



For Immediate Release:
February 1, 2012

MEDIA ADVISORY

WHAT: Save Texas Schools San Antonio Regional Conference

WHO: Families, students, educators joining together to restore state education funding

WHEN: Friday, 2/3 (6pm-9 pm), Saturday, 2/4 (9 am-2 pm)

WHERE: Northside ISD Activity Center (Friday); Holmes High School (Saturday)

CONTACTS: STS Chair Allen Weeks (512-653-4935) or Toni Serna, Office of State Rep. Mike Villarreal (210-734-8937)

Save Texas Schools To Train San Antonio Parents, Educators To Fight for School Funding; Group Also Plans Statewide Petition Drive and March 24th Capitol Rally

With severe state budget cuts causing crowded classrooms, program reductions, and school closures statewide, Save Texas Schools (STS) is working with San Antonio groups to fight back.

In partnership with the office of State Representative Mike Villarreal, Northside ISD, Texas AFT, TSTA, IDRA, LULAC and other local nonprofits and organizations, Save Texas Schools will spend this Friday and Saturday helping parents, teachers, and concerned citizens learn how to empower pro-education candidates and fight for restored funding in the 2013 Legislature.

"With our children feeling the massive cuts to programs, we're more determined than ever to re-fund schools," says Martianne Johnson, a Northeast ISD parent who helped organize the San Antonio Save Texas School conference this Friday. "Save Texas Schools believes that education is the top emergency issue right now in our state!"

Save Texas Schools first gained statewide attention with a massive rally last year that drew over 13,000 Texans to the State Capitol to stand up for public education. The group is planning an even larger rally for March 24, 2012, and will officially launch a statewide petition this week calling on state leaders and candidates to restore school funding cuts, revise school finance laws to be fair to all students, fix the state's structural deficit to avoid future education cuts, and reevaluate and limit high-stakes standardized testing.

Friday's conference at Northside Activity Center in San Antonio will feature San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro, Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, Rep. Mike Villarreal, Rep. John Garza, and Texas Superintendent of the Year Dr. John Folks of Northside ISD, as well as parent and student speakers. A bipartisan panel of legislators will wrestle with potential solutions to Texas' education funding crisis.

Saturday's workshops will offer hands-on training on how to increase support for public schools, with topics such as: understanding public education funding and the origins of the funding crisis in Texas; developing and supporting pro-education legislators; the truth behind the new STAAR/EOC tests; and effective education messaging. A panel of local superintendents and school board members will discuss the impact of budget cuts on San Antonio area districts.

The San Antonio conference is expected to attract over 300 participants from the San Antonio area and is the third such event that STS has hosted since the end of the 2011 legislative session. Two earlier conferences were held in Austin and Dallas and a fourth is being planned in Houston for April in advance of state primary elections. "We're training parents, teachers, and concerned citizens from all over the state to become education advocates who can go back to their communities and work at the grassroots level to get the change we need for our public schools," says Allen Weeks, chair of Save Texas Schools.

In addition to restoring fair and adequate funding to public education, Save Texas Schools is also speaking out about the new STAAR/EOC tests, calling for reductions in state-mandated high stakes testing. "Even the Texas Education Agency Commissioner has acknowledged the overemphasis on testing in our state. With the new tests, the average school will go from 28 to 45 days per year spent on testing – the equivalent to nine weeks of instruction lost to bubble tests!" says Weeks. "It's a huge expense and it's hurting our children's education."

For more information about conference registration and event schedule, please visit www.savetxschools.org.

ABOUT SAVE TEXAS SCHOOLS: *Save Texas Schools is a nonpartisan statewide volunteer coalition of parents, students, educators, business leaders, concerned citizens, community groups, and faith organizations. Our goal is to educate our state's elected officials about the importance of maintaining funding for Texas public education – from pre-K through college – to the maximum degree possible, within the context of the current state budget crisis and beyond.*

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