council whose task is to create an evidence-based public health awareness plan.
- HB 1622, by Representative Helen Giddings and Senator Judith Zaffirini, creates a grant program to provide children at risk of hunger or obesity with increased access to nutritious foods.
- SB 1027, by Senator Kirk Watson and Representative Tim Kleinschmidt, establishes an interagency farm-to-school task force to promote a healthy diet for school children by facilitating the use of locally grown food products in public schools.
- SB 282, by Senator Jane Nelson and Representative Rob Eissler, creates a grant program to provide nutrition education to children.
- SB 1344, by Senator Kirk Watson and Representative Rob Eissler, requires State Board of Education to adopt essential knowledge and skills that address binge drinking and alcohol poisoning for inclusion in Health Curriculum.
- SB 161 by Senator Rodney Ellis and Representative Linda Harper Brown, creates a new specialty license plate to support Safe Routes to School Program. After deduction of the dept's administrative costs, the remainder of the purchase cost of the specialty plate will go to the Safe Routes to School Program to promote bicyclist safety, education and access through education and training.

• **SCHOOL FINANCE:**

- HB 3646, by Representative Scott Hochberg and Senator Florence Shapiro, seeks to return, to the extent possible, to a formula driven public school finance system that improves equity and reduces recapture. For more details, visit the Texas PTA Web site for an [overview of HB 3646](#).
- SB 300, by Senator Dan Patrick and Representative Mark Shelton, seeks to reduce unfunded mandates on schools. It allows a school district to choose between two methods for posting job vacancies rather than requiring a district to use both methods. The bill extends the expiration date of a district-level class size exception from the end of the semester, for which it is granted, to the end of the school year, for which it is granted, and removes a prohibition against the commissioner of education's granting an exception for more than one semester at a time. The bill

training once a year and requires a school district to establish a long-range energy plan to reduce the consumption of electric energy. The bill repeals a requirement that a school district board of trustees establish a goal to reduce the annual electric consumption by five percent each year for six years, beginning September 1, 2007.

- **SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY** - HB 3, by Representative Rob Eissler and Senator Florence Shapiro, the school accountability system remake bill passed with an amendment that reinstates a requirement for high school students to take 1 credit of PE and 1 credit of Fine Arts. For more details, visit the Texas PTA Web site for an [overview of HB 3](#).
- **STATEWIDE SMOKE-FREE LAW FAILS** - One major piece of legislation that Texas PTA supported and that failed this session is SB 544 by Senator Rodney Ellis/HB 5 by Representative Myra Crownover, the statewide smoke-free legislation. While there was strong support among members of the House, the chairman of the House committee to which the bill was sent, Representative Burt Solomons of Carrollton was unwilling to allow it to be placed on the House calendar for debate until the Senate voted the bill out. The chairman of the Senate committee, Senator Jane Nelson of Flower Mound, delayed a vote on the bill in committee and support eroded in the Senate.

For more information about legislation tracked by Texas PTA this session visit our website at www.txpta.org.

We encourage you to thank our bill sponsors who worked very hard to help us to accomplish our goals:

BOOSTER SEAT BILL

Representative Allen Vaught
Texas House of Representatives
P O Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

Senator Judith Zaffirini
Texas Senate
P O Box 12068 - Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

SALES TAX HOLIDAY EXPANSION

Representative 20Dwayne Bohac
Texas House of Representatives
P O Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

Senator Florence Shapiro
Texas Senate
P O Box 12068 - Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

Comptroller Susan Combs - assisted throughout the process to help Texas PTA pass the sales tax holiday bill

Comptroller Susan Combs
Comptroller of Public Accounts
P O Box 13528
Austin, TX 78711-3528

CELL PHONE PROHIBITION FOR DRIVING TEENS

Representative Larry Phillips
Texas House of Representatives
P O Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

Senator John Carona
 Texas Senate
P O Box 12068 - Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

Senator Tommy Williams - filed a cell phone bill for Texas PTA that did not pass, but helped Texas PTA to pass HB 339.

Senator Tommy Williams
Texas Senate

Austin, TX 78711

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES LEGISLATION

Senator Nelson passed the vast majority of Texas PTA's healthy lifestyles agenda. Other bill sponsors are listed above and may be acknowledged with a thank you as well. Note the addresses for Senate members and House members above.

Senator Jane Nelson

Texas Senate

P O Box 12068 - Capitol Station

Austin, TX 78711

IF YOU CALLED OR EMAILED YOUR LEGISLATOR DURING THIS LEGISLATIVE SESSION, PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO CALL OR EMAIL HIM OR HER TODAY TO SAY THANK YOU FOR HELPING TEXAS PTA TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL SESSION.

Our successes this session would not have been possible without your calls to your legislators and their actions to support PTA's legislative priorities. A quick call or email to say "thank you" reinforces the relationship you are developing with your legislators and reminds them that you are invested in the process and aware of their actions to support PTA priorities.

Texas PTA is a noncommercial, nonsectarian-nonpartisan organization that promotes the welfare of children and youth. Texas PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party.

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